



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2024

by C Harding BA (Hons) PGCert PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W9500/W/24/3350385

Townend Farm, Whitby Road, Easington, Redcar and Cleveland TS13 4NE

- 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 I Graham against the decision of North York Moors National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is NYM/2024/0166.
 - The development proposed is extension of five van site (motorhomes – no tents to provide an additional 7 hardstandings and new access direct to Whitby Road (A174).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been made in respect of the appeal. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. I understand that a five-pitch site has operated at the appeal site, as a Caravan and Motorhome Club Certificated Site, for several years. It is stated, and it is not disputed by the Council, that the site has operated on this basis as permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). That the site has been used for this purpose, albeit without a specific planning permission having been granted, is therefore material to the consideration of the appeal.
4. The appellant's statement of case includes a drawing named "Appendix B" which provides details of visibility splays at the proposed access. Whilst it is unclear whether this drawing was available to the Council at the time it made its decision, it does not represent an amendment to the scheme, and the Council has had opportunity to comment upon it. No party, therefore, would be prejudiced by me taking account of it in reaching my decision.
5. The Highway Authority ('HA') did not provide comments on the planning application, but it did provide comments to the Council in relation to proposal during the appeal process. These comments were subsequently provided to me by the Council. The comments of the HA were not, therefore, made directly to the Planning Inspectorate.
6. Whether the HA evidence was provided separately or as part of the Council's case, as this evidence was received within the appeal timetable, and the appellant has

had opportunity to comment upon it, no party would be prejudiced by my taking account of it, regardless of the means by which it was submitted.

7. On 12 December 2024, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). During the appeal the parties were invited to comment on the relevance of the revised Framework to the appeal proposal. In reaching my decision, I have had regard to the responses of the parties.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are the effect of the proposal upon:
 - the character and appearance of the North York Moors National Park, and;
 - highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

9. The appeal site lies within the North York Moors National Park ('NP'). NPs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The two purposes of NPs are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of NPs by the public.
10. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, amended The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to impose a duty to further the statutory purposes of NPs in England. Paragraph 189 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in NPs.
11. The appeal site is located at the western edge of Easington, towards the summit of a shallow crest and adjacent to the A174 (Whitby Road). The landform falls gently to the west, and more steeply to the south, towards a railway line. To the east of the appeal site is Townend Farm and a number of residential dwellings at the western extent of the village. Here the road falls to the east. To the north, beyond the road, the topography is flatter, but ultimately gently rises towards Boulby Road and the coast. The appeal site is located at the western edge of the NP and therefore effectively forms a gateway to it.
12. An existing timber shed is located adjacent to the appeal site and road. This building, and the public house opposite, being located on the crest of the hill form a pair of landmark buildings. Although the A174 contains streetlights between Easington and Loftus, and has a footway on its northern side, the western edge of the settlement is clearly defined by Townend Farm and the public house.
13. The character of the A174, given the footway and streetlights, has a less rural feel than, for example, the A174 to the east of Easington. However, there is no sense otherwise that the area has a particularly urban character or that Easington is closely related to the larger and more urban settlement of Loftus, which lies to the west. The landscape between the two settlements is rural in character and is reflective of much of the countryside in the area.
14. It is the case therefore, that the appeal site lies outside of the built-up area of Easington, within open countryside. It has value as part of the wider landscape and

in maintaining the sense of separation between Easington and Loftus. It also has a role in preserving the clearly defined western entrance to the village, despite the existing use of part of the appeal site as a Certificated Site.

