

**8. FULL APPLICATION – CREATION OF 3 ADDITIONAL CAMPERVAN SPACES AND 11 ADDITIONAL PARKING SPACES AT NORTH LEES CAMPSITE, BIRLEY LANE, HATHERSAGE (NP/DDD/0325/0221, HF)**

**APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Summary**

1. North Lees Campsite is located in open countryside approximately 1.5km north of Hathersage.
2. The application proposes the creation of 3 additional campervan spaces and provision of 11 additional car parking spaces within the existing site.
3. The development is acceptable in principle and the proposed design, layout and associated landscaping would ensure the development conserves, and in this case enhances the local landscape which is a valued characteristic of the National Park. The application has demonstrated it can achieve biodiversity net gains and that there would be no harm in respect of residential amenity, trees or highway safety.
4. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

**Site and Surroundings**

5. North Lees Campsite is located in open countryside approximately 1.5km north of Hathersage. The campsite is owned and operated by the National Park Authority and comprises an existing single storey office / amenity building, camping pods, tent pitches and a number of campervan spaces.
6. The existing campsite is enclosed by woodland planting which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order.
7. Access to the campsite is off Birley Lane. The nearest neighbouring properties are North Lees Hall north of the site, Bronte Cottage to the west, Cattis Side to the east and Cow Close Farm to the south. The Grade II\* Listed North Lees Hall and associated buildings is to the north, however due to the distance, intervening landscaping and change in levels, the site and development is not considered to impact the setting of the Hall.
8. There are Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to the north west and south of the campsite. The campsite is designated as Access Land.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

1. **Statutory 3 year implementation.**
2. **Development in accordance with approved plans.**
3. **The new car parking and campervan spaces shall be surfaced with a grass mesh surfacing prior to their first use.**
4. **The proposed landscaping shall be carried out within the first planting and seeding season following first use or substantial completion of the new campervan and car parking spaces. Requirement for ongoing maintenance.**

5. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved biodiversity gain plan (approved under general condition imposed by paragraph 13(1), Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990)) and the approved biodiversity gain plan shall be implemented before first use of the development hereby permitted.
6. Restrict occupancy of campervan spaces to short term holiday letting (no more than 28 days occupancy by any individual per calendar year).
7. All new service lines associated with the approved development, and on land with the applicant's ownership and control, shall be placed underground and the ground restored to its original condition thereafter.
8. There shall be no external lighting on the new campervan bays or car parking spaces hereby approved.
9. Surfacing of the widened track to match the existing materials of the track.
10. Nesting bird checks to be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist if any works (including vegetation removal) are undertaken during the main nesting bird season.

#### **Key Issues**

- The principle of development,
- impact on the landscape,
- highway safety,
- neighbouring amenity.

#### **History**

9. None relevant.

#### **Consultations**

10. Derbyshire County Council Highways: No objection. Informative to be included in respect of Public Rights of Way,
11. Derbyshire Dales District Council: No response received to date.
12. Hathersage Parish Council: No objection to the additional campervan spaces. The Parish Council would like to see additional provision for formalised campervan parking in the area. No objection to the additional 11 parking spaces however request that site users are clearly signposted and directed regarding site entry and exist, including directing users to turn left towards Hathersage when departing. Site entry / exit was agreed in the original site planning permission.
13. Peak District National Park Authority Access and Rights of Way: *In 2005, the Authority dedicated as access land the woodland surrounding the campsite. The campsite was in operation at the time of dedication of the woodlands for public access. The mapped extent, provides a right of access on foot for the purpose of open-air recreation within the woodland and an area of the campsite.*

*Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, access land covered by buildings is viewed as 'excepted land'. This includes any tent, caravan, or other temporary or moveable structure. In these areas, the public right of access is not exercisable. As the*

*proposal provides for campervans in an area previously available for camping, there is considered to be no material change in the availability or otherwise of access in this area.*

*It is further considered that, as the woodland is accessed from the campsite and from a public footpath to the north of site, this access and the track through the campsite would be unaffected by the development.*

*There is therefore no objection to the submitted proposal. It would not have a material impact on public access to the woodland, nor affect that which is not exercisable. However, as the Access Authority, we would look to enhance the means of access into the woodland, including though the provision of additional access from the roadside.*

*The following footnote is recommended clarifying the availability and extent of the public's rights of access.*

*Footnote*

*The site and adjoining woodland are access land as designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Please note that the grant of planning permission is separate to the public's rights of access which remain unaffected by the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Authority's Access and Rights of Way Officer.*

