
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 October 2016

by Helen Cassini BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/H0928/W/16/3154185
Deep Ghyll, Plumpton, Cumbria CA11 9PF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr M. Elliott against the decision of Eden District Council.
 - The application Ref 15/0709, dated 31 July 2015, was refused by notice dated 20 January 2016.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as a 'Change of Use – Siting of 16no. Holiday Caravans'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Although the appellant has invited me to make an award of costs against the Council, no formal application has been made and I am not minded to instigate one.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development is justified in its rural location and if not, whether there are material considerations to indicate the proposal is otherwise acceptable in principle.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located approximately 600 metres from the settlement of Plumpton, which is defined as a Local Service Centre. The proposed development would be sited within the extensive grounds of the dwelling to the east known as Deep Ghyll and within an area of grazing pasture which is also within the ownership of Deep Ghyll.
 5. The appellant contends that Deep Ghyll is located within a group of seven dwellings located to the east of Plumpton. It was evident from my site visit that a number of dwellings and agricultural units are located along the B6413 road. Nevertheless, due to the separation distance of at least 100 metres between Deep Ghyll and the next property I do not consider that the appeal site forms part of a cohesive group. In addition, the proposal includes the retention of one of the caravans for warden accommodation. The need for such a role on the site demonstrates that the proposal would be separate from the main dwelling and further adds to the sense that the site is remote. I therefore consider that, due to the distance from the main settlement of
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Plumpton and the relatively isolated location, the proposal is located within open countryside.

6. I note that the appellant has referred to a previous appeal decision¹. This appeal related to the proposed change of use of agricultural land to a static holiday caravan park for 7 holiday homes within Appleby-in-Westmorland. I do not have detailed evidence before me in relation to the history of the planning application which relates to the decision. Nonetheless, I am minded to concur with the view of the Inspector who found that that it is not the function of the planning system to inhibit competition.
7. Notwithstanding my view with regards to competition, paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, amongst other things, economic growth in rural areas should be supported where identified needs are not being met by existing facilities. However the appellant has failed to provide any substantive evidence with regards to the need for the proposed caravan site. I note the correspondence from Cumbria Tourism regarding the need for holiday accommodation in the Eden locality, although this does not confirm the specific need for the proposal.
8. Furthermore paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Framework sets out 3 inter-linked dimensions and roles of sustainable development; social, economic and environmental. In addition paragraph 17 states that a core principle of the Framework is that patterns of growth should be actively managed so as to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. In this regard, the appellant contends that the proposal would have good access to alternative transport modes and has provided detailed information with regard to bus services to the larger settlements of Carlisle and Penrith.
9. I accept that there would be an acceptable level of bus services to these settlements from Plumpton, which would provide access to shops, tourist and leisure facilities and rail services. However, access to the bus services would be via a relatively busy road with no street lighting or roadside footpaths for a considerable distance. Accordingly these factors make it likely that walking and cycling to Plumpton would be inaccessible or unattractive to many people, for example people with disabilities and parents with pushchairs and young children. I therefore consider that the relatively remote location of the appeal site would be far more likely to encourage a general reliance on the private car rather than buses, walking and cycling, particularly during poor weather conditions, and on days of early darkness in the winter months.
10. Tourist facilities including the Carlisle Settle railway, the Roman Fort of Voreda, Wan Fell and Lazonby Fell are only situated a few miles from the appeal site. However, due to the number of proposed caravans, and the relative inaccessibility to public transport provision, the development has the potential to generate a substantial number of additional traffic movements via the private car. Therefore allowing the development in an isolated rural location would increase the number of unsustainable journeys.
11. In economic terms, I note that the appellant wishes to diversify the use of the land to the holiday caravans in order to continue their breeding of Hebridean sheep. The proposal would provide some local construction jobs, albeit temporarily. I also acknowledge that the proposal would provide employment

¹ Appeal reference APP/HO928/A/11/2151464

for a warden on site, cleaning staff and a gardening contractor. Nevertheless, these economic benefits would be very limited in scale.

12. The social dimension seeks to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. As the proposal is for 16 holiday caravans it could create additional demands for various local services. I accept that a cafe and aquatics centre is located a short distance away and a garden centre is also located within Plumpton. However, there are limited other facilities and services that the proposal could actively support. In addition, whilst the appellant intends to make the caravans available to let all year, usage will experience a degree of seasonal fluctuation. Accordingly, I find that the level of contribution in support of local services would be limited, particularly during the winter months.
13. Due to the level of existing mature vegetation and trees within the wooded ghyll, I concur with the view of the Council that the site is relatively well screened from the road and the effect on the surrounding landscape would be minimal. Furthermore, I accept that the proposed timber clad design would be appropriate in terms of the context of the site.
14. The main view of the site would be from the highway to the east of the site. Current views are of one of the existing small scale agricultural buildings which were evident at the time of my site visit. Whilst I note that the proposal does not intend to make use of the existing agricultural buildings, it is proposed to site one of the caravans on the footprint of the existing building. Due to the proposed design and modest scale of the unit, which would be less than that of the current building, I do not find an increased level of visual harm would result.
15. The Council referred to Policy NE1 of the Eden District Council Local Plan 1996 in their decision notice. This policy seeks to ensure that the siting of development within the countryside, which is outside of settlements, minimises visual impact and proposed materials are appropriate to the location. Given my findings in terms of visual impact and design, I do not find that the proposal compromises this policy.
16. Despite my findings in relation to the provision of limited economic and social benefits and lack of visual harm, in the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, the proposed development is not justified in its rural location. I therefore find that the proposal is contrary to Policies CS12, CS14 and CS15 of the Eden District Council Core Strategy 2010. When taken together these policies seek, amongst other things, to ensure that new tourism development is located within sustainable locations. The location of the proposed development would be contrary to paragraph 28 of the Framework which seeks to support the expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate, sustainable locations.

Other Matters

17. The concern raised regarding the handling of the application by the Council has been acknowledged. However, this is a procedural issue which does not concern the planning merits of the case. Accordingly, I have not attached any weight to this matter.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Helen Cassini

INSPECTOR