15. This being said, the site has limited visibility within the wider landscape as topography and a lack of public viewpoints means that it is not prominent in longer views. I saw that views from Boulby Road, to the north are specific, intermittent and long distance, and that the appeal site is generally recessive, with only the more prominent timber shed being readily identifiable. Although the proposal would lead to motorhomes and caravans being located on the appeal site, which would have an urbanising effect, the effect of this in these longer views would not be significantly harmful.
16. However, the proximity of the appeal site to the A174 means that the proposal, including any motorhomes using the site, would have the potential to be highly visible in local views by road users or pedestrians. There is an existing hedge which lines the southern side of the road, and which in part, provides screening. However, the effectiveness of this varies, and whilst I saw that the hedge has been gapped up in places, these measures do not yet significantly bolster any screening that it provides.
17. In particular, the area around where the proposed access would be installed is noticeably open and provides clear views into the appeal site, and towards the existing caravan site. These views are particularly evident when approaching the site in a vehicle from the west, or when making use of the footway.
18. Therefore, the proposal, particularly when the appeal site would be in use, would appear as a prominent roadside feature with a clear urbanising effect, in contrast to the otherwise natural appearance of the surroundings beyond the edge of the settlement. Touring caravans are also typically of a light colouration which would increase any sense of visual intrusion. Overall, this would be harmful to the character and appearance of the NP. Although views from the A174 would be time-limited and localised, this would not overcome this harm.
19. Additional planting either to bolster existing hedgerows or to provide screening within the site would take time to establish, and it is likely that the harm that I have identified would persist in the medium to longer term. Furthermore, such screening would not overcome the loss of the open nature that the appeal site currently exhibits, and which contributes positively to the character of the NP.
20. Consequently, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the NP. The proposal therefore conflicts with Strategic Policy B and Policy UE2 of the North York Moors National Park Authority Local Plan ('LP'), which together and among other factors states that small scale holiday accommodation should be screened by existing topography, buildings or adequate well-established vegetation, and should not detract from the character or visual attractiveness of the area. Furthermore, the proposal conflicts with the first statutory purpose of the NP.

Highway safety

21. The A174 is a single carriageway road which forms a route into the NP from the north and west. The settlement of Loftus lies to the west of the appeal site and the stretch of the road between Loftus and Easington is limited to 40 miles per hour ('mph'). The road is sinuous close to Loftus, but visibility opens up as the road

gently rises towards the appeal site when approached from the west, albeit the road continues to curve.

22. Immediately to the west of the appeal site is an existing gated access set back from the main carriageway, which serves the railway line and agricultural land to the south of the appeal site. A footway can be found on the northern side of the A174 and I saw that street lights are present.
23. In refusing planning permission, the Council cited concern in relation to the level of information provided by the appellant in relation to highway safety, on the basis that the new access would be used by large vehicles and would be served by a main route. I note that the Highway Authority ('HA') did not offer any comment on the planning application but has since provided comments in relation to the appeal. As set out above, I have had regard to these comments.
24. The provided plan "Appendix B" indicates that the access would be 5.3 metres ('m') wide, and that visibility splays of up to 120m could be achieved in both directions. It also indicates that a pedestrian route exiting the site to the east at Townend Farm would also be provided.
25. I saw that much of the A174 between Loftus and Easington is subject to overtaking restrictions. The HA highlights that the proposed access would be located within a short stretch of the A174 where overtaking is permitted. Given the restrictions that are evident, it is reasonable to expect that vehicles could seek to make use of this relatively short stretch of overtaking opportunity. This would result in potential conflict with users of the proposed access; even if suitable visibility would be achievable, it would not necessarily be expected that traffic would approach the point of the access travelling against the regular flow of traffic. Moreover, given the use of the site for caravan and motorhomes, it is reasonable to expect that vehicles leaving the appeal site may be larger or potentially towing, and would therefore be slower to join the carriageway.
26. Therefore, despite the additional visibility that might be available to drivers of larger vehicles and the fact that streetlighting exists, I consider that proposed access would have the potential to lead to conflict between vehicles leaving the appeal site, and vehicles using the A174, which may also, at this point, be carrying out overtaking manoeuvres. Overall, this would be harmful to highway safety.
27. It may be the case that the existing access to the west has operated without incident, however the evidence indicates that this is used as a maintenance access for the railway line and for accessing farmland. Consequently, the frequency of its use is likely to be low, and not comparable to the level of activity which would be associated with the proposal.
28. It is stated that the new access is proposed in order to prevent vehicles having to access the site through Townend Farm, close to residential dwellings. While I acknowledge that the proposed access would offer advantages in this respect, this does not justify the potential harm to highway safety that I have identified.
29. It is possible that the use of a one-way system could have the potential to address the harm that I have identified by preventing the use of the proposed access for egress purposes. However, there are no substantive details before me in relation to how access and egress to the site would operate in such a system, and whether

