



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/21/3285348

**Campsite, Land at Hill Farm, Northampton Road, Brixworth,
Northamptonshire NN6 9DQ**

- 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 Dr Dallas Burston against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref DA/2021/0310, dated 23 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is reception and security office proposals for an approved campsite in the field north of the site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The site is situated outside of the confines of Brixworth village, and thus in the open countryside as defined in local planning policy terms. Policy RA6 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (February 2020) (the P2LP) sets out that only certain specified forms of development will be supported in such a location, which include development for agriculture, equestrian, forestry, leisure, community or tourism use that is justified and of an appropriate scale for its location, and that has no significant adverse impacts on its character, beauty and tranquillity.
4. The site itself is comprised of part of a grassed field that is situated to the immediate east of the A508 bypass and that is planted to much of its perimeter. The proposal would be served by an existing access track that runs through the site and ultimately leads to neighbouring land to the north, where planning permission¹ is in place for a campsite to be developed that would incorporate areas of hardstanding for caravans and tents, decked areas, a shower/toilet/laundry building, a manager's office, car parking and a play area.
5. It has been suggested by the appellant that the intended building is specifically required to provide the necessary level of reception and security for visitors arriving at the site and to ensure non-authorised access is prevented. It would occupy a large footprint and incorporate a range of often spacious and

¹ DA/2011/0203

interconnected internal spaces offering office, meeting, administration and storage functions as well as a generously sized entrance lobby and multiple toilets. The building would also be served by a spacious area of hardstanding for parking.

6. Notwithstanding any assertion made to the contrary, some of the functions to be provided would replicate or expand upon facilities to be offered by the campsite development. Nevertheless, given the physical separation that exists between the planned campsite and the site's access point, I accept that the opportunity to obtain a constant or regular presence in proximity to the highway would offer some operational and security-based advantages. However, notwithstanding the generous expanse of the consented campsite and the potential for resident guests to have products delivered, the need for development of the extent intended has not been clearly justified.
7. The scheme is supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (the LVA), which confirms that, at a local level, the site falls within the Pitsford Water Rolling Ironstone Valley Slopes landscape character area. The key characteristics of which include gently sloping agricultural land that descends to the reservoir, as well as the existence of a network of planted field boundaries and wooded areas. The site and its immediate surroundings are largely reflective of such typical characteristics. The LVA suggests that the proposal can be integrated without causing harm in landscape character terms and that a negligible effect upon localised views would be had without causing harm to the qualities or amenities of the receiving visual environment.
8. I accept that the site does not comprise part of a valued landscape and that available views of the proposal would be somewhat limited and localised in range. This limited visibility would be due to a variety of factors, including the building's single storey height, the existence of undulating landforms and the presence of established planted buffers (most evidently alongside the A508 bypass). Nevertheless, the scheme would still be visible, at least in-part, from a range of publicly accessible locations close by, including when stood at or in proximity to the site's access point. Furthermore, it must be noted that, consistent with my own experiences at this site, planting cannot be relied upon to consistently provide solid or impenetrable buffers to views.
9. Thus, the proposed development, to include a new building of large footprint and not insignificant scale, would appear as an unexpected, urbanising addition to the rural landscape. This is even when factoring in the scattered existence of other buildings nearby, the colouring of the external-facing materials to be used and the intention to plant additional soft landscaping.
10. I adjudge that the site is set sufficiently away from the Pitsford Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest to ensure that the intended development would not have a harmful effect upon its setting. Even so, for the above reasons, it remains that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme conflicts with Policies BN5, E7, R1 and R2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (December 2014) (the JCS), Policies RA6, ENV1 and ENV10 of the P2LP, Policies 2, 3 and 11 of the Brixworth Neighbourhood Plan (revised March 2021) and the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) in so far as these policies require proposals to be of an appropriate scale for their location and to respect the environmental quality and character of the rural area.

Other Matters

11. I have awareness of a January 2021 appeal decision² that relates to a wider parcel of land adjacent to Brixworth Country Park, and to proposed development including a building of similar design and positioning to that now before me. Nevertheless, whilst the 2021 Inspector identified harm in landscape character terms, he came to overall conclusions as opposed to specific findings with respect to individual components of a far larger proposal. It is thus a decision of limited relevance to my considerations.
12. Whilst the proposed development would not constitute a tourism attraction in its own right, it would have a direct association to an adjacent consented campsite and can rightfully be considered to comprise tourism development. Accordingly, the scheme would offer some support to the growth and expansion of a rural business and would promote operational and security-based improvements to a future tourism facility. There would also be some economic activity generated via the construction phase and by the small number of job opportunities created once the building became operational. The development would also be anticipated to deliver some biodiversity enhancements through new planting.
13. Nevertheless, a single building and a site of somewhat constrained area are under consideration. The scheme's benefits, even when considered in a cumulative sense, would be relatively modest and attractive of limited weight. Moreover, the identified benefits would be insufficient to outweigh the considerable harm (and associated policy conflicts) that I have identified would be caused in a character and appearance sense.
14. For the avoidance of doubt, the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as referenced at Policy SA of the JCS, does not apply. Indeed, the proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR

² APP/Y2810/W/20/3258382