



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2025

by **B Plenty BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/W/23/3335116

Hallfield Farm, Strawberry Lee Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S17 3BA

- 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 Gary Singleton against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is NP/S/0523/0530.
 - The development proposed is a retrospective planning application for a timber, open fronted implements store, and a circular horse training centre.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposed development has already been constructed. I shall take this into consideration within the appeal.
3. A new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published 12 December 2024. I have not sought comments from main parties on this matter, as the changes made to the Framework have not had a material bearing on the issues raised in this appeal.
4. The second reason for refusal identifies that policy DRM3 of the Local Plan for the Peak District National Park [2019] (LP), is relevant to the proposal. However, the National Park Authority identifies that this should have referred to policy DRM4, with respect to 'facilities for keeping and riding horses'. I have taken the alternative policy into account, as it is relevant and has been discussed by the appellant, conveying no prejudice to any party by my doing so.
5. The appellant has queried whether the site is within the Natural Zone referred to by the National Park Authority. Nonetheless, the Council has confirmed that its interactive policy map viewer clearly shows that the appeal site is within the Natural Zone. I see no reason, within the submitted evidence, to disagree with the Authority's assertion on this.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and
 - Whether the proposal would be in a suitable location within the Natural Zone, in consideration of local policies.

Reasons

Character and appearance

7. Policy L1, of the Core Strategy [2011] (CS), states that development must conserve and enhance the valued landscape character of the area. The Authority identifies that the site is within the 'Slopes and Valleys with Woodland' Character type within the Derbyshire Peak Fringe. The area's characteristics include undulating topography, irregular blocks of woodland, pockets of semi-improved grassland, scattered gritstone farms and narrow winding lanes. The appeal site is part of a farm holding, set within a valley with large, wooded areas and providing open views to distant points. As such, the site accords with the Authority's character assessment of the area. The site is within an area of high landscape value and therefore makes a positive contribution to its character and appearance.
8. LP policy DMR4 relates to facilities for the keeping and riding of horses. This explains that such facilities would be permitted provided they meet certain criteria. These require that it consist of appropriate materials, be adjacent to existing buildings, would not alter the valued landscape or create any other adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. The associated commentary to the policy states that the impact of such development on the character and appearance of the area may be lessened by siting stables, or associated facilities, adjacent to existing groups of buildings.
9. The proposed development consists of an equipment store and circular horse-training centre. The store is rectangular and clad in horizontal wood panels, with a pitched roof, and clad in timber shingles. The training centre is also clad in wooden panels and includes a green coloured roof. The store and training centre stand within a flat area of land, adjacent to the farm access driveway. Although the training centre is relatively self-contained, and absent extensive security lighting or paddock fencing, it and the store, are a human intervention within this pastoral landscape.
10. The site is on a hillside, with Strawberry Lee Lane following the valley side above the site, and the farmhouse and its associated buildings below, on the valley floor. The sloping landscape includes tree groups and large woodland areas to the west of the site, but views remain relatively open from public vantage points. Public views of the site, within its mostly open surrounding context, are evident from several viewpoints along the lane and footpath 40 (FP40). Strawberry Lee Lane terminates at a small car park that serves Blackamoor Nature Reserve, a short distance from the farm entrance. This indicates that the site is in a highly visible location and observable by many passing motorists and walkers.
11. The proposed scheme is set away from the main farm buildings. It has been located within an area of open pastureland between the lane and the farm buildings. It is also beyond a group of trees that enclose the farm buildings which help to soften views of the main buildings from viewpoints along the lane and FP40. Being located a sizeable distance from the main buildings and being separated by trees, the buildings the subject of the appeal are not adjacent to existing buildings and visually intrude into the pastureland.
12. In some views from Strawberry Lee Lane, the proposed buildings are in a line with the menage and main house. However, they are still separated from the main buildings by a group of intervening trees and by distance, and views of the

proposal are sequential rather than static from passing receptors. Consequently, most views of the proposal do not place these built components in alignment, with other buildings and therefore do not form a backdrop. In most views the proposed development appears isolated from other built form. Also, whilst the western-most outbuildings of the farm are a similar distance from the main house as the proposal, these are screened by mature tree groups and visually connected by other farm buildings behind the main house. As a result, the proposed buildings are an obtrusive form of development within this largely open setting.

