

11. FULL APPLICATION - CHANGE OF USE FROM AGRICULTURAL FIELD TO SITE FOR FIVE TOURING CARAVANS OR MOTOR HOMES BETWEEN MARCH AND OCTOBER ANNUALLY. INCLUDING ALTERED ACCESS AND HARD STANDING, AND ERECTION OF ELECTRIC PICKUP POINTS, AT CHURCH LANE FARM, CHURCH LANE, GREAT LONGSTONE (NP/DDD/1223/1446, MN)

APPLICANT: MR D COX

Summary

1. The site is an open field beyond the edge of the northern boundary of Great Longstone village
2. The application proposes the change of use of the land from agriculture to a site for five touring caravans or motorhomes., with associated hardstandings, new access track and new access onto Beggarway Lane.
3. The development would harm the established landscape character of the area and the setting of the Great Longstone Conservation Area.
4. The application is recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

5. The application site is the western end of a larger field parcel, abutting the northern side of Beggarway in Great Longstone. The land is currently used for grazing and storage of farm equipment. There is a gateway that gives vehicular access from Beggarway Lane in the south western corner of the field.
6. The western and northern boundaries of the site are bounded by public footpaths. A further public footpath runs diagonally through the field from south west to north east.
7. The site is just outside of the Great Longstone Conservation Area - its northern boundary runs along Beggarway Lane.
8. There are residential properties to the south, the nearest being 'Croft Lodge' and 'Barley Close', and a property known as 'Church Croft' lies directly to the west.

Proposal

9. The change of use of the land from agriculture to use for the siting of up to five touring caravans or motor homes between the months of March and October each year. The pitches would be sited along the northern edge of the application site, in a row. Plans show no hardstandings for vehicles or caravans.
10. A new vehicular access would be formed towards the south eastern corner of the field, onto Beggarway Lane. A new surfaced access track would run northwards from the new access with Beggarway Lane before returning west across the field.
11. A scheme of planting within the site is proposed, comprising mostly native deciduous trees.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. **The siting of five caravans or motorhomes and the associated vehicles, new access and associated track, and paraphernalia associated with the use at the site would harm the established landscape character of the area and setting of the Great Longstone Conservation Area, contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, L1, L3 and RT3, Development Management Plan policies DMC3, DMC8 and DMR1 and the National Planning Policy Framework. The public benefits arising from the development would not outweigh the harm that has been identified.**

Key Issues

12. The impact of the development on the landscape character of the area and the setting of the Great Longstone Conservation Area.
13. Highway issues.
14. The impact of the development on the amenity of neighbouring properties.
15. Wider public benefits.

History

2021 – Planning permission refused for change of use from agricultural field to site for five motor homes, including hard standings, new access track and new site access, on grounds of landscape impacts and impacts on residential amenity.

1960 – Outline planning permission refused for erection of bungalow on the grounds that the site lay beyond the confines of the village.

Consultations

Highway Authority – Initially requested further details and amendments. Those have been provided and the highway authority now have no objections subject to conditions securing the completion and maintainance of the access as proposed, a plan securing the site layout during works being required, and details of refuse storage and collection being provided.

District Council – Environmental Health - Do not believe that there is likely to be a significant negative impact on nearby residential properties from noise outbreak from the proposed site, or noise nuisance likely to be caused. Recommend that the Noise Management Plan is implemented. Unclear what is proposed in terms of waste disposal and what provisions are proposed for the disposal of foul waste generated from the proposed site.

Parish Council – no objections

Authority's Archaeologist - no archaeological comments

Authority's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Lead Adviser – The grassland is improved and species poor and regularly mown in June with poor potential for enhancement. This close to the village and with public rights of way adjacent and through it, there is also poor potential for use by ground nesting birds irrespective of the management of the field.

The boundaries are drystone walls in the main with rare hawthorn/mature ash. Along the road there is a short section of hedge I think. There is no proposal to destroy these features. The proposal will enhance the ecological interest of the site through the proposed tree

planting/screening which will contribute to the NPMP aims of diversifying the White Peak plateau through tree and shrub planting and will provide additional habitat for protected species which are in the area. The tree planting along the northern wall will also help mitigate for expected tree loss as a result of ash dieback.