14. Peak District National Park Authority Ecology: *The baseline habitats are 0.12 habitat units (modified grassland) and 0.23 hedgerow units. The development proposals will result in the loss of 58 m of young hedgerow and 0.06 ha amenity grassland.*

*The BNG proposals will achieve a net unit change of 0.02 habitat units (17.58%) and 0.11 increase in hedgerow units (45.72%). This will be achieved by creating 0.0072 ha of grassland sown with a meadow mixture along with 0.0259 ha of robust lawn mix suitable for camping site requirements. 5 small native trees will also be planted (although species have not been specified). The trading rules of the metric are satisfied as the same distinctiveness or better habitat will be achieved.*

*It is noted that the condition assessments have been undertaken within a sub-optimal period (November). However, given the type of habitat present (nutrient rich, amenity grassland), it is considered that extant habitats have not been undervalued.*

Conditions recommended in respect of Biodiversity Net Gains (BNG) and nesting birds.

Conclusion

*The areas of habitat creation or enhancement are not considered significant relative to existing habitats on site; therefore, in this case, it is not considered proportionate to require monitoring to be secured by legal agreement for 30 years. However, management will still be required to achieve the proposed biodiversity uplift and this is recommended to be secured by a condition. Please see recommendations below.*

15. Peak District National Park Authority Landscape: *Campsite is located in the slopes and valleys with woodland in the Derwent Valley and is nestled at the bottom of a wooded valley which continues on a meandering uphill slope to the NE, there are wooded banks directly to the North beyond which the site borders North Lees hall and to the South up to edge of Birley Lane. Much of the wood and the campsite itself along with Cattis-side Moor to the east is classed as open access land, this includes the area for proposed carparking and campervan plots.*

*Birley Lane is well used by walkers (as well as vehicles and bikes) as is the lane up to North Lees Hall which is PRoW WD81/7. There will be some visibility to the new area for campervans and cars from FP WD81/7, and there is good visibility through the mature tree trunks from Birley Lane directly to the South.*

*The topography and wooded nature of the landscape provide a high level of screening for the proposed development from the wider landscape and within the campsite itself stone walls and blocks of planting provide a good level of screening from northern viewpoints, there is a clump of trees to the east of the proposed campervan plots that isn't shown on the existing or proposed plans which helps to provide screening which in my view should be retained. The proposed bunding and hedges will contribute further to screening within the site and provide some mitigation for the views affected from Birley Lane and FP WD81/7. However I would question if they go far enough, as mentioned there will be visibility into the area from the north and south and the character of this land will change from an open grass field with scattered picnic benches and tents with a well concealed track passing through the middle, to a view of campervans and cars in the popular months of the year. I am in support of the scheme generally however would recommend a stronger planting scheme is considered to help to integrate the proposals into the landscape better which could include:*

- Denser planting buffers around the bunds of a width of 5m, the mix to include small trees and shrubs,*
- Understorey planting to the Southern edge of Tain Wood where it meets Birley Lane (from close to the site entrance up to just beyond the beginning of the stone wall.)*
- Additional scattered trees in the open space between the proposed carpark area and Tain wood this would integrate well with the area being used for picnic benches.*
- (Suitable species and densities are given in the Upland Landscape section of the Wooded Landscape Plan.)*

16. Natural England: No response received to date.

### **Representations**

17. A single response has been received from the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales District Group which raises concerns over the impact of the development on Access Land and the encroachment of parking across this land, with a request for the National Park Authority to be consulted on the above points.

### **Main Policies**

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, DS1, L1, RT3

Relevant Development Management Policies: DMC3, DMC11, DMC12, DMC13, DMR1, DMR2, DMT6

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

18. 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: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks by the public. When they carry out these purposes they also have the duty to; seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities in National Parks.

19. The NPPF is a material consideration and carries particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. Paragraph 189 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.
20. In the National Park, the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy (2011) and the Development Management Policies (DMP) (2019). The development plan provides a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. In this case, it is considered there are no significant conflicts between prevailing policies in the development plan and the NPPF.

### **Relevant Development Plan Policies**

#### **Core Strategy**

21. GSP1, GSP2: These policies jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage assets.
22. GSP3: Requires that particular attention is paid to the impact on the character and setting of buildings and that the design is in accord with the Authority's Design Guide and development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, including in respect of access, traffic levels and landscaping.
23. DS1: Development in the countryside which is acceptable includes recreation and tourism, and conversion or change of use for visitor accommodation.
24. L1: Development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and other valued characteristics.
25. RT3: Proposals for caravan and camping sites must conform to the principles set out under the policy criteria. Part C. states provision of improved facilities on existing caravan and camping sites must be of a scale appropriate to the site. Part D. states development that would improve the quality of existing sites, including improvements to access and landscaping, will be encouraged.

#### **Development Management Policies**

26. DMC3: Development that is acceptable in principle will be permitted provided it is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape and cultural heritage, with attention paid to siting, scale, impact on landscape features and the landscape setting which contribute to the valued character and appearance of the area. Attention will be paid to parking.
27. DMC11: Proposals should aim to achieve net gains in biodiversity and should ensure all reasonable measures are undertaken to avoid net loss in accordance with the ecological hierarchy outlined at (i) – (v).
28. DMC12: Development may be permitted where it is demonstrated the legislative provisions to protect Internationally designated or candidate sites, or European Protected Species, can be fully met.

- 29. DMC13: Planning applications should provide sufficient information to enable their impact on trees to be properly considered in accordance with 'BS 5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations' or equivalent. Development should incorporate existing trees, hedgerows or other landscape features within the site layout.
- 30. DMR1: The development of a new touring camping or caravan site, or small extension to an existing site, will not be permitted unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable, and it does not dominate its surroundings.
- 31. DMR2: Where the development of a touring camping or caravan site is acceptable, its use will be restricted to no more than 28 days per calendar year by any one person.
- 32. DMT6: New or enlarged car parks will not be permitted unless there is a clear, demonstrable need. Where planning permission is required, additional parking should be of a limited nature, whilst being appropriate to the size of development and accounting for its location and visual impact.

## **Assessment**

### **Principle & landscape impact**

- 33. Policy RT3 states that provision of improved facilities on existing caravan and camping sites must be of a scale appropriate to the site itself.
- 34. Policy DMR1 states small extensions to existing touring camping and caravan sites will not be permitted unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact on neighbouring uses are acceptable and it does not dominate its surroundings.
- 35. The application proposes 3 new campervan spaces within the existing North Lees campsite, and provision of 11 additional car parking spaces. An existing campervan space would be repositioned. Spaces would have grass grid surfacing.
- 36. The campsite was established in order to reduce camping pressure in the surrounding area, and the application states the latest proposals seek to address increased demand for campervans on the site. In this respect, it is recognised there is an increasing presence of campervans parking overnight along the edge of the highway in the local vicinity and outside of the campsite. Whilst the increase in campervan parking spaces is limited, the proposal would nonetheless offer a potential benefit in offering an alternative location for campervans to stay, in a location that is designated for camping and is better contained and less harmful to the wider landscape.
- 37. The additional car parking and campervan spaces would be provided within the confines of the existing campsite and the impact within that setting is considered to be acceptable and the scale proportionate to the campsite.
- 38. The proposed landscaping including re-located bunds and use of grass grid surfacing would help the spaces to integrate well within the site.
- 39. Whilst the campsite is well established, initial concerns were raised by officers and the Authority's landscape officer regarding the increase in vehicle and campervan parking within the site which could lead to an urbanising effect in the countryside, with particular concern raised regarding the thinning of the woodland edge of the campsite to the south and east of the campsite along Birley Lane, particularly during winter months.