13. Planting is proposed to assist in screening the proposal. On site I observed that a hawthorn hedge has been planted around the training centre. Also, a sedum roof is proposed to be added to the training centre. Although a sedum roof, hedge and tree planting would provide some mitigation to soften views of the proposal, the hedge appears out of place within this setting and emphasises the building it is attempting to screen. Furthermore, the proposed planting would not fully screen the proposed buildings and would partly contribute to the obtrusive nature of the development. In any event planting alone cannot, and should not, be used to attempt to hide obtrusive and harmful development. Accordingly, the proposed mitigation would not materially mitigate the visual impact of the proposal.
14. The equipment store is used in connection with the management of the land across the farm holding. This provides covered storage for a tractor, trailer, hedge cutter, chain harrow, mower and an all-terrain vehicle. It also accommodates fencing materials and stone for walling. It is undisputed between parties that the store is functionally required and of an appropriate scale to meet the needs of the farm holding and is supported by suitable agricultural justification in compliance with LP policy DME1(A) with respect to agricultural or forestry development.
15. However, LP policy DME1(B) requires new buildings to be located close to the farmstead or main group of farm buildings and to relate well to existing buildings and landscape features. It also requires development to avoid adverse effects on the area's valued landscape characteristics and avoid harm to the integrity of the NZ. The proposal would not be close to the existing farm buildings or relate well to existing landscape features.
16. Accordingly, the proposed equipment store and training centre, would erode the quality of the valued landscape and demonstrably harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with CS policy L1, LP policies DME1 and DMR4 and the Framework. These seek, *inter alia*, for development to not adversely impact on the character and appearance of the valued landscape and to afford great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.

Suitability of location

17. The site is within the Natural Zone (NZ) of the district, close to the eastern boundary of the National Park, within an area defined as 'Section 3 – Moorland'. Appendix 2, of the LP, explains that land designated as NZ possess six qualities. These relate to the quality of the wilderness, by containing mostly natural vegetation, having limited human influence, being 'open country', having high wildlife value and a natural beauty deemed by the Authority as being particularly important to conserve. It is recognised that since the initial designation of the NZ, the area of the site and its context has altered through deforestation. However, this

part of the NZ retains qualities that are valued due to its natural beauty. It is also of value by acting as a buffer between Dore and local ecologically sensitive sites such as Blackamoor Nature Reserve.

18. CS policy L1, of the Core Strategy [2011] (CS) explains that development must conserve and enhance the National Park and that, other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals within the NZ will not be permitted. LP policy DMC2, with respect to protecting and managing the NZ, explains the exceptional circumstances in which development is permissible. Exceptional circumstances would be where a suitable, more acceptable location cannot be found and where it is essential for either; (i) the management of the NZ or (ii) would be for the conservation or enhancement of the National Park's valued characteristics.
19. The proposal is within the appellant's land holding and the equipment store is required to provide a necessary facility for the farm. LP policy DMC2(B) is clear that development that would only serve to make land management easier, such as the use of the equipment store, will not be regarded as essential. In locational terms, the proposal is required to be sited within the farm holding to achieve its purpose and therefore cannot be sited outside of the NZ. However, it is some distance from the other buildings within the farm, which are mostly located behind the farmhouse.
20. The appellant asserts that the proposal is as close as possible to the farmhouse and other buildings, with the existing menage, the brook and varying topography eliminating nearer sites. The appellant also explains that land to the west of the driveway is outside the farm holding, which eliminates some other options. However, there is limited evidence to clearly explain why locations for the store and training centre, nearer to the farmhouse have been eliminated, either together or as disaggregated components. Accordingly, the submitted evidence fails to adequately demonstrate that the selected site is the closest possible site to the existing buildings. As such, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal is required to be located on the appeal site or that a more suitable location cannot be found.
21. Moreover, the proposed equipment store and training centre would not be used for a purpose that would be seen to be 'essential' for the management of the NZ or the conservation or enhancement of the National Park's valued characteristics.
22. Consequently, the proposal would fail to meet the exceptional circumstances required for development to be found to be acceptable in the NZ. As a result, the proposal would conflict with CS policy DS1, LP policy DMC2 and the Framework. These seek, among other matters, for the Authority to promote the effective conservation and enhancement of the National Park and to only allow development in the NZ which is shown to be essential for its management or the conservation of the Park's valued characteristics.

Other Matters

23. The horse walker building is used to exercise the appellant's horses that are reported as being exceptionally highly trained and competition winners. Accordingly, the appellant remarks that the horse walker is an essential building for the appropriate management of equine bloodstock. The building is also used to train ponies and exercise mares who have recently given birth. These benefits are

recognised but are personal to the appellant and afford only limited weight in favour of the proposal.

24. An equipment store was approved by the Authority at Far Nova in 2021. However, the details of that scheme, and its context and relationship to other buildings, is not disclosed within the evidence. As such, I cannot draw any clear similarities between these separate developments.

Conclusion

25. The proposal would result in demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area, where the Framework requires great weight to be applied to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and the scenic beauty of a National Park. Accordingly, the proposal would not accord with the development plan, when taken as a whole, and there are no material considerations of sufficient magnitude to indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, the appeal is dismissed.

B Plenty

INSPECTOR