Representations

34 letters of representation have been received. 32 support the application, 1 makes general comment and 1 objects. The applicants agent has also submitted a petition signed by 67 people supporting the proposals.

Support has been received raising the following points:

- Proposals would provide a means of diversification for a long standing local farm business.
- Site would support and benefit other local businesses.
- The addition of trees and hedges would contribute to wildlife, help screen the site, and improve its ecological value.
- The site is in close proximity to the village.
- The site could be a 'Certified Site' without permission.

Objection has been received raising the following points:

- The new access and site would cause harm to the landscape character of the area.
- Landscaping would take time to mature and screen the site.
- Development would detract from the Conservation Area and historic landscape
- Highway concerns – adjoining lanes are narrow, have poor visibility and are often congested. Development would increase problems.
- Impact on amenity of neighbouring properties. No on site management to control activities.
- Lack of information on sewage and refuse disposal.
- Concerns about impacts on ecology.

The general comment raises concern regarding the time needed for any planting to reach maturity and be effective.

The representations can be viewed in full on the Authority's website.

Main Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1, L2, L3, RT3, CC1

Relevant Development Management Plan policies: DME2, DMR1, DMC12, DMC13, DMC14, DMT3

National Planning Policy Framework

16. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and Development Management Policies (adopted May 2019) 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.

17. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving*

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 landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'

18. Paragraph 84 states that decisions should enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

Core Strategy

19. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and 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
20. RT3 states that small touring camping and caravan sites will be permitted, particularly in areas where there are few existing sites, provided that they are well screened, have appropriate access to the road network and do not adversely affect living conditions
21. Policies L1 and L3 say that development must conserve or enhance the landscape character and cultural heritage of the National Park. Development that harms the landscape or cultural heritage will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
22. Policy L2 states the development must conserve and enhance any sites, features or species of biodiversity importance and where appropriate their setting. Other than in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where is likely to have an adverse impact on any site, features or species of biodiversity importance or their setting.
23. Policy CC1 states that development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources, taking into account the energy hierarchy and achieving the highest possible standards of carbon reductions and water efficiency.

Development Management Plan

24. Policy DMC3 expects a high standard of design that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape.
25. Development Management Policy DMT3 states the development 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 that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it.
26. Policy DMC8 seeks to protect the character and appearance and setting of Conservation Areas.
27. DMC12 states that development for sites, features and species of biodiversity importance, development will only be permitted where significant harm can be avoided and the conservation status of the purposes is maintained and the need for, and the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh any adverse effects
28. DMC13 seeks to protect trees put at risk by development and requires that sufficient

information be submitted to enable impacts to be properly considered.

29. DMC14 sets out that development that presents a risk of pollution or disturbance including soil, air, light, water or noise pollution, or odour will not be permitted unless adequate control measures are put in place to bring the pollution within acceptable limits:
30. DMR1 states that the development of a new camping or touring caravan sites will not be permitted unless the scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable and it does not dominate its surroundings.
31. DME2 states that development for farm diversification will be permitted if there is clear evidence that the new business use will remain ancillary to the agricultural operation of the farm business and provided there is no net harm to valued landscape character.

Assessment

Principle of development

32. In principle, Core Strategy policy RT3 and Development Management Policy DMR1 allow for the development of small scale camping and caravanning sites provided that they do not cause harm to the landscape character of the area or neighbouring uses. The proposed development, being for 5 caravans or motor homes, is considered to be 'small' in the context of policy RT3. The key issues are therefore the impact on the character of the area and on the amenity of neighbouring uses.

Impact of the development on the landscape character of the area and the setting of the Great Longstone Conservation Area.

