



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 August 2022

by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/A2335/W/22/3297311

New House Farm Caravan Park, Long Level, Cowan Bridge LA6 2HR

- 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 Thomas Hogarth against the decision of Lancaster City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00502/FUL, dated 20 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new storage building.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/A2335/W/22/3297636

New House Farm Caravan Park, Cowan Bridge, Kirkby Lonsdale LA6 2HR

- 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 Thomas Hogarth against the decision of Lancaster City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00546/FUL, dated 29 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing agricultural barn and erection of 5no. holiday lets.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The site addresses above for both appeals are taken from the respective planning application forms. Whilst they vary slightly from one another, for the avoidance of doubt these appeals relate to the same caravan park, albeit the respective proposals concern different parts of the park.
4. For this reason, I have considered both appeals within this decision letter and, to avoid duplication, I have included a single description of the area before going on to consider the individual merits of each case separately.
5. The appellant has submitted various amended and additional plans with both Appeal A and Appeal B. With regards to Appeal A, the amended plans appear to indicate a larger planting area around the proposed storage building. In respect of Appeal B, the amended plans namely show an alternative design for the holiday lets and the inclusion of a planted screen adjacent to the car parking area.

6. Paragraph M.2.1 of Annex M of the Procedural Guide: Planning Appeals - England states that the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme and it is important that what is considered by the Inspector is essentially what was considered by the local planning authority, and on which interested people's views were sought. The revisions go to the heart of the issues raised in both appeals. Therefore, and having regard to the Wheatcroft principles¹, I have chosen to not accept the amended plans as the Council and other interested parties who should have been consulted would be prejudiced if I were to do so. My assessment of both appeals is therefore based on the plans which were before the Council when it made its decision.

Main Issues

7. The main issue in Appeal A is the effect of the proposed storage building on the character and appearance of the rural area.
8. The main issue in Appeal B is the effect of the proposed holiday lets on the character and appearance of the rural area, including the setting of the non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

9. The New House Farm Caravan Park is a compact cluster of development located within the open countryside. Due to the undulating topography of the wider area and the current landscaping around the site and along the A65, views of the caravan park are limited and only glimpses of the main farmhouse and adjacent built form are achieved as one travels along the A65. The surrounding landscape has a strong open and rural appearance, with scattered clusters of built form set amongst agricultural fields and pastures, which are divided by stone walls and hedgerows.

Appeal A

10. The proposed storage building would be sited beyond the existing planting to the north of the caravan park, in an area of open, undeveloped grassland. Although it would be of a simple design, the building would nevertheless be of a large scale and have an excessive footprint, also taking into consideration the gravel access track and concrete yard and path surrounding it. The proposal would also cut into the land, due to the gentle rise in the site up to the highway. This standalone and intrusive siting, along with the building's substantial scale, would cause it to be a highly insensitive and incongruous addition which would fail to assimilate well into its undeveloped landscape setting.
11. Whilst views of the proposed development from the A65 may be limited due to existing landscaping, the open nature of the surrounding fields is an intrinsic characteristic of the locality. The proposal includes the introduction of a planting belt. The details are very limited and the submitted plans are ambiguous as to the full extent of the planting. I nevertheless note that one side of the building would remain exposed to wider views across the fields.
12. Additionally, the trees and shrubs would take a considerable length of time to mature, they may be seasonal in nature and their permanence could not be guaranteed, thus any screening that may result to the remaining sides could

¹ Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment [JPL 1982]

not be secured. Furthermore, given the lack of further details, the proposed area of trees and shrubs may be incongruous itself due to its extent. I am not therefore satisfied that the proposed planting, along with the use of green cladding, would overcome the intrusive projection of built form into and erosion of this part of the open countryside.

13. I acknowledge the need for alternative options to store various items and equipment required in connection with the caravan park, given the development proposed in Appeal B and the considerable age and poor condition of the existing storage building. However, the wider caravan park is of a generous size and I am not convinced that there are no other, more appropriate options within the existing cluster of built form.
14. Accordingly, the proposed storage building would harm the character and appearance of the rural area and thus would be contrary to Policy EN3 of A Local Plan for Lancaster District 2011-2031, Part One: Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD (July 2020) (Part One) and Policies DM29, DM46 and DM47 of A Local Plan for Lancaster District 2011-2031, Part Two: Review of the Development Management DPD (July 2020) (Part Two). Collectively these policies, along with chapters 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), seek to ensure that development respects and protects the open and rural countryside and landscape and has regard to local distinctiveness.

