



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 April 2019

by David Storrie DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/A2335/W/19/3220796

Castle View Caravan Park, Borwick Road, Capernwray, Carnforth, LA6 1AQ

- 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 J McCarthy, McCarthy Caravans against the decision of Lancaster City Council.
 - The application Ref 18/01342/CU, dated 18 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is the change of use of agricultural land into caravan sales area, including laying of hardstanding, alterations to land levels and erection of retaining walls.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. I have taken the description of the proposed development from the appeal form as this more accurately describes the development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are whether the proposed development is justified with specific regard to sustainability, and, the effect on the character and appearance of the landscape and amenity of the area.

Reasons

Sustainability

4. The appeal site comprises part of a larger field at the south-west corner adjacent to the caravan site and adjacent to the main access road that serves the site, close to the site's junction with Borwick Road. This field falls outside the caravan site. The boundary between the two sites is made up of a low stone wall with a hedge of approximately 2 metres behind it.
5. The adjacent caravan site was previously two separate sites that have now amalgamated and has implemented planning permissions for some 316 static caravan pitches for holiday use. Given that it has been established on the site for many years, the use has been considered sustainable by the local planning authority where such uses have been accepted in rural areas in the district. I have no reason to disagree with this view.

6. The appeal proposal would create an area to display 8no. caravans that would be available to rent or purchase. The appellant has said that these would only be for existing occupiers wishing to upgrade or renew their existing caravans although also says that non-residents expressing an interest to purchase and become a resident of the site would not be excluded. Based upon the appellant's statement in support of the appeal, from their experience, caravan owners are said to upgrade their caravans between 5-10 years.
7. The siting has been chosen because it would be close to the existing site office and away from existing residents caravans. Whilst I can see some administrative advantage in this, considering that the primary aim is to allow viewing by existing residents, and that the timescale between upgrades appears significant, I do not see it essential for it to be close to the site office. During my site visit I walked around the site and saw that a number of caravans were presented for sale in an area identified as *Area 1* on the Location Plan to the north-west of the appeal site and inside the caravan site. It was unclear as to whether these were available to residents only.
8. If the display of caravans was for existing residents only then I would consider this sustainable as the residents are already there and users of the site. However, if it were available for general sales, it would attract people not associated with the site. I consider that general sales would not be a sustainable use of this site. I have considered whether this could be controlled by way of a planning condition but have concerns about the enforceability of such a condition.
9. Without adequate controls and given the close proximity of the proposed sales area to the site entrance, I consider that it could easily be visited by non-residents. Such general sales activity would be inconsistent with the recreational use of the existing caravan site and would not be sustainable in this rural location. This would be in conflict with the aims of the Lancaster Local Plan Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) (2014) Policies DM7 and DM20 that, amongst other things, support sustainable economic development where it supports rural vitality and seek to minimise the need to travel by the private car. It would also be at odds with sections 6 and 9 of the Framework that, whilst being supportive of tourism and recreation in rural areas, seek to ensure development is as sustainable as practicable. I consider that the potential for uncontrolled general sales with associated travel would conflict with this.

Character, appearance and amenity

10. Although the development would be on land owned by the appellant it does not form part of the adjacent caravan site. It would represent an incursion into open countryside of an area of some 29.6m deep and some 25m wide. I do not consider this to be insignificant in scale. The works necessary to create the sales area would involve removal of part of the existing low stone wall and hedge that currently form the boundary with the field and the caravan site. The land levels rise up from the caravan site and engineering operations would be necessary to provide a level area for the siting of the caravans. The proposal involves the construction of a tiered stone wall framing the side and rear boundary of the site with landscaping on the outer side of the walls and a fence beyond that. The site would accommodate 8no. caravans lined up in two banks of four.

11. Views into the field are limited to those from Borwick Road which rises up to the south-east of the site whilst the existing caravan park is well screened and contained by existing landscaping. Whilst landscaping could assist in screening the boundary of the appeal site over time, I consider that the incursion of the caravan sales area in the form and scale proposed would result in an incongruous extension into open countryside where the resultant mitigation would present an awkward juncture between open countryside and the caravan site that would have an adverse impact on the landscape form in this location. The fact that the field is not in use for agricultural purposes does not diminish the harm I have identified. Neither does the fact that the area is not identified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other such recognised status of high landscape value as the Framework recognises the intrinsic beauty of the countryside for its own sake at paragraph 170 b).
12. On the issue of amenity, the appellant says the field is being used for dog walking by residents of the caravan park and for occasional/casual grazing by horses from the onsite stables. Given the large scale of the field that would remain for these activities, I do not consider that the proposed development would significantly impact upon amenity in the area.
13. Notwithstanding my view on amenity, it does not outweigh the harm I have identified with regard to the character and appearance of this rural area. As a consequence, I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with DPD Policies DM28 and DM35 that, amongst other things, seek to resist proposals that would harm the landscape quality of an area and not contribute positively to the identity and character of the area through good design. It would also fail to respect advice in Sections 12 and 15 of the Framework that, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development is visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The planning balance and conclusion

14. I am not convinced that the proposed use can be adequately limited to sales to existing residents of the caravan site by way of a planning condition. Furthermore, the proposed development would effectively extend the existing caravan park into open countryside. Both would result in unacceptable harm that I have identified.
15. For reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

David Storrie

INSPECTOR