



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 May 2020

by D M Young JP BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI MIHE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/20/3246671

Lower Greenfields Caravan Site, Milford Lane, Alport, Bakewell, Derbyshire DE45 1LJ.

- 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 Glyn Hind against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref NP/DDD/0919/1001, dated 22 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is a change of use to allow use of field for the siting of up to 15 touring caravans.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. To provide greater clarity, I have amended the description of development from that given on the Application and Appeal Forms.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on, firstly, the character and appearance of the Peak District National Park and, secondly, highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is a 0.45 hectares agricultural field located adjacent to Lower Greenfield Caravan site. It occupies an isolated and elevated position to the south-east of Youlgreave and is visible over a wide area. The site is accessed principally from Youlgreave via Coach Road with a secondary access available from Hollow Farm. The proposal seeks permission for a change of use to allow the stationing of touring caravans between 1 March to 31 October.
5. The appeal site is within the Peak District National Park. The statutory purpose of a National Park is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) places great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks.

6. At a local level, Policy RT3 of the "*Peak District National Park Authority Core Strategy 2011*" (the CS) states that small caravan sites will be permitted, particularly 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. In a similar vein, Policy DMR1 of the "*Peak District National Park Development Management Policies 2019*" (the DMP) states that the development of a new touring 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. CS Policy L1 and DMP Policy DMC3 deal principally with landscape matters and collectively seek to ensure that development conserves or enhances valued landscapes.
7. In assessing compliance with the Development Plan a judgement needs to be reached as to whether the proposal is 'small' for the purposes of policies RT3 and DMR1. The Authority's Officer Report notes that the proposal would accommodate 15 pitches roughly doubling the size of the existing caravan park. The Appellant argues that the current site is very small in scale and would remain so even with the extra caravans. The supporting text to Policy RT3 sets out that '*sites up to 30 pitches are more likely to be acceptable, although this may be too large in many circumstances.*' Based on the foregoing guidance, I am satisfied that 15 pitches or a total of 29 would fall within the remit of the aforementioned policies.
8. The determinative issue is therefore whether the development would accord with the landscape components of Policies RT3 and DMR1. The "*Peak District Landscape Character Assessment 7: Derwent Valley 2009*" places the site in the 'Valley Farmlands with Villages' character type which comprises an attractive rolling pastoral landscape with open fields, isolated farmsteads and copses and some larger wooded areas. As I saw when I visited the area, the existing caravan site and appeal site are visible from wide-ranging vantage points, including from Mawstone Lane on the southern edge of Youlgreave and the Rights of Way network to the west which includes the popular Limestone Way.
9. As with the existing site, there can be little doubt that the stationing of large and often prominently coloured vehicles would completely change the character of the land. Although the caravans would be removed over the winter months, they would be present during those months of the year when greater numbers of people would be visiting and enjoying the National Park for its natural and scenic beauty.
10. Whilst I note the Appellant's intention to '*plant trees and shrubs to enhance the site and provide some screening*', I have not been provided with a plan and therefore do not know what form the landscaping would take. In any event, although landscaping might assist in softening the visual impact of the development, this would inevitably take some years to reach sufficient maturity to be of benefit and in the intervening years the caravans would represent a grievous, man-made intrusion into a protected landscape. I also share the Authority's concerns about how the site could be landscaped in a manner that would offer adequate screening from the multitude of visual receptors in the area.

11. I acknowledge that the Appellant would be entitled to use the appeal site for camping under the permitted development regime for up to 28 days a year. However, tents by virtue of their size, colour and lack of permanence are not in any way comparable to touring caravans. Accordingly, the existence of permitted development rights over the land adds very limited weight in favour of the appeal.
12. Overall, I conclude that the development would not conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Peak District National Park. It would thus conflict with CS Policies RT3 and L1, DMP Policies DMR1 and DMC3 and Section 15 of the Framework.

Highway Safety

13. There is some ambiguity in the Appellant's submissions regarding the issue of access. Despite an agreement to use the access through Hollow Farm it appears that the principle means of access to the site would be via Coach Road which is gated at its junction with Mawstone Lane and carries the line of a Public Right of Way. The Appellant states that this route has been used for over 20 years with no apparent problems. The Highway Authority has confirmed that Coach Road is Public Highway. On that basis and in the absence of any substantial evidence to the contrary, I am satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated a means of access to the site.
14. Whilst I acknowledge the substandard nature of Coach Road as well as its popularity with pedestrians, I have not been made aware of any accidents despite its use in connection with the existing caravan park. From my observations, any vehicles using Coach Road, whether towing or not, are likely to do so with extreme caution and are likely to be familiar with its limitations. In any event, irrespective of its deficiencies, the number of additional traffic movements is likely to be very small. I am therefore satisfied that the development would not materially harm highway safety. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with DMP Policy DMT5 C). Whilst the Authority's second reason for refusal cites conflict with Policy DMT3, I do not consider this policy relevant to the appeal scheme.

Other Matters

15. I have noted the support from Youlgreave Parish Council and accept that the development would support tourism in the National Park as well as offering some support for local businesses. These objectives garner explicit support from the Framework and Chapter 5 of the DMP.
16. The Authority's third reason for refusal cites conflict with the carbon reduction aims of Policy CC1. Whilst the development might generate a small number of additional traffic movements, that in itself is not a reasonable reason to reject the development. In any event, I am satisfied that the environmental impact of additional movements could be offset by a suitable landscaping scheme.

Conclusions

17. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that this application is determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I have identified landscape harm to the National Park contrary to CS Policies RT3 and L1, DMP Policies DMR1 and

DMC3 and Section 15 of the Framework. This harm would not be outweighed by the economic benefits of the scheme.

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

D. M. Young

Inspector