33. The application site is in open countryside, beyond the built edge of the village of Great Longstone. Beggarway Lane forms a distinct northern boundary to the village and except for one dwelling (Church Croft) the land to the north of the lane is distinctly agricultural in character. It consists of an open fieldscape with drystone field boundaries, some hedgerows and trees along boundary features. This is consistent with the landscape character type for the area, as described in the Authority's Landscape Strategy (Valley Farmlands with Villages). The Strategy describes this landscape as 'a settled pastoral landscape', with farmland 'enclosed by hedgerows and some drystone walls'.
34. Whilst the site is not within the Conservation Area, views into the Conservation Area are available across the site from the surrounding footpaths. And from within the Conservation Area, there are open views across the outlying field system. Consequently the site contributes to the setting and therefore the significance of the Conservation Area.
35. The proposed pitches, when occupied by caravans or motorhomes and the access track would be highly prominent when viewed in close proximity from the road and public rights of way that bound, and cross the site, They would also be prominent in more medium range views from the public rights of way as they head into the village from the east and north, and would also be visible in some longer range views from Longstone Edge, albeit they would appear relatively recessive in those longer range views. By virtue of their shape, colour, external appearance and siting, the vans or motorhomes would appear as discordant and jarring features, strung out across the open field. They would catch the eye and would detract significantly from the pastoral landscape in which the site sits.
36. As well as the vans or caravans themselves there is likely to be other paraphernalia associated with the use of the site as a touring site including awnings, refuse bins, hook up points, external lighting etc, all of which would contribute to the harmful visual impact

of the development.

37. The development would be positioned at the northern edge of the field and, whilst following the field boundary, would appear isolated and unrelated to existing development. New native planting is proposed to the south and east of the proposed pitches. Such native planting is relatively common in the area, but the new planting would take a considerable length of time to mature and adequately screen the site from the south and east and in the meantime, harm to the distinctive character of the landscape would occur. Further, even when established, the planting would have a much reduced screening effect at the beginning and end of the proposed seasonal use, when the trees would not yet be in full leaf, or would be losing them.
38. The planting would not screen the vans in views from the north or west to any significant extent and so they would interrupt and cause harm to open views into and out of the Conservation Area. At present Beggarway Lane forms a distinct edge to the built development of the village. The presence of motor homes in the field would blur this boundary and would erode the characteristic way in which the farmland butts up to the edge of the village.
39. Further, a new access off Beggarway Lane is proposed. This would be an opening of over 8m in width, with a splayed entrance. This would lead on to an 8 meter wide surfaced track. This access would not only afford views directly in to the site from Beggarway Lane across its width, but would in itself be an incongruous feature that would be at odds with the generally enclosed fields along the road, with other accesses typically limited to only modest field gateways.
40. In summary the proposed use of the site for 5 caravans and motorhomes and the associated access track and hardstandings would cause harm to the landscape character of the area and the setting of the Conservation Area, contrary to policies L1, L3 DMC3, DMC8 and DMR1.

Highway and access issues

41. At present vehicular access is gained off Beggarway Lane in the south west corner of the field. The application is silent on closure of the existing access as part of the proposals. The applicants agent has however advised by email that it is proposed to lock this during the camping season, but for it to remain in use out of season for use when the applicants run cattle on foot from the nearby barns. Retention of this access would appear to conflict with the proposed tree planting to this corner of the field, further calling in to question the likely extent and effectiveness of such planting.
42. As described above, in addition to retention of this access the plans show a new, second access would be formed further to the east. The access bellmouth would be 8m in width and the roadside boundary on either side of the access would be set back behind the visibility splay. An existing low boundary wall would be retained.
43. The highway authority initially requested some amendments and clarification of the proposals, which has been received. They raise no objections to the proposals as amended.
44. The application stresses the improvements that the development will bring in terms of highway safety. Whilst the new access would have improved visibility over the existing, the highway do not indicate that the existing access is unsafe, has accident records, or advocate for the approval of the current application. The fact that the other access would

also remain in use for several months a year also reduces any benefits arising from access improvements.

45. Representation has raised concerns about the potential for the development to lead to more congestion on narrow local roads, especially due to the large size of some touring vehicles. However the Highway Authority has not raised any objections in these respects and on balance we are satisfied that due to the modest scale of the development, the impact on the local road network would not be so significant as to warrant refusal on highway grounds.
46. Notwithstanding the above, the concerns regarding the visual impacts of the new access set out above still stand.

