

8. FULL APPLICATION FOR INSTALLATION OF 14 SOLAR PANELS TO ONE SIDE OF CAMPSITE OFFICE ROOF AND INSTALLATION OF AIR SOURCE HEATING SYSTEM AT NORTH LEES CAMPSITE, HATHERSAGE (NP/HPK/0921/1046, AM)

APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Summary

1. North Lees Campsite is located in open countryside approximately 1.5km north of Hathersage.
2. The proposal is for the erection of solar panels and air source heat pumps to the existing office / amenity building on site.
3. The development is acceptable in principle and would not harm the character of the building, the valued characteristics of the National Park, amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety.
4. The application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Site and Surroundings

5. North Lees Campsite is located is located in open countryside approximately 1.5km north of Hathersage. The campsite is owned and operated by the National Park Authority and comprises the existing single storey office / amenity building, camping pods and tent pitches.
6. Access to the property is off Birley Lane. The nearest neighbouring properties are North Lees Hall to the north of the site, Bronte Cottage to the west, Cattis Side to the east and Cow Close Farm to the south.

Proposal

7. Installation of 14 solar panels to the south facing roof slope of the office / amenity building. The panels would be black with black frames and fitted flush with the stone slate roof.
8. Installation of two air source heat pump units to the west of the building. The plans show that timber fencing would enclose the units.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions;

1. **Commence development within 3 years.**
2. **Carry out in accordance with specified approved plans.**
3. **No works to install the solar panels shall commence until after the 1st November and once commenced the works shall be completed before the following March.**
4. **The works to install the solar panels shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with section 4.1 of the submitted Bat Activity Survey dated 20th October 2021. The two new bat boxes shall be installed before the installation of the solar panels hereby approved.**

5. **Notwithstanding the approved plans, the enclosure to the air source heat pumps shall be a drystone wall to match the stone, construction and height of the existing drystone walling to the north of the application site.**

Key Issues

9. The impact upon the building, landscape and biodiversity.

Relevant Planning History

10. None relevant.

Consultations

11. Highway Authority – No objection.
12. District Council – No response to date.
13. Parish Council – No objection. Pleased to note these ongoing sustainable measures.
14. PDNPA Ecology – No objection if works are carried out in the winter months after 1st November and before 1st March and in accordance with avoidance, supervision, mitigation and compensation measures proposed within submitted ecological survey.

Representations

15. No letters of representation received to date.

Main Policies

16. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP3, DS1, CC1, CC2, L1, L2 and RT3
17. Relevant Development Management policies: DMC3, DMC11, DMC12 and DMR1

National Planning Policy Framework

18. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In particular, Paragraph 176 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
19. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the May 2019 Adopted Development Management Policies. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.

Peak District National Park Core Strategy

20. Policies GSP1, GSP2 and GSP3 together say that all development in the National Park must be consistent with the National Park's legal purposes and duty and that the Sandford Principle will be applied where there is conflict. Opportunities for enhancing the valued characteristics of the National Park will be identified and acted upon and development which would enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park will be permitted.

21. Policy DS1 outlines the Authority's Development Strategy and in principle allows for recreation uses in the open countryside.
22. L1 says that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and other valued characteristics.
23. L2 says that development must conserve or enhance any sites, features or species of biodiversity or geodiversity importance and where appropriate their setting. Other than in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where it is likely to have an adverse impact on any sites, features or species of biodiversity or geodiversity importance.
24. CC1 says that in order to build in resilience to and mitigate the causes of climate change all development must: make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources; take account of the energy hierarchy; be directed away from flood risk areas and reduce overall risk from flooding; achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions; achieve the highest possible standards of water efficiency.
25. CC2 says that proposals for low carbon and renewable energy development will be encouraged provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting landscape character, cultural heritage assets, other valued characteristics, or other established uses of the area taking into account cumulative impacts.
26. RT3. C says that provision of improved facilities on existing caravan and camping sites, including shops and recreation opportunities, must be of a scale appropriate to the site itself.

Development Management Policies

27. Policy DMC3 requires development to be of a high standard that respects, protects, and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place. It also provides further detailed criteria to assess design and landscaping, as well as requiring development to conserve the amenity of other properties.
28. Policy DMC11. A says that proposals should aim to achieve net gains to biodiversity or geodiversity as a result of development. In considering whether a proposal conserves and enhances sites, features or species of wildlife, geological or geomorphological importance all reasonable measures must be taken to avoid net loss. Policy DMC12 requires development to conserve protected sites, features and species.
29. Policy DMR1 allows for the development of touring camping or caravan sites if the scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses is acceptable.
30. Policy DMT3. B says that development, which includes a new or improved access onto a public highway, will only be permitted where, having regard to the standard, function, nature and use of the road, a safe access that is achievable for all people, can be provided in a way which does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it.
31. Policy DMT8 states that off-street parking for residential development should be provided unless it can be demonstrated that on-street parking meets highways standards and does not negatively impact on the visual and other amenity of the local community. It notes that the design and number of parking spaces must respect the valued characteristics of the area, particularly in conservation areas.

Assessment

32. This is an existing camping site owned and operated by the National Park Authority. Policies DS1, CC1 and RT3 all support the principle of installing renewable energy development at the site if it can be accommodated without harm to the valued characteristics of the National Park.
33. Given the nature of the proposals and distance to neighbouring properties there are no concerns that the development would harm the privacy, security or amenity of any neighbouring property. There are no changes to the existing car park or access so we agree with the Highway Authority that the development would not harm highway safety.
34. The proposed solar panels would be sited on the southern roof of the existing office / amenity building. This is a relatively modern building but built to reflect the local tradition and constructed from natural gritstone and stone slate.
35. The proposed panels would change the appearance of the roof introducing an array panels covering the majority of this roof slope. The panels would be visible from the access and within the site but have a more limited impact in the wider landscape. The panels and the frames would be finished black, which would create a recessive appearance, and fitting the panels flush with the roof slope would create a neat finish. This design approach ensure that the development would conserve the character of the building, its setting and the wider landscape.
36. The proposed air source heat pumps would be well sited, located to the side and rear of the building, which would limit visual impact. An enclosure for the rear and side of the units is proposed and this is acceptable to screen the units if the enclosure is constructed from drystone walling to match the adjacent wall rather than timber fencing as proposed.
37. The proposed air source heat pumps would provide heating and hot water and replace the existing immersion and storage heaters. The solar panels would provide electricity to the building and a back-up power source for the heat pumps while also feeding back into the National Grid. The proposals would significantly reduce energy consumption at the site, which is welcomed.
38. A bat and bird survey of the roof was undertaken in October. The survey found no evidence of birds within the roof of the building but two Common Pipistrelle bats were seen emerging from a ridge tile and foraging in nearby trees. Due to the presence of bats, the report and our Ecologist recommend measures to mitigate the potential impact of works upon bats and to install compensation measures.
39. This includes timing the works to avoid the summer months, providing a toolbox talk to builders, recreating bat roosts within the ridge of the building and erecting two new bat boxes on adjacent trees.
40. If permission is granted we recommend that planning, conditions be imposed to secure a stone wall enclosure for the air source heat pump units and to secure mitigation and compensation measures for bats are implemented.

Conclusion

41. The proposed development is acceptable in principle and would provide renewable energy development in a manner that conserves the character and appearance of the building, its setting and the valued characteristics of the National Park.

42. The development would not harm the amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety.
43. Therefore, having taken into account all other material considerations raised we conclude that the development is in accordance with the development plan. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions set out in the report.

Human Rights

44. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

45. Nil

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