



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 November 2023

by L Wilson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/W/23/3314691

Land to the South of B6478 adjoining Marl Barn, Slaidburn

- 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 J Lumb, WDF Estates Limited, against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2022/0380, dated 11 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2022.
 - The development was originally described as the proposed erection of 4.no holiday lodges as detailed in the attached Planning Statement and Plans.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by the appellant against the Council. This application is attached as a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. I have taken the site address in the heading above from the decision notice as this provides a more accurate reflection of the site location than that given on the application form.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, having particular regard to the location of the appeal site within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises permanent pasture and benefits from an existing hardcore track off the B6478. The site is in a rural area and located within the AONB. The landscape is primarily characterised by open aspect land with extremely limited built development. There is a strong sense of remoteness, isolation and tranquillity. The appeal site makes a positive contribution to the area as it is characteristic of the landscape.
6. The site is located towards the south of Marl Barn. Marl Barn has a tarmacked access from the B6478, and the site comprises a small caravan and campsite, farmhouse (which I understand has been converted to holiday accommodation) and agricultural buildings. A dry stone wall separates the appeal site with Marl Barn.

7. The proposed development would not be of a large scale, and the lodges would be self-contained. Furthermore, the use of timber would not be out of keeping with buildings in the wider area, for example agricultural buildings. There would be limited views of the development from public vantage points due to the topography of the land, siting of Marl Barn, and nearby dry stone walls.
8. Nonetheless, the proposal would create a new holiday accommodation site on open agricultural land, which contains no structures, and in a landscape largely devoid of structures. The introduction of four large holiday lodges, with associated large areas of decking and parking, would result in the introduction of an incongruous and discordant form of development. The appeal site physically and visually appears separate and detached from the buildings at Marl Barn. Therefore, the proposal would poorly relate to the existing built form. The development would compromise the open aspect of the landscape that defines the inherent character of the area. Consequently, the proposal would not be in keeping with the character of the landscape and would not reflect the local vernacular due to the scale and design of the lodges along with the large areas of decking and parking. It would result in unacceptable built form in this open, rural landscape and would have an urbanising visual effect on the landscape.
9. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, and would neither conserve nor enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Consequently, it would conflict with Key Statement EN2, DMG1 and DMB3 of the Council's Core Strategy 2008-2028: A Local Plan for Ribble Valley (2014) (CS). These support proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the borough and collectively seek, amongst other matters, to ensure development is in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, features and building materials. Furthermore, the proposal would conflict with paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Other Matters

10. In 2021, the Council granted planning permission for four glamping pods, caravan pitches, toilet and welfare facilities building, and associated landscaping works at Marl Barn¹. That development relates to the expansion of an existing established caravan and camping site which contains an established group of buildings. In contrast the appeal site is open agricultural land with no structures, and the proposal would result in the formation of a new glamping lodge site.
11. My attention has been drawn to an appeal decision which granted planning permission for the change of use of land to tourism, including the siting of a shepherd's hut for use as holiday accommodation². There are similarities between that scheme and the proposal before me in that both sites are situated within the same local planning authority area and within the AONB, both relate to a farm diversification project, utilise an existing field access, and include a hot tub and associated decking. However, the context of the sites

¹ 3/2021/0457

² APP/T23504/W/22/3294050

differ. Whilst numerically the distance to buildings is greater in that case, the extent of surrounding built development (to the east and west) is greater than the site before me. Furthermore, the allowed appeal granted permission for one, modest shepherd's hut whereas the proposal before me is for four large lodges.

12. The Council has also approved other camping pods/lodges within the AONB and open countryside, which include timber and rustic structures³. I have had regard to the decisions, however the circumstances of the cases (including the extent of development proposed, size of the lodges along with the decking, context of the sites and surrounding areas, and planning history) are not directly comparable. In any case, I have considered the appeal proposal on the basis of the evidence before me. The highlighted decisions do not set a precedent and do not alter my findings above.
13. The development plan (including Key Statement EC1, Policies EC3 and DMG2 of the CS) supports proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy, and farm diversification. Furthermore, paragraphs 84 and 85 of the Framework supports a prosperous rural economy, and sustainable rural tourism developments which respect the character of the countryside.
14. My attention has been drawn to the Council's pre-application response. The appellant has also highlighted their frustrations with the Council in terms of a lack of engagement as well as not raising any issues with the application. A planning condition has been suggested to require the submission of a landscaping plan.
15. The loss of the Basic Payment Scheme and increased costs of farming the land has led the appellant to consider diversification. The appellant asserts that the proposal would help facilitate the continued farming and management of their land and thus secure the future landscape character. However, no substantive evidence has been provided to demonstrate this, or to demonstrate that the farm needs to diversify to remain profitable.
16. I recognise the benefits of the proposal, including enabling the appellant to diversify their business as well as economic and social benefits. The contribution to the local and visitor economy would be limited due to the scale of the development. The provision of planting could reduce the proposals visual impact. However, planting could further erode the open character of the site and would not adequately mitigate the harm found. The pre-application response stated that a small-scale development of less than five buildings may be acceptable, but that was subject to further information and a suitable design. Based on the evidence provided, the other matters raised would not overcome the conflict with planning policy and harm I have found.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other material considerations, the appeal does not succeed.

L Wilson
INSPECTOR

³ 3/2021/0721, 3/2020/0579, 3/2017/1024, 3/2017/1120