the existing access would be suitable to accommodate such additional traffic. I therefore afford little weight to such a potential arrangement.

30. It is indicated that pedestrian access through the appeal site from the east by way of Townend Farm would be possible. In these circumstances I consider that it is unlikely that pedestrians would seek to leave the site via the proposed vehicular access as matter of course, as this route would involve crossing the road. The proposal would therefore be acceptable in this regard.
31. Nevertheless, the proposal would lead to harm to highway safety. In doing so, it would conflict with LP Policy CO2 which states, among other factors that development will only be permitted where the design and layout take into account the needs of all users.

Other Matters

32. The proposal would provide additional capacity to accommodate caravan and motorhome visitors, in a NP where there are pressures in relation to the capacity to accommodate motorhomes. The provision of such accommodation would help to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the NP. It would also give rise to economic benefits in the form of supporting local businesses and services, as well as the wider tourism economy, as highlighted by the level of support for the proposal indicated by local residents and businesses. I also take account of the support for tourism more generally within both the LP and policies within the Framework, and the fact that the appellant had successfully secured grant funding for the scheme. Together these factors weigh in favour of the proposal.
33. The scheme would also have the potential to deliver biodiversity benefits, however there is no specific evidence before me to quantify the biodiversity net gain that may arise.
34. It is stated that the appeal site could operate under a temporary use as a campsite under the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 4, Class BC of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for up to 60 days per year. This is advanced as a fallback position.
35. However, reference is made to this in only very general terms, and it is not clear whether there is a more than a theoretical prospect of such a use being implemented. The extent of Class BC is such that it would not facilitate the creation of a new access. Consequently, it is likely that users would be required to access the site by other means, potentially via Townend Farm, a situation which the evidence indicates that the appellant is otherwise seeking to avoid.
36. Furthermore, Class BC would only allow 60 days of occupation, whereas the appeal proposal would not be subject to such restrictions. While it is stated that the season is usually between March and October, this would not be comparable as it would be possible for the appeal proposal to operate for periods exceeding 60 days within this season. In doing so, the visual harm that would result from the use of land would occur for longer periods.
37. While potentially more pitches could be installed under Class BC than are proposed within the appeal scheme, it is likely that the site would be occupied for a shorter time throughout the year. Furthermore, the fallback position would not result in

harm to highway safety that I have identified, as the creation of an access on to a classified road would fall outside of its scope.

38. Therefore, even if I were to agree that there was a greater than theoretical prospect of the site being used as a temporary recreational campsite under Class BC and that this constituted a fallback position, it has not been shown that the fallback position would result in greater harm than the appeal scheme. It does not, therefore, weigh in favour of the proposal.
39. I am aware that the Authority has recently granted planning permission for a tourism development at Hinderwell, although the level of detail provided in relation to this is limited. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the context of that site in terms of its relationship to the overall settlement, main roads and wider NP, and therefore its effect upon the character and appearance of the NP, is not wholly comparable to the scheme that is before me. Moreover, the fact that the Hinderwell scheme was approved subject to a range of conditions, and received objection from interested parties does not justify the harm that I have found in relation to the scheme which is before me.
40. Taken together these matters do not lead me to reach a different conclusion, and I must attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park.

Conclusion

41. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations which would indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given and having considered all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C Harding

INSPECTOR