Appeal B

15. This appeal concerns an existing agricultural storage building located adjacent to the farmhouse. Along with the farmhouse, it is one of the first buildings visitors to the caravan park see. Whilst it is of a poor condition, it is an inconspicuous feature that has a strong agricultural appearance and form. It does not therefore unduly detract from the appearance of the site or appear out of context. Rather, it contributes towards the site's rural character.
16. The farmhouse, with attached former barn, has been identified by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). The significance of this NDHA appears to derive primarily from its vernacular design and historic value and association with a former farmstead, albeit it has undergone various piecemeal alterations.
17. The wider site makes a positive contribution towards understanding the NDHA's significance and its farming past. The farmhouse is the focal building, with the surrounding built form comprising subservient outbuildings of lesser value and set to the rear. Therefore, although the historic access routes to the south have been altered, the site maintains a hierarchy of development, with the farmhouse retaining a strong prominence which creates a sense of arrival to a former farming use.
18. The proposed holiday lets would be arranged as a staggered terrace and would appear as a three storey block when viewed from the rear. They would have modern fenestration, dormers and balconies with glass balustrades. The development would have a significantly greater footprint than the storage building it seeks to replace, taking also into consideration the proposed car parking area. Whilst some elements of the material palette would reflect the wider rural character, the extensive use of render, modern fenestration, height and coverage of the proposal would cause the development to be of a

substantial scale and mass, and it would have a strikingly contemporary appearance. Overall, its design would fail to take appropriate account of the local context and its distinctiveness.

19. The proposal would be readily apparent from public vantage points, particularly from the A65 which is at a higher level to the appeal site. Its considerably urban appearance and excessive scale would cause it to read as an uncomfortable addition that would jar awkwardly with its rural surrounds. It would drastically alter the character of the wider caravan park from a small scale, rural site to a more urban, domesticated development.
20. By virtue of these factors, along with the close proximity to the farmhouse, the proposal would also compete with the NDHA as it would become the focal point within the site, rather than the original farmhouse. The development would therefore significantly interrupt the hierarchy of the former farmstead and erode the understanding of the context of the farmhouse and its former use. This effect on how the NDHA is experienced would therefore result in the proposal harming its significance.
21. Taking all the above into consideration, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and would fail to preserve the setting of the NDHA. It would therefore conflict with Policy EN3 of Part One and Policies DM4, DM29, DM41 and DM46 of Part Two which, along with chapter 12 of the Framework, seek to ensure that developments respect local distinctiveness, including rural context, and protect heritage assets. Given the high visibility of this part of the appeal site to visitors and passers-by, the level of harm would be substantial.

Other Matter

22. References of planning applications for storage buildings and tourist accommodation at other sites in the wider area have been provided for both appeals. However, from this very limited information, I am unable to ascertain whether those examples are directly comparable to the appeal proposals.

Conclusions

Appeal A

23. The proposed storage building would provide the caravan park with storage facilities which would support the running of the park. Given its scale overall, along with the potential I have identified for other less harmful locations, this matter is afforded limited weight in favour of the proposal.
24. It has been suggested that the proposed planting for Appeal A would mitigate noise from A65 which would improve the stay for holiday makers however my attention has not been drawn to any concerns relating to the operation and success of the business in this regard. This matter is afforded limited weight.
25. The additional planting may bring ecological benefits however the detail of planting is ambiguous. It seems to me that the amount of planting would simply mitigate for the loss of moderate quality trees whose removal would be necessary to provide access to the storage building. As such, this matter does not represent a benefit of the proposal.

26. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole. The benefits of the proposal carry limited weight and would not therefore be sufficient to outweigh that conflict and lead me to a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
27. Therefore, Appeal A should be dismissed.

Appeal B

28. Paragraph 203 of the Framework advises that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
29. The proposal would assist in the diversification and growth of the existing business through the creation of new, high-quality holiday lets, which in turn would expand the offering of tourist accommodation in the local area. Visitors would likely spend money in the locality and the proposal would also create employment opportunities before, during and after development. Overall, I attribute limited weight to the public benefits of the proposal given the small scale of the development, thus they do not outweigh the harm that would result.
30. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, which lead me to a decision other than in accordance with it.
31. For these reasons I therefore conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

H Ellison
INSPECTOR