



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2019

by C Coyne BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31st January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/19/3238360

Jug and Glass Inn, Ashbourne Road, Hartington SK17 0BA

- 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 Ms V Bonsall against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref NP/DDD/0619/0687, dated 26 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is use of land as touring caravan site with 10 pitches.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has raised an issue in relation to the apparent mistaken reference to Policy RT2 in the officer's report to the planning committee. The Authority have confirmed that this was indeed a typographical error on their part and that this should have referred to Policy RT3. Consequently, I have assessed this appeal on the basis that the relevant policy is Policy RT3 which was in any event referred to in the main body of the officer's committee report.
3. The appellant has also suggested that the decision made by the National Park Authority was fundamentally flawed in relation to the nature of the extant tree planting (i.e. that it was a hedgerow) and that the decision related primarily to the planting and not to the proposed caravan site. However, having read the officer's committee report and the Authority's appeal statement, I am satisfied that the officers were concerned with the potential adverse impact on the landscape of both the proposed caravan site and the extant trees/shelter belt that was clearly planted with the sole purpose of screening the proposal and I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Peak District National Park and its landscape.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a rectangular grassed area located south west of the Jug and Glass Inn, a public house/restaurant with bed and breakfast accommodation which is located adjacent to the A515 and set within the Peak District National Park (PDNP). On three sides the site is bounded by a dense strip of recently

- planted saplings. On the fourth (southern) boundary several sapling trees have also been planted, however this planting is not as dense as that on the other three sides. The land encompassing the site and the public house (to the west of the A515) is agricultural land which contributes to the open character of the surrounding landscape.
6. The fact that the appeal site is located within a national park means that the landscape in this area is afforded the highest level of protection due to its nationally significant status and high vulnerability to change. Consequently, being mindful of paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) I have attached great weight to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park and its landscape.
 7. The proposed development would create a new touring caravan site with capacity for ten pitches. Criterion A of Policy RT3 of the PDNP Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 (CS) supports the provision of small-scale touring caravan sites 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.
 8. Both parties appear to agree that the proposal would be classed as being small-scale and not adversely affect living conditions. It is also obvious that the site would have appropriate access to the road network. In relation to whether the site would be well-screened, both parties appear to agree that given the existing tree planting on site the proposal would eventually be screened once the saplings had grown to a sufficient height. However, the Authority has raised concerns in relation to the negative impact on the open character of the landscape that both the proposal and the trees that have been planted in order to screen it from view would potentially have.
 9. The appeal site is within the Limestone Plateau Pastures character area which the Peak District Landscape Character Assessment 2009 (LCA) describes as '*an upland pastoral landscape with a regular pattern of straight roads and small to medium sized rectangular fields bounded by limestone walls with tree cover mostly limited to occasional tree groups, or small shelter belts, allowing wide views to the surrounding higher ground.*' The LCA also identifies one of the key characteristics of this area as being its open views to the surrounding higher ground.
 10. Due to its scale and location, the proposal would obstruct the open views from the area surrounding the Jug and Glass to the upland pastoral landscape beyond it to the southwest. Consequently, given the open nature of the landscape in this area and the prominent location of the appeal site within it, I consider that the proposal would have an adverse visual impact particularly when viewed from the public house, its grounds and the A515 thereby causing harm to the character and appearance of the area in conflict with Policy L1 of the CS.
 11. I note the appellant's point that the proposal would be well screened by the existing dense belt of planting on site which comprises native tree species and that this would eventually be thinned to create a broadleaf woodland similar to others in the National Park. However, based on what I have seen and read it is apparent that even though the U-shaped band of trees has been planted specifically to screen the proposal and increase local biodiversity, it is (by

virtue of its unusual shape) at odds with the open character of the local landscape which predominately contains smaller and more linear shelter belts than what the appellant has planted.

12. I also note the appellant's points that: the extant tree planting is not alien to the landscape either by its form or nature; that it is not a hedgerow; that its high density was deliberate to protect young trees and increase biodiversity; that whilst the U-shape may not be the most common arrangement; it is not unique; when viewed in combination with the other planting it forms a more rectangular block pattern of planting which is the most common arrangement; and that once the planting has matured it will blend in with the existing landscape. However, from what I observed on my site visit and based on the evidence before me, it is clear to me that neither a U-shaped or indeed a rectangular block of native tree planting represent a common form of shelter belt in this part of the National Park. In fact, the local area is characterised as an open pastoral landscape which, in my view would be interrupted by either or both these types/shapes of shelter-belt particularly one of the scale that the appellant has planted.
13. Furthermore, the fact that the currently dense planting would be subject to future thinning means that it would as a result be potentially less effective and not provide adequate future screening of the proposed caravan site. In any event the fact that the proposed caravan site would potentially be partially screened from view would not be of sufficient weight to outweigh the harm to the landscape I have identified above to which I must attach great weight.
14. I also acknowledge that the proposal would be classed as small-scale. However, based on the evidence before me it would not be located in an area where there are few existing touring caravan sites. Accordingly, the proposed development would not comply with criterion A of Policy RT3.
15. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be unduly prominent within the landscape failing to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the PDNP thereby harming the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with Policies GSP3; L1; and RT3 of the CS (adopted October 2011) and also with Policies DMC3 and DMR1 of the PDNP Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (adopted May 2019) which seek to respect the character of the area, conserve and enhance valued landscape character, enhance the visual amenity of the landscape and support appropriate camping and caravanning development, amongst other considerations. It would also conflict with paragraph 172 of the Framework which aims to conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty within National Parks. There would also be a conflict with the first statutory purpose of National Parks to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Other Matters

16. I note the appellant's point that the appeal site is level and well drained and that the proposed touring caravan site would rely on existing facilities and services available at the inn meaning that no operational development would be required. However, as the Authority has not raised any concerns in relation to this matter and as I am dismissing the appeal on other substantive grounds, I have not pursued it further.

17. In support of the proposal the appellant has also stated that it would provide an additional income stream that would help sustain the adjacent public house/restaurant thereby supporting a community asset. However, no substantive evidence has been provided by the appellant to adequately demonstrate this. In any event, any economic benefit that the proposal may provide would not be of sufficient weight to outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the National Park and its landscape that I have identified above.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Coyne

INSPECTOR