

**13. FULL APPLICATION - FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A SOLAR POWERED CAR PARK MACHINE AND ASSOCIATED BASE, PEDESTRIAN AREA AND SIGNAGE AT PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND CAR PARK, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/1122/1439, DH)**

**APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Summary**

1. The application is for the installation of a solar powered car park machine and associated base, pedestrian area and signage at the car park in the centre of the village of Alstonefield.
2. The site is an existing operational car park within the Peak District National Park owned and operated by the National Park Authority, which currently is free to use by members of the public.
3. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (Section 12) gives the Authority powers to provide and operate parking places, and may for the purposes of such arrangements erect such buildings and carry out such work as may appear to them to be necessary or expedient.
4. The existing use and character of the site is not altered, and the harm to the wider setting of the car park is minimal as the development is against the backdrop of the existing development on the site.
5. The application is recommended for approval.

**Site and Surroundings**

6. The application site is located off the south side of The Rakes, in the centre of Alstonefield, a named settlement in policy DS1.
7. The site is within the Alstonefield Conservation Area. There is a listed building 5m away from the west corner.
8. The site comprises a hard-surfaced car park with a public conveniences block in the middle. The north-west half of the car park is bounded by drystone walls, the south-east half is for coach parking and has an open front to the road, with stone walls to the south-east and south-west boundaries, in front of which is a grass strip round the hard-surfaced area protected by timber posts. The car park has trees to all sides other than the north-east (road) side.
9. The public toilets which stand between the two parking areas stand gable end on to the road and 4.4m back from the edge of the highway. The single storey building has a pitched roof massing and is constructed from traditional materials.
10. The nearest neighbouring properties are Manifold Cottage, which is listed Grade II, to the west, The Mount to the north-west, and Homestead Cottage to the south-east.

**Proposal**

11. The proposal is for the erection of a solar powered car park machine along with associated signage and two posts in front of the machine to create a safe area for people using it.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**12. That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Statutory time limit**
- 2. The development to be in accordance with the submitted specifications received 17/11/2022, and the amended site plan received 16/01/2023**

## **Key Issues**

13. The key issues are:

- Whether the proposals would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site and its setting, or the wider landscape setting within which it sits; and
- Public safety; and
- Whether the proposals would harm the amenities of nearby neighbouring properties.

## **History**

14. 1977 – Planning permission to provide a car park for 16 cars and 3 coaches and the erection of a toilet block was granted subject to conditions under NP/SM/0677/58.

15. 1978 - The provision of a septic tank for the public toilets was granted by NP/SM/0278/16.

## **Consultations**

16. Staffordshire County Council (Highway Authority) – No objections.

17. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – No response to date.

18. Alstonefield Parish Council – Objects to the proposal, for the following reasons:

- *Strong concerns that (it) will impact negatively on road safety*
- *Increased levels of roadside parking*
- *Impact on residents' frontages*
- *Congestion in the village*

## **Representations**

19. During the publicity period the Authority has received two representations regarding the proposal, which are both objections, citing the following reasons:

- *The charges board would be a blot on the landscape of the conservation area*
- *More car parking on the road would be detrimental to the landscape of the conservation area*
- *Cars parked on the road would make the village less safe*
- *It would be unsightly if tourists parked on the roads, pavements and verges*
- *It would be dangerous if pathways are restricted and people have to go on the roads*
- *It would be inconvenient to the normal life of the village of people delivering, dropping off and visiting*
- *It seems entirely antisocial*

- *Tourists will park elsewhere rather than pay*
- *If the Authority does not police the site they will park without paying*
- *Policing the site would cost more than income generated*
- *Maintenance and vandalism challenges*
- *The car park should be sold or leased to the Alstonefield Parish Council or some other community group*

### **Main Policies**

20. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, CC1, CC2, DS1, L1, L3, T1, T3 & T7
21. Relevant Local Plan policies: DM1, DMC3 & DMC8
22. National Planning Policy Framework

### **Wider Policy Context**

23. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:
  - Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
  - Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public
  - When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to:
  - Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. A revised NPPF was published in July 2021. The Government's intention is that the document 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 the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and policies in the Peak District National Park Development Management Policies document 2019. 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 more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
25. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*

### **Peak District National Park Core Strategy**

26. GSP1 & GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park.* These policies set out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives, and jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conservation and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage

27. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. GSP3 states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
28. CC1 – *Climate change mitigation and adaptation*. CC1 requires all development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources to achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.
29. CC2 - *Low carbon and renewable energy development*. CC2 states that proposals for low carbon and renewable energy development will be encouraged provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting the landscape character, cultural heritage assets, other valued characteristics, or other established uses of the area.
30. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. This sets out what forms of development are acceptable in principle within the National Park.
31. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. L1 states that all development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
32. L3 – *Cultural heritage assets of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance*. L3 states that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of historic assets and their settings; other than in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where it is likely to cause harm to the significance of any cultural heritage asset. It goes on to say that proposals will be expected to meet the objectives of any strategy covering the National Park that has, as an objective, the conservation and where possible the enhancement of cultural heritage assets.
33. T1 – *Reducing the general need to travel and encouraging sustainable transport*. T1 (E) says that sustainable access for the quiet enjoyment of the National Park, that does not cause harm to the valued characteristics, will be promoted.
34. T3 – *Design of transport infrastructure*. T3 (B) requires particular attention to be given to using the minimum infrastructure necessary.
35. T7 – *Minimising the adverse impact of vehicles and managing the demand for car and coach parks*. T7 (C) refers to the management of non-residential parking.

#### Local Plan Development Management Policies

36. DM1 – *The presumption of sustainable development in the context of National Park purposes*. These being (i) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; and (ii) to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the valued characteristics of the National Park.
37. DMC3 - *Siting, design, layout and landscaping*. DMC3 states that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is 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.

38. DMC8 – *Conservation Areas* – Policy DMC8 relates to development in conservation areas and development which affects its setting and important views into and out of conservation areas.

### **Assessment**

#### **Principle of the development**

39. The proposal contributes to the Authority's statutory purposes and is acceptable in principle.
40. The provision of car parking ticket machines could help to encourage car sharing, thereby reducing travel, which policy T1 seeks to promote.
41. Policy DS1 states that renewable energy infrastructure is acceptable in principle provided that they can be accommodated without adverse visual impact and do not raise any amenity issues.

#### **Visual Impacts**

42. The siting for the proposed car park ticketing machine and the associated tariff signage is to the north-east gable of the public toilet building. In this position it would be facing to the road between the opening to the coach park and the entrance to the car park.
43. In terms of the wider visual impact the development, it is acknowledged that in the proposed position it would be visible from outside the car park itself. However, it would be seen in the context of the site, against the backdrop of the existing building on the site.
44. The proposed machine is a functional structure comprising a solar panel measuring 475mm by 378mm, on top of a pedestal whose dimensions are 290mm by 274mm. The overall height of the machine is 1.714m. The machine has a black finish, which is a recessive colour.
45. The machine is on a concrete pad with a small tarmac standing area and two posts are provided to ensure the safety of the area when members of the public are using the machine.
46. The tariff sign measures 850mm across, by 1.2m in depth. It is mounted on poles with its highest edge at 1.5m. The sign has a dark green background with lettering and symbols in Peak District National Park colours. The smaller advisory signs, measuring 290mm by 425mm (approximately A4 size), are also green.
47. Although the design of the proposed infrastructure does not reflect or harmonise with the natural environment or local building traditions, the development is a modest scale, recessive colour. The siting, which utilises existing features and screening makes the impact negligible. Within the existing car park it is screened from wider viewpoints, and in the context of the car park, is not incongruous and does not have a detrimental impact on the site.
48. The proposals are considered to have a minimal impact on the character and appearance of the existing site and a negligible impact on the wider setting of the car park.

49. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposal is compliant with Core Strategy policies GSP3, L1, L3 and Development Management policies DMC3, and DMC8, and also in line with policies CC1, CC2, T3 and T7.

#### Amenity Impacts

50. Due to the location of the site in relation to neighbouring properties, it will not have an adverse effect upon any neighbouring properties.

51. As noted above, the proposed installations will not have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site, or its wider setting.

52. The Highway Authority have no safety concerns, and the proposed posts to keep the immediate area to the front of the machine protected means there are no public safety issues.

53. In terms of amenity issues the proposal is in line with the Authority's policies and national planning policy.

#### Sustainability

54. Policy CC1 requires all development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources to achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions. The solar powered infrastructure is inherently sustainable and therefore complies with the requirements of CC1.

#### Conclusion

55. The proposed development does not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the existing site.

56. As such, it is concluded that the proposal is compliant with policies GSP3, L1, CC1, CC2, T3, T7, DMC3, and national planning policy.

#### Human Rights

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

#### List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil

#### Report Author and Job Title

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