



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2023

by Samuel Watson BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 April 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/W/22/3304264

Withies Campsite, Stretton Road, Much Wenlock TF13 6DD

- 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 A McDonagh against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03873/FUL, dated 5 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is the siting of 5 Glamping Pods and 2 Log Cabins and installation of grass grid access track at existing caravan and camping site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development was changed during the planning application process with agreement between the two parties. Consequently, and as it concisely describes the proposal, I have used this amended description in the header above.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, including the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is outside of, but seen in relation to, the AONB. From my observations on site, and the evidence before me, I find that the special qualities of the AONB stem, in part, from the varied landscape of predominantly farms and woodland set across hills and valleys. The site is surrounded by fields, with sporadic development within the wider area, and Much Wenlock beyond that. The appeal site itself forms part of a sloping field which rises up away from Stretton Road. The field is bounded by hedgerows on all sides, with the agricultural and campsite portions separated by a low fence. Further planting has been laid along the access forming an overlap with that along the roadside.
5. The site contains a shower block and a small children's play area as well as space for four shepherd huts, although only one hut was present at the time of my visit. The centre of the site is clear of built development but is where permission is present for the siting of 16 tents and 5 touring caravans. Overall,

the site presents an informal character that is not intrusive within the surrounding rural landscape.

6. The proposal would introduce a new row of development, 5 glamping pods and 2 log cabins, along the front of the site adjacent to the recently constructed access. I note that the hedgerows and trees around the site provide some softening of views but, the nature of the planting does not block all views and so does not provide complete screening. Moreover, although the planting along the front is young and likely to grow, I cannot be certain that it would grow sufficiently to suitably screen the development in views through or over the hedgerow. Furthermore, it would not be possible to control the planting scheme for the lifetime of the development and any screening could easily be lost as a result of the hedgerow dying, being cut back or removed entirely.
7. Consequently, I find that the cabins would be significant and prominent features as a result of their elevated position above Stretton Road at the front of the site. Moreover, they would not reflect the temporary and informal nature of the accommodation that characterises this site, or the agricultural character of the surrounding area. The glamping pods would result in a similar impact, although, given their smaller scale and the siting of some further from the road, this would be more limited. Nevertheless, harm would still occur.
8. Furthermore, when taken cumulatively, the development would lead to an intensification of the use on site and of the built development present. This would be jarring with the surrounding fields and woodland which are primarily open without built development. The harm would be especially acute given the site is within the setting of the AONB where it would harm the appreciation the area in long distance views.
9. Although I am mindful of the buildings, and former quarries, within the surrounding area, these are some distance away and are largely small or compact developments that do not significantly alter the character and appearance of the surrounding area or justify the proposal.
10. The proposal, as a result of its scale and siting, would harm the character and appearance of the site and its contribution to the surrounding landscape, including the setting of the AONB. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies CS5, CS6, CS16 and CS17 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy, Policies MD2, MD11 and MD12 of the Shropshire Council Sites Allocations and Management of Development Plan, and Policies GQD1, GQD2, EJ7 and LL3 of the Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2026. These policies collectively, and amongst other matters, require developments to be of a high quality that reflects and complements their context, and countryside location, so as to maintain or enhance its character. They also require particular regard to be paid to the AONB. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework with particular regard to Paragraph 8c and chapter 12, including Paragraph 130, which seek for developments to protect the natural environment and be sympathetic to their landscape setting.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has referenced stringent health and safety regulations and that it would not be acceptable to operate the camp site in a "back to basics" way. However, it has not been demonstrated that any health and safety concerns

exist on site or in the way it is operated. I have therefore given this matter little weight in my considerations.

12. No substantive evidence has been supplied to demonstrate that the existing level of demand at the site is such that an expansion would be necessary or that it would result in any meaningful benefit to the local economy. Therefore, and although the development plan supports rural tourism facilities, this is only where it would not result in harm to the landscape character and appearance. Furthermore, whilst the appeal site may provide good access to the countryside and public rights of way, given its close relationship with them, this does not outweigh the harm identified above.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Samuel Watson

INSPECTOR