



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 March 2021

by Alison Partington BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/20/3260865

Lower Greenfields, Unnamed road from Cliff Lane to Mawstone Lane, Alport, 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/0720/0613, dated 28 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is to allow use of this field for 5 touring caravans to link up to our current touring caravan site in the adjoining field, known as Lower Greenfields Caravan Site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the landscape character of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is currently an enclosed field that lies adjacent to Lower Greenfield Caravan Site. It is situated on an open hillside to the south of the village of Youlgreave and within the Peak District National Park. The appeal scheme proposes the use of the field for 5 touring caravans to be located along the boundary hedge with the existing caravan park. Although to be used by touring caravans it is proposed, that like the existing facility, the caravans would be parked on the site all year round.
4. Policy L1 of the *Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted October 2011)* (CS) and Policy DMC3 of the *Development Management Policies (adopted May 2019)* (DMP) indicate that developments must conserve and where possible enhance the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) also states that in National Parks great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty (paragraph 172).
5. However, Policy RT3 of the CS indicates that small touring camping and 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. Similarly, Policy DMR1 of the DMP states that the development of either new touring caravan sites or extensions to existing ones will not be permitted unless their scale,

- location, access, landscape setting and impact on neighbouring uses are acceptable, and they do not dominate their surroundings.
6. Whilst what constitutes a “small” site is not defined in the policy, the supporting text to Policy RT3 indicates that sites of up to 30 pitches are more likely to be acceptable. The existing caravan site has 16 pitches and so even with the proposed 5 additional ones would be below 30. I therefore am satisfied that this would remain a small site. Nonetheless, to be acceptable, the proposal needs to accord with the various landscape components of the policies outlined above.
 7. The Council have stated that the appeal site lies within the “Valley Farmlands with Villages” area of the Derwent Valley as identified in the *Peak District Landscape Character Assessment (July 2009)*. This is a settled pastoral landscape, often with low lying topography associated with a network of streams and damp hollows, and Gritstone-built villages with outlying farms and dwellings set in small to medium sized fields.
 8. Other than scattered farmsteads, the broad, open landscape to the south of Youlgreave is largely free from development and consists of wooded areas and open fields. Despite being relatively small in size, the existing caravan park is an incongruous and discordant feature in this pastoral and wooded landscape.
 9. The surrounding countryside contains many footpaths. Due to its elevated position and the open nature of the hillside on which it is located, the existing caravan park and the appeal site are clearly visible at times from many of these, as well as in public and private views from various places in Youlgreave, and from the surrounding road network. I accept that the undulating topography and vegetation do cause views to come and go, but the light colour of the caravans and the glare they cause when catching the sun, draws the eye, in the way that the more muted colours of the traditional gritstone buildings in the area do not.
 10. The proposal would extend the caravan park into the adjacent field. I note that the appeal scheme would be significantly smaller than the previous proposal for the siting of 15 caravans on the site¹. Nevertheless, even though caravans are not permanent structures, in introducing man-made features into what is currently an undeveloped field it would still change the character of the site and increase the detrimental impact the existing caravan park has on the landscape. Furthermore, whilst keeping the caravans on the site all year would reduce traffic movements to and from the site, it would exacerbate the visual harm it would cause, even if the caravans were covered in the winter months.
 11. Whilst the appellant has stated that it is proposed to plant indigenous native trees and shrubs to provide screening of the site, no plan of what is proposed has been provided and so the likely effectiveness of this cannot be assessed. Moreover, not only would any such vegetation take many years to mature, but there would be a tension between screening the site from the view of others and enabling users of the site to enjoy views of the area from it. I observed that, although the current caravan park has been in existence for many years, the current vegetation does little to screen it from views.

¹ Appeal Reference APP/M9496/W/20/3246671

12. The appellant has stated that the field is currently used for tents and that 5 caravans would have less visual impact than the much greater number of tents that use the field. However, as the Council have indicated that no planning permission exists for the field to be used in this way, it could only be used for tents for a maximum of 28 days in any one year (currently 56 days under temporary Covid-19 measures). Given this, the more limited size of tents, and their much less solid nature, I consider that utilising the field for tents would have much less impact than for the siting of 5 caravans all year round.
13. Consequently, I consider that the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape character of the area. Accordingly, it would conflict with Policies L1 and RT3 of the CS and DMR1 and DMC3 of the DMP outlined above.

Other Matters

14. It is not disputed that the site is a well-managed quiet site and I note that those using the site often help out with events in the village. The expansion of the caravan park would have some benefits to the local economy through the spend of future users of the site, and so would help support the recovery of local businesses. In addition, as due to the pandemic, the demand for holidays in Britain has increased significantly, the proposal would make a small contribution to satisfying some of this demand.
15. Whilst the provision of additional visitor accommodation would support the second purpose of National Parks of promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public, its detrimental visual impact would cause a loss of enjoyment to some users of the local footpath network. Moreover, it would be contrary to the first purpose of a National Park which is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
16. It is stated that the expansion of the caravan park is necessary to help recoup some of the recent investment on the site and to ensure it remains financially viable. However, no viability evidence has been provided to show that this is the case. In addition, whilst it is stated that if the use was permitted the field would no longer be used for tents and that no further planning permissions would be sought for more pitches, no mechanism is before me to secure that neither of these would happen. As a result, I give all these matters little weight.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would have an adverse impact on landscape character, contrary to both the development plan and the Framework. Whilst I have taken account of the economic benefits of the proposal, I do not consider that these represent a material consideration sufficient to outweigh the conflict with the development plan.
18. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Alison Partington

INSPECTOR