The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2015

by Jason Whitfield BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 02 February 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/M0933/W/15/3032572
Grange over Sands Golf Club, Meathop Road, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6QX

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr John Bolton against the decision of South Lakeland District Council.
- The application Ref SL/2014/0516, dated 19 May 2014, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2015.
- The development proposed is the siting of 6 holiday chalets on stone hard standing, laying of slate drive and parking, plus installation of wastewater treatment plant and outfall pipe.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application was submitted in outline, with only access and layout to be determined at this stage. I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site comprises the south-western corner of Grange over Sands golf course, close to the existing club house and associated buildings on Meathop Road. Lindal Road sits high above the site to the west due to the steep valley side with an intervening woodland belt of around 25m in depth. Low level vegetation forms the southern boundary on Meathrop Road. The site lies close to the Grange Conservation Area.

5. The site is not located within an area of any specific landscape designation. It is, however, located within an area identified in the Landscape Character Guidance[1] (LCG) as Broad Valley. The landscape is generally a wide and deep valley with steep valley sides and an open flood plain. There is a pattern of rural farmland with pockets of scrub, woodland and coniferous plantations.

[1] Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit: Supporting Cumbria's Local Development Frameworks 2011

Hedges and stone walls form a matrix pattern whilst roads and railway lines follow the contours of the valley, as is the case with Lindal Road.

6. The site is close to the built up area of Grange-over-Sands. The Cumbrian Grand Hotel sits above the site on Lindal Road with residential properties on Hazelwood Terrace and Berisdale Terrace nearby. As a result, the appeal site lies in area where the change of the landscape from the built form of the Grange Conservation Area into the Broad Valley landscape identified in the LCG is at its most apparent.

7. Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect and enhance the diverse character and local distinctiveness of the Cartmel Peninsula area. Policy CS8.2 of the Core Strategy states the proposal should be informed by and sympathetic to the guidance set out in the LCG and that development should protect, conserve and where possible, enhance landscapes. The LCG makes clear that the Broad Valley landscape will be conserved and enhanced. It notes that developments for holiday homes can be accommodated within the landscape, providing the visual impact is minimised and high standards of design are achieved.

8. The golf course lies in contrast to the prevailing character of the wider landscape, having introduced an irregular pattern of buildings, contours and linear tree belts. However, the appeal site is within a highly sensitive location on the edge of the valley, close to the urban area and on the periphery of the conservation area.

9. I note that there is existing woodland between the site and Lindal Road and that the planting on the golf course is increasingly maturing. I also note that the siting and design of the scheme is a matter of future consideration at reserved matters stage, and that the chalets are intended to be single storey. The proposal would, however, be visible in public views from Lindal Road and Meathop Road through gaps in the existing woodland, becoming more apparent in the winter months when tree cover is at its lowest. Moreover, the cabins would be sited on an area of raised ground and the proposals would appear intrusive within views across the golf course and the valley beyond as Lindal Road is significantly higher than the appeal site.

10. The countryside beyond the golf course is largely unfettered by buildings. Whilst the chalets would be sited in a linear pattern following the contours of the valley, the proposals would nevertheless introduce a dense cluster of built form. As a result, the proposals would appear as jarring and discordant features within the landscape. This would be in stark contrast to the prevailing open and unfettered character and appearance of the landscape. Consequently, the proposed chalets would fail to conserve the prevailing landscape character and would fail to preserve the setting of the Grange Conservation Area.

11. I find therefore, that the proposals would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with the design and landscape character aims of policies CS1.1, CS4. CS7.6 and CS8.2 of the Core Strategy[2] and saved policy T6 of the Local Plan[3].

[2] South Lakeland Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2010
[3] South Lakeland Local Plan 2006 and Alterations: Final Composite Plan March 2007

Other Matters

12. The appeal site lies within Flood Zone 3a. Paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that development in areas at risk from flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Paragraph 101 of the Framework goes on to advise that a sequential, risk-based approach must be taken that steers development towards areas of lower risk. The Framework requires a Sequential Test to be applied to all development in high risk areas. Only where a development passes the Sequential Test should the Exception Test be considered.

13. It is apparent on the basis of the evidence before me that the Sequential Test has not been met. Whilst the Environment Agency has advised that the site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) demonstrates that the proposal is 'appropriate development' and that it would pass the first part of the Exception Test, as the Sequential Test has not been met, the proposal would fail to address flood risk in line with the approach set out in the Framework. However, given my findings on the main issue above, this failure does not lead me to any different overall conclusion.

14. The proposal would make a modest contribution towards the availability of holiday accommodation in the area and I acknowledge the benefits to tourism that would bring. I also note that the appellant contends that the proposal is necessary to secure the future of the golf club and continue providing a valuable facility for the community. However, these factors do not outweigh my concerns about the harm to the character and appearance of the area.

15. I note that the proposal would be sited a considerable distance from the closest residential properties and would not therefore have a significant harmful effect on the living conditions of nearby residents with regard to privacy or noise and disturbance. Moreover, I have noted the concerns of local residents over the proposed access and the effect on existing parking arrangements on Meathop Road. However, I agree with the main parties that highway safety would not be compromised. Nevertheless the absence of harm in respect of these factors does not outweigh the harm arising from flood risk.

Conclusions

16. For the reasons given above, and having considered all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jason Whitfield

INSPECTOR