The impact of the development on the amenity of neighbouring properties

47. There are a number of residential properties in close proximity to the application site, the nearest being 'Croft Lodge' and 'Barley Close' to the south on the opposite side of Beggarway Lane, and a property known as 'Church Croft' which lies directly to the west. By the nature of the proposed use for the siting of camper vans, inevitably vehicles will arrive at various times during the day and evening, and due to the outdoor nature of a camping use, visitors themselves are likely to generate noise when staying there.
48. The application has been accompanied by a professional noise assessment. Taking readings from positions closest to the most affected neighbours, it concludes that any impacts on neighbours arising from noise and disturbance would be low, based on the proposed use, subject to limits on the nature and hours of noise for guests being a requirement of booking.
49. The environmental health team have been consulted on the application and raise no concerns in regards to likely noise nuisance on the basis of the report, and recommend that the measures proposed to limit particularly loud noise and times of operation set out in the submitted report are followed. This could be secured by condition if permission was to be granted.
50. On this basis we conclude that the proposed development would conserve the amenity of the occupiers of nearby dwellings. The application is therefore in accordance with policies GSP3, RT3, DMC3, DMC14 and DMR1 in these regards.

Wider public benefits

51. The representations received in support of the application and the design and access statement argue that the development would diversify and support the applicant's agricultural business. No further information has been provided in these respects and so it is difficult to assign weight to it. It is accepted however that the provision of camping and caravanning sites can bring positive financial benefits to individual farm businesses. Nonetheless our view is that the benefits to the continuation of land management in this part of the National Park do not outweigh the harm that has been identified above.
52. The Authority's FiPL Lead Adviser notes that the proposed planting would bring about a degree of ecological improvements at the site. Given the area of land is relatively small, some limited weight is given to this benefit.
53. It is also suggested that the proposals would bring wider benefits to the community because visitors to the site would make use of and support other local facilities. This is a public benefit, but given the scale of the proposed development it would be limited and in any case it does not outweigh the significant harm to the landscape that has been outlined above.

54. The application and representations also note that the development would support and promote tourism within the National Park. Whilst correct, and a public benefit, planning policy already makes provision for such accommodation and there are numerous sites where such provision is available locally, or other sites where it could be accommodated in a manner that conserves the special qualities of the National Park landscape. As such, this is afforded limited weight.
55. The improvement in highway safety that is discussed in the previous section of this report is also a public benefit. As set out above though, any such benefit is modest, and not sufficient to outweigh the harm arising from the provision of the access itself, of the development as a whole even when taken alongside other arising benefits.

Other Issues

56. Limited information has been provided with regard to waste storage and collection, We consider that the storage of waste could be accommodated in a way that does not cause harm to residential amenity, but the siting of refuse bins would add to the issue of visual 'clutter' that has already been identified.
57. Limited information has been provided with regard to the disposal of foul sewage. The applicant's agent advises that the caravans and vans do not require this, being self contained, but that they could provide an underground dump station if required. If the development had been acceptable in all other respects this information would have been requested.
58. There are mature trees growing along the northern boundary of the site. The crown spread of these trees is not shown on the plans and so it is not clear whether the proposals would have any impact upon them. Had the application been acceptable in all other respects we would have asked for more information with regard to impact on trees.
59. With regard to ecology, the development does not fall within a category that is likely to affect protected species as defined in the Authority's Practice Note and so a protected species survey was not required in this case. The applicants argue that the proposed planting would improve the ecological interest of the site. The Authority's FIPL Lead Engagement Officer has commented on the application, advising that the site is currently of low ecological interest and that the scheme would result in some improvement in this regard. There are therefore no ecological concerns arising from the proposals.
60. No information has been provided with regard to the provision of external lighting.

Conclusion

61. The siting of five caravans or motor homes and the associated surfacing works and new access would cause harm to the valued landscape character of the area and the setting of the Great Longstone Conservation Area.
62. Consequently the development is contrary to the development plan and having assessed all other material considerations, the application is recommended for refusal.

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

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