40. The campsite is within the 'Slopes and Valleys with Woodland' area of the 'Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe'. This area is typically a steeply sloping and undulating topography below the gritstone edge of Stanage. It has patches of acid grassland and bracken, with irregular blocks of semi-natural and secondary woodland. Typically there are open glades comprising small fields enclosed by gritstone walls in this character area, though not in the immediate vicinity of the site itself.
41. Landscaping surrounding the campsite includes a mix of mature tree planting which provides considerable screening of the site within the wider landscape, particularly during the summer months. However, during the visit to site in early Spring there were clear views into the site from Birley Lane from the south and east, when deciduous tree species were not in leaf. It is also unclear if there has been a reduction in understorey planting over the years.
42. Views along the PRoW to the north west would largely be of the landscaped edge of the campsite along the north / north west boundary, with views into the site disrupted by the level change.
43. To address concerns regarding the urbanising impact of the new campervan and car parking spaces, the applicant has submitted amended plans which propose a more comprehensive landscaping scheme to the site.
44. Internally within the campsite, it is now proposed to move the existing 3m wide by 0.5m bunds either side of the track and position these north and south of the campervan and parking bays. The existing mature native hedges on top of those bunds will be carefully relocated to sit on top of the southern bund in order to provide a more instant screening to the south due to the height and maturity of that hedging. New hedging of similar species would be planted along the bund to the north. Holly and hazel feathered whips are proposed along the south edge of the parking spaces to further enclose the spaces, whilst existing trees to the north east end of the campervan spaces would screen the area from the wider campsite to the north east.
45. Meanwhile, the application proposes the planting of understorey vegetation within the woodland edge to the south between the campsite and Birley Lane, comprising a total of 43 holly feathered whips. The Landscape Strategy confirms species within the Slopes and Valleys with Woodland Landscape Character Type includes ancient semi-natural woodland usually with a mixture of species which include holly. The use of holly is therefore appropriate to the local landscape character and would have the benefit of being an evergreen species, thereby helping to screen the campsite during the winter months when other vegetation thins. The quantum of holly planting that is proposed would offer a significant screening benefit.
46. The proposed car parking and campervan pitches would therefore not only be an appropriate scale and well accommodated within the landscape setting as required by RT3 and DMR1, but would also include significant improvements to landscaping which RT3.D indicates will be encouraged. The screening afforded by evergreen species in the winter months would deliver a significant benefit to the local landscape and the development therefore offers an opportunity to enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park, as encouraged by Policy GSP2.A, whilst also supporting National Park purposes in accordance with Policy GSP1.
47. Officers are therefore satisfied the proposals are of a small scale appropriate to the size of the existing campsite, and that the development is acceptable in terms of its scale, siting and impact on the wider landscape setting, thereby complying with Policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, RT3, DMC3 and DMR1.

48. The additional campervan spaces will be subject to a condition restricting their occupation to no more than 28 days by any one person, as required by Policy DMR2.

### Ecology

49. The application is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gains (BNG) Assessment which confirms that the proposed development would achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gains within the site boundary. The Authority's ecologist has confirmed management to achieve the proposed uplift will need to be secured by condition.
50. Notwithstanding the above, the application has been subject to minor amendments to allow sufficient manoeuvring space for the campervans and cars accessing the proposed spaces. This is a minor change which is not considered to be material, however does result in a change to the overall BNG calculations. The final updated report is awaited as are comments from the Authority's ecologist, which will be provided verbally at the committee meeting.

### Residential Amenity

51. Due to the nature of the existing site, small scale of the proposed development and the intervening distance and landscaping (both existing and proposed) between the site and nearest neighbouring properties, it is not considered the development would harm the residential amenity of those properties. The development complies with Policies GSP3, RT3, DMC3 and DMR1.A in this respect.

### Access

52. A response from the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales District Group which raises concerns over the impact of the development on Access Land and the encroachment of parking across this land, with a request for the National Park Authority to be consulted on the above points.
53. The Authority's Access and Rights of Way (ARoW) officer has been consulted and has responded that whilst the site is Access Land, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Access Land that is covered by buildings is viewed as 'excepted land' and for the purposes of that view, this includes any tent, caravan or other temporary / moveable structure. The public right of access is not exercisable in such areas, however as the proposal would provide for campervans in any area previously available for camping, the ARoW officer considers there to be no material change in the availability or otherwise of access to this area.
54. Means of enhancing access to the woodland around the campsite are being looked at separately by the Authority, and are not directly relevant for the purposes of this application.
55. The response of the Parish Council is noted in respect of access / exit signage and the applicant has agreed to mark low-key signage on exit of the site on the plan.

### Conclusion

56. The proposed car parking and campervan spaces are of a scale appropriate to the size of the existing campsite. The layout and accompanying landscaping proposals would ensure the development is acceptable in terms of its siting and impact on the wider landscape setting in accordance with Policies GSP1, GSP3, L1, RT3, DMC3 and DMR1.

57. The extent of landscaping proposed to the woodland edge to North Lees Campsite would offer a significant enhancement to the screening of the both the proposed development and the existing campsite as a whole when viewed within the local landscape along Birley Lane. Such enhancements are encouraged by Policies GSP2 A and RT3 C.
58. The development would not harm the amenity of neighbouring properties, trees or highway safety and has demonstrated it can achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gains.
59. 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**

60. Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.
61. List of Background Papers (not previously published)
62. Nil
63. Report Author: Hannah Freer, Senior Planner