



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 23 February 2021

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C2708/W/20/3263522

Former Railway Goods Yard, Clapham Station, Lancaster LA2 8ES

- 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 Terry Cunningham of Adams Park Homes against the decision of Craven District Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/20487/FUL, dated 3 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is Change of use of land from former Railway Goods Yard to 5no. Holiday Lodges (Phase 2).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Terry Cunningham of Adam Park Homes against Craven District Council. That application is the subject of a separate Decision

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a former railway siding next to Clapham Station on the Skipton to Lancaster railway line. It is a narrow site comprising sparsely vegetated hardstanding with scattered immature trees and it has a long road frontage enclosed by a stone wall. It sits within a loosely aggregated small rural settlement that includes the railway station, traditional stone-built dwellings some of which are listed buildings and tourism sites. It is in the open countryside and in the 50m buffer of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).
5. The proposal (Phase 2) would be an extension to the neighbouring holiday lodge development¹ (Phase 1), with which it would share highway access. The 5 lodges and the maintenance and cycle storage building would be linearly arranged and separated from the railway boundary by an internal road. There would also be a new 1.8m high trespass proof fence with safety barriers along the railway boundary, parking for 8 vehicles and a scheme of soft landscaping.

¹ Ref 16/2016/17483

6. The Phase 1 development is set below the level of the road. However, the appeal site rises towards Station House such that parts of the proposal would be at or above the road level. Consequently, the proposal would be more elevated and prominent than Phase 1, including relative to the boundary wall which maintains a relatively consistent height along the road. With the exception of No 1, the lodges would be arranged end to end and on a similar building line resulting in a regular regimented appearance which would be at odds with the more irregular siting and spacing of nearby buildings.
7. Notwithstanding the gap between Nos 1-3 and the group formed by Nos 4-5 and the maintenance building, the proposal would be a thin linear development linking Station House and Phase 1. In contrast to Phase 1, which maintains separation and spacing, the 2 phases would collectively appear as a single conspicuously long ribbon of development extending out from the centre of the hamlet along the road. The cumulative development would be out of scale with, and it would erode and detract from, the characteristic rural pattern of scattered dwellings and discrete building groups including farmsteads.
8. The lodges would be matching and finished in dark timber cladding with grey roof tiles. While they would be typical of holiday lodges elsewhere, including the Phase 1 development, they would not relate well to the traditional surrounding built environment. By virtue of the cumulative scale, the incongruous design and the prominent roadside location, the extended holiday park would be a discordant and dominant feature that would diminish the vernacular character of the area. The proposal would not make a positive contribution to sense of place or local distinctiveness. I note the suggestion that external materials could be controlled by planning condition. However, in the absence of amended proposals I cannot be certain that a different external finish would be sufficient to mitigate the adverse visual impact.
9. Except for a reference to low level bollard lighting along the access road, there is little detail in relation to the external lighting of the road or the lodges. The proposal fails to demonstrate that exterior lighting would be the minimum required or that adverse effects on the intrinsically dark landscape and the visibility of the night sky would be avoided. Furthermore, based on the third party photographs that illustrate the lighting impact of Phase 1, and the long linear layout, the proposal would result in cumulative adverse light pollution impacts. Therefore, the concerns of the Council do not appear unfounded. Taking account of the great weight attached to the conservation of the special qualities of the AONB and its setting, I am not satisfied that this matter could be left to planning condition.
10. I have considered whether the landscaping proposals would mitigate the visual impacts. The tree survey dated July 2018 does not include full details of branch spread, crown height, age class, condition, management requirements, estimated life expectancy or tree category. Moreover, it is not clear that the tree survey was carried out by a suitably qualified arboriculturist. Nevertheless, there would be some limited screening benefit from the retention of the sparse and immature trees to the road boundary.
11. The illustrated landscape planting would help soften and screen the proposal. However, species such as oak and ash are large slow growing deciduous trees with wide canopy spreads at maturity. Over time, the proximity of such trees to the lodges would be likely to result in conflict due to shading, leaf and branch

fall and root spread. Screening benefits, including of artificial illumination, would be reduced in any case during times of year when trees are not in leaf. Consequently, even if planting could be relied upon to screen inappropriate development from view, there is little guarantee that it would deliver the necessary screening benefits over the lifetime of the development.

12. Therefore, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy ENV1 of the Craven Local Plan 2012 to 2032 Adopted November 2019. This requires, among other things, that proposals respect and respond to landscape character, conserving the special qualities of the AONB and its setting including its intrinsic darkness and the visibility of the night sky, and enabling settlements to grow in ways that respect their form. It would also conflict with Policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that require development to be sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and to contribute to a strong sense of place.

Other Considerations

13. The appeal site is next to a railway station and therefore accessible by public transport. Even so, given the relatively remote rural location and the distance to services and facilities, it seems reasonably likely that the majority of future lodge occupiers would travel by private vehicle. Therefore, the proximity of the local train station carries limited weight in favour of the proposal.
14. There would be economic benefits in the short-term during construction. The evidence suggests that lodges could be privately owned, which would be a private benefit, or individually let. In either case, lodge occupiers would contribute to the wider local economy. Given the number of lodges, these matters carry limited weight.
15. The third party representations indicate that the imbalance in the proportion of holiday accommodation compared to permanent dwellings in the area is detrimental to the local community and residential amenity. I understand the concerns in relation to an even greater number of holiday units, but the application was not refused on grounds relating to impacts on neighbouring residential occupiers nor is there substantive evidence that the proposal would result in adverse effects on the neighbours. However, I am not aware that the proposal would contribute positively to the local community and it would not create any employment opportunities.
16. I acknowledge that the parties engaged with one another during the processing of the application to find an acceptable form of development and the scheme has been amended including through a reduction in the number of lodges and additional planting. The proposal would not harm the safe operation of the highway nor result in significant impacts on biodiversity. While it would be visible from nearby dwellings, there would be no loss of privacy or outlook. Other matters, including in relation to ground contamination and drainage, could be dealt with by planning condition. However, the absence of harm in these or other respects weighs neither for nor against the scheme.
17. The Framework advises that substantial weight be given to the value of using suitable brownfield sites within settlements for homes and other identified needs. In this case, while the appeal site is previously developed land, I am not aware of an identified need for additional tourism accommodation in this

location. Moreover, while policies in the development plan support sustainable rural tourism, they do not provide unqualified support for schemes that conflict with other relevant development plan policies.

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 the conflict.
19. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR