



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 May 2024

by R Major BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/W/23/3330351

Hackings Holiday Home Park, Elker Lane, Billington, Lancashire BB7 9HZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Hacking against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/2022/0945.
 - The development proposed is extension to existing caravan site to allow siting of additional caravans and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Subsequent to the Council issuing its decision the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 19 December 2023 and updated on 20 December 2023. Both parties, within their respective submissions, had an opportunity to comment on the revised Framework. Where reference is made to the Framework in this decision, the paragraph numbers are those that appear in the latest version.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Hackings Holiday Home Park (herein referred to as 'the Park') currently contains around 124no. caravan pitches, as well as land used for the storage of touring caravans and grazing animals. The appeal relates specifically to a relatively flat parcel of green land within the Park, situated directly to the north of the highway of Pashmire Brow, to the west of a number of static caravans and directly to the south of the touring caravan storage area.
5. The appeal site is located within the open countryside, and I acknowledge that caravan parks of this scale are generally found in the open countryside. However, in this case the prevailing character of the area is the open aspect of the surrounding agricultural land, its scattered farmsteads and interspersed woodlands.
6. The existing static caravans on the Park are screened from public vantage points by a combination of surrounding mature vegetation and their position on the lower sections of the undulating topography. I did observe that some of the

caravans within the touring caravan storage area were visible from a section of Old Langho Road, as well as being partially visible through gaps in the mature hedgerow that separates the Park from Pashmire Brow. Nevertheless, in the main, the existing Park successfully assimilates into the rural character of the surrounding area.

7. In its present green and undeveloped form, the appeal site currently aids the Park's assimilation into the landscape by acting as an important visual buffer between the highway of Pashmire Brow and the caravans on the Park. The appeal site therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area by separating the caravans from public views along this highway.
8. The appeal proposes to change the use of this parcel of open land to allow the siting of static caravans similar in design to the existing static caravans on the Park, along with a new access track to serve the caravans and new landscaping features. The appeal also includes the provision of a new area of hardstanding for the parking of 4no. vehicles associated with the existing static caravans to the east. These proposed spaces mitigate for the loss of existing spaces that would be removed to enable the proposed access track to connect to the existing access road(s) within the Park.
9. I observed on my site visit that the existing static caravans within the Park are light in colour and include associated domestic paraphernalia such as areas of raised decking, outdoor furniture, external lights and parked vehicles. The proposed siting of similarly designed light-coloured static caravans on the appeal site, along with the likely associated paraphernalia, would jar and contrast with the existing natural green appearance of the appeal site. The caravans would therefore result in a significant encroachment of an intensive and discordant development that erodes the open aspect of the appeal site which currently acts as an important buffer between existing caravans and the highway. This encroachment would be to the visual detriment of the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
10. In coming to this view I acknowledge there are existing caravans within the vicinity of the appeal site. However, as detailed earlier, as a result of their siting on lower land, and the mature vegetation that acts as a screen, these existing static caravans are not clearly visible from land outside the Park. The appeal site however is set at a higher land level than the nearest static caravans to the east, and I observed that even though solid in appearance, the existing mature hedgerow along Pashmire Brow includes gaps which allow views through to the appeal site.
11. I also appreciate that the existing caravans within the storage area are currently visible from this highway, through the existing gaps in the hedgerow. However, this storage area is set significantly back from the highway with the appeal site acting as a visual buffer that provides distance between these stored caravans and the highway. Therefore, whilst visible, these stored caravans are not particularly prominent from the highway of Pashmire Brow. Whereas the proposed static caravans would be situated much closer to, and therefore much more prominently viewed from public vantage points when travelling along Pashmire Brow, thus increasing the cumulative visual harm of the Park within the open countryside.
12. It is also reasonable to assume that in the winter months the existing hedge would become more permeable to views than it was during my site visit and

therefore allow even greater views of the appeal site and proposed caravans, further increasing the visual prominence and harm arising from the appeal proposal.

13. The land directly to the northwest of the appeal site would remain open and free from development. Furthermore, due to the natural change in land levels between the appeal site and the closest existing static caravans situated to the east, there is a sloping parcel of green land which would separate the proposed caravans from the existing static caravans in the Park. This parcel would include a section of the proposed access, but in the main would also remain green and open, thus creating a visual gap between existing static caravans and those proposed on the appeal site. In this context the proposed static caravans within the appeal site would therefore appear somewhat visually detached and isolated from the existing static caravans within the Park and thus the proposal would not round-off or fill-in an area that is surrounded by development.
14. In view of the above, I conclude that the appeal proposal would introduce a visually intensive and discordant form of development into an area that is currently open and which provides an important visual buffer between the existing caravans on the Park and the highway of Pashmire Brow.
15. The appellants refer to additional landscaping that would be introduced to reduce the visual impact of the appeal proposal. However no specific details of this proposed landscaping have been provided and in the absence of this detail I am not persuaded that a landscaping scheme could overcome my concerns. As such, it would not be appropriate to deal with this fundamental matter by way of a planning condition.
16. I understand that in 2020 the Council concluded that an application to extend the caravan storage facilities into land immediately to the north of the appeal site would not cause undue landscape or visual harm. Whilst each application is judged on its own merits, as detailed above, I observed that the caravan storage area referred to by the appellant is set back from the highway. Whereas the appeal proposal would encroach into land that I have found acts as an important visual buffer between these stored caravans and the highway of Pashmire Brow. As such, the land upon which these caravans are being stored and the appeal site are not directly comparable and therefore this previous decision of the Council has not been determinative in my assessment of this appeal.
17. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and is contrary to Ribble Valley Core Strategy¹ (2014) (CS) Policies DMG1, DMG2 and DMB3. These policies together seek to ensure, among other things, that development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the area by virtue of its scale, siting, or design; be of a high standard of building design and sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses; and that proposals within the open countryside are in keeping with the character of the landscape area.
18. The proposal is also contrary to paragraphs 135 and 139 of the Framework where they seek to ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the

¹ Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008-2028 - A Local Plan for Ribble Valley - Adoption Version (2014)

area; are sympathetic to local character, including landscape setting; and that development which is not well designed should be refused.

Other Matters

19. The appellants put forward a case that there is demand for additional holiday accommodation in the Ribble Valley, and that the appeal site is close to a National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) which is an attraction for visitors. Furthermore, the appellants state that the expansion of existing caravan parks to meet this need is preferable to the creation of a new caravan park.
20. In support of these claims the appellants have provided copies of the Ribble Valley Tourism Webpage, the Ribble Valley Tourism Destination Management Plan (2018) and the Council's Draft Economic Plan 2023-2026. While these documents clearly demonstrate the important role that tourism and the visitor economy play in the Ribble Valley, and are material considerations in the determination of this appeal, they do not form part of the Development Plan. Furthermore, I have been provided with little evidence of any specific unmet demand in this area, such as details of occupancy rates at the appeal site or other nearby caravan sites, or waiting lists or records of enquiries. I therefore attribute this benefit limited weight in favour of the appeal scheme.
21. Moreover, while the Development Plan is also generally supportive of new tourist facilities, this is subject to other criteria and policies being met. For the reasons detailed earlier in this decision I have found that the appeal scheme causes visual harm to the character and appearance of the area, and therefore conflicts with policies within the CS.
22. The appellants comment that paragraphs 85 and 88 of the Framework place significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity, and that decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas. They also provide calculations of the likely economic benefits arising from the appeal proposal.
23. In this regard the proposal would assist with the expansion of a rural business and support economic growth, however there is little evidence that an alternative scheme could not deliver similar benefits without the harm that I have identified. Furthermore, paragraph 88 of the Framework states that decisions should enable sustainable growth through well-designed, beautiful buildings and sustainable rural tourism which respects the character and appearance of the area. I do not consider the proposed static caravans to be well-designed, beautiful buildings and given I have found harm to the character and appearance of the area the proposal does not represent sustainable growth. As such the appeal proposal does not benefit from the full support of the Framework. Nevertheless, I attribute moderate weight to the economic benefits.
24. I note the Park includes a Grade II Listed Building known as Potter Fold Farmhouse. This listed building is situated a significant distance from the appeal site with large intervening agricultural style buildings. A significant number of caravans are also stored on land between the appeal site and the listed building. Consequently, the appeal site is not located within the setting of the listed building and it would not harm its special interest.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and conflict with the development plan as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the benefits, to indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
26. Therefore, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Major

INSPECTOR