



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2020

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0928/W/20/3246844

Williams Wood, Morland, Penrith CA10 3BJ

- 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 Frederick Markham against the decision of Eden District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0807, dated 28 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is creation of 'glamping' cabin.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the rural character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a small parcel of land planted with immature trees. It is in an elevated position in the countryside, a little less than 1km away from Morland. Access is from the C3056 Morland to Cliburn road, via an agricultural field gate and across the intervening field. The surrounding area is a sparsely and sporadically developed undulating rural landscape, with scattered traditional dwellings and farmsteads. There is a public right of way to the west of the site.
4. The proposed glamping cabin would be a relatively modest single storey building finished in oak cladding with a larch shingle roof and a long veranda. There would be a large car parking and manoeuvring area adjacent to the building. The long access track would be fenced out from the field and the vehicular access and parking areas would be surfaced with blue slate chippings. There would be alterations to the highway access to create visibility splays and a large surfaced entrance area, with new gateways set back from the road providing access to the cabin and the neighbouring field.
5. The Council's locational development strategy is based on the hierarchy of settlements within the district. Policy LS1 of the Eden Local Plan 2014-2032 Adopted October 2018 (the LP) sets out that in rural areas outside of the settlements, development will be restricted to specific circumstances including where proposals accord with other policies in the LP. This allows for development in the countryside where this would be an asset to the district.

6. Policy EC4 of the LP supports small-scale tourism development consisting of temporary accommodation such as caravan, camping and chalet sites provided they meet a number of criteria. These are that the site is adequately screened, that it avoids unacceptable adverse impacts on the local road network, and that the development is capable of being removed without damage or material change to the land on which it is sited.
7. The LP does not specifically mention glamping sites and there is no definition of glamping in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, the concept of glamping is derived from 'glamorous' and 'camping' and it therefore relates to relatively luxurious and well-appointed camping accommodation. Consequently, policies in the Framework and the development plan that relate to tourism and camping are relevant to the proposal.
8. The cabin would be located where the long hill that rises from Morland gives way to a wide plateau. By virtue of its elevated location and the surrounding topography, there are views from the appeal site across the landscape, including towards the nearby Eddy House, Morland and further afield to the North Pennines. The cabin would be screened in part by trees. However, wide swathes through the site have not been planted with trees and they allow more direct views in and out of the site. By virtue of its relatively small scale, the cabin would not be particularly prominent in distant views across the landscape. Nevertheless, it would be visible from closer viewpoints.
9. The proposed access arrangements, including the track, enlarged road entrance and increased visibility splays, would cumulatively add to the visual impact in this location. Moreover, as a result of artificial illumination, including from the extensive glazing to the south facing elevation and car headlights, the proposal would be conspicuous during the hours of darkness and times of year when trees are not fully in leaf. Consequently, the proposal would be visually obtrusive when seen from locations in the surrounding area including the nearby footpath, road and scattered properties.
10. By virtue of its high quality design, the cabin would be in keeping with the character and appearance of tourism development elsewhere. However, the cabin would be an isolated feature in an elevated and prominent position in the rural landscape. It would not be seen in the context of similar development elsewhere. It would be an incongruous feature that would not relate well to traditional rural development in the area. Consequently, it would be a discordant feature that would not make a positive contribution to its rural surroundings.
11. The woodland might provide a greater degree of screening as the trees mature, particularly during the summer when the trees are in leaf. However, there is no information in the form of a landscape management plan or similar to demonstrate that the trees would be maintained and managed over the lifetime of the proposal. Vegetation is not guaranteed to be permanent in any case. Therefore, while it can help assimilate development into its surroundings, it should not be relied upon to screen inappropriate development from view.
12. Therefore, the proposal would result in significant harm to the rural character and appearance of the countryside. It would conflict with Policies EC4, DEV5 and ENV2 of the LP. These require, among other things, that new camping sites are adequately screened, that development reflects local distinctiveness and protects and enhances the distinctive rural landscape.

Other Considerations

13. The proposal would be a diversification and a benefit for the appellant's business. Nevertheless, by virtue of its small size, it would make a minimal contribution to the Cumbrian tourist economy. While future users would be likely to use local shops, cafes and public houses, there would be limited economic benefits in terms of support for local services and facilities. The proposal would create part-time employment opportunities. These are matters that carry limited weight and they would not outweigh the harm that I have found.
14. Camping, and hence glamping, is an activity generally associated with the countryside. However, there is no substantive evidence that glamping requires a greater degree of isolation or privacy than any other type of camping accommodation. The type of tourist accommodation proposed does not justify the isolated countryside location.
15. The proposal would be supplied with water and electricity and it would be connected to a cesspit. Although relatively small, the building would have living and sleeping accommodation and a kitchen and bathroom. The proposal would therefore provide for the main activities of daily domestic existence. On this basis, the absence of an electrical grid connection would not appear to preclude year-round occupation and it does not weigh in favour of the scheme.
16. The maturing woodland could contribute in the future towards reducing carbon emissions and it would provide wildlife habitats and benefits for biodiversity. However, the woodland already exists and it is not proposed as part of the scheme. Therefore, it does not weigh in favour of the proposal.
17. There is no highway reason for refusal. However, concerns have been raised in relation to highway safety and specifically whether the visibility splays illustrated on the plans would be adequate. No speed survey was submitted to demonstrate the adequacy of the access arrangements and the Council did not request one, on the basis that it was minded to refuse the application on grounds relating to its landscape impact. As I am also dismissing the appeal for other reasons, this is not an issue that I need to consider further.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict. For this reason, the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR