



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2025

by T Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2620/W/24/3349134

Land to the north of Bradfield Common & east of Lincoln Cottage, Common Road, Bradfield, North Walsham NR28 0QR

- 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 Dr Clare Walters (Absolute Specialists Limited) against the decision of North Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is PF/23/1580.
 - The development proposed is change of use from a caravan that provides for shelter, refreshments and storage to one that provides day-time workshop facilities and short-term overnight accommodation for mental health support and well-being services. This will include cladding the caravan with timber weatherboarding, as well as landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the proposal has altered from the application form to the Council decision notice. The amended description has been utilised on the appeal form and the appellant indicates within their evidence that the revised description was agreed.
3. The proposal should therefore be described as stationing of caravan for a mixed use comprising short term residential retreat / holiday accommodation for carers and people from a caring profession (up to 84 days per annum); hosted retreats for carers and people from a caring profession (up to 18 days per annum); Full-day and half-day therapeutic retreats for carers and people from a caring profession including overnight accommodation for the site manager / operator (up to 66 days per annum). I have considered the appeal on this basis.
4. The evidence indicates the site benefits from a certificate of lawful development for existing use of land for stationing of a caravan to provide shelter, toilets and refreshment facilities and a place to provide a place to lock up equipment.

Planning policy position

5. The most relevant policies to this proposal are SS 1, SS 2 and EC 7 of the North Norfolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy (CS) (2008). I am satisfied that these relate to the nature of the proposal and the weight to be afforded to local plan policies can be determined by assessing the degree of their compliance to the Framework¹. These policies broadly seek to focus development including tourist

¹ National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

accommodation to areas where services and facilities are available and seek to restrict development within the countryside.

6. These policies do have alignment with the Framework which amongst other things at paragraph 88 states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. Paragraph 89 recognises that sites may have to be found beyond existing settlements and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In those circumstances development should exploit any opportunities to make a location more sustainable.
7. In any event, the policies within the local plan are tailored to meet the particular requirements of North Norfolk. The most relevant policies should therefore be afforded substantial weight in the consideration of this proposal.

Main Issue

8. The main issue is whether the proposal would accord with the development strategy for the area with particular regard to achieving sustainable patterns of development.

Reasons

9. The appeal site forms a parcel of land which sits within a rural area outside of North Walsham. The site has vehicular access from Common Road and includes a static mobile home as well as amongst other features a field, orchard, vineyard, shed, workshop and other planting. The proposal seeks to use the caravan as a retreat venue for carers and residents of North Norfolk suffering exhaustion, anxiety and burn out. The purpose would be to allow rehabilitation through 'The Walters Method' exercises which is said revolves around solitude, quiet reflection, walking in nature, meditation, reading self-help books and relaxation.
10. There appear to be very limited services and facilities available within the immediate vicinity of the site, with those available in the area located within other settlements away from Bradfield. Although there is access to the quiet lanes network and nearby footpaths, it is likely that due to the nature of the rural roads, any services and facilities at Trunch or further afield within North Walsham would generally be accessed by car.
11. It is contended that the proposal is not for either residential or holiday accommodation at the site. The Council consider the proposal relates to a mixed use of the site, with residential and tourism elements.
12. The request is for 168 overnight stays in total. The first element of the proposal for retreat/holiday accommodation for carers and people from a caring profession (up to 84 days per annum) would appear closely related to the use of the caravan for holiday accommodation. The part of the proposal relating to use for overnight accommodation for the site manager / operator (up to 66 days per annum) appears to relate more to the use of the caravan as residential accommodation, albeit in association with a business. 18 overnight stays are also sought for individuals receiving intensive guidance.
13. There is limited justification provided for the requirement for a site manager/operator to be on site and it may be that the tasks associated with such a

role could equally be completed without the requirement to stay overnight at the site.

14. Policy SS 1 of the CS relates to the spatial strategy for North Norfolk. Broadly, it seeks to direct new development to the principal settlements which are set out within a hierarchy.
15. Policy SS 2 of the CS relates to development within the countryside. It states that in areas designated as countryside, development will be limited to that which requires a rural location and is for one or more of the listed development types which include recreation and tourism.
16. Policy EC 7 of the CS states that proposals for new build tourist accommodation should be located within the principal or secondary settlements. The policy allows new tourist accommodation within the countryside, where permitted in accordance with other policies for employment areas, the re-use of buildings in the countryside, and extensions to existing businesses in the countryside.
17. There is nothing to indicate that this proposal is associated with these matters. The Policy indicates that where there are no sequentially preferable sites, amongst other things, serviced accommodation may be permitted in the rural tourism and asset zones of the countryside where they are in close proximity and have good links to the principle and secondary settlements.
18. The proposal includes both residential and tourism uses. However, the appeal site does not have good links to principle or secondary settlements or any other settlement with services and facilities. This would limit the opportunity for travel via modes other than by car. Subsequently, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development strategy for the area as it would fail to promote sustainable patterns of development. The proposal would therefore conflict with policies SS 1, SS 2 and EC 7 of the CS.

Other Matters

19. By the third year of operation the evidence indicates that 50 carers and others largely from North Norfolk suffering emotional distress and being overwhelmed would benefit annually. There would therefore be benefits to individuals and their families as a result of the proposal. Whilst I accept that there may be a need for more mental health support in Norfolk, detailed and substantial evidence relating to that need before me is limited and rather broad in its nature and I afford the matter of need limited weight.
20. The proposal could improve the appearance of the caravan and the cladding could give the caravan an appearance more befitting of the rural setting which would be of benefit to the appearance of the area. The site would also be made available to local community groups and the proposal would generate some local spend associated with the works and use. The proposal could generate a biodiversity net gain in part through additional planting at the site. Given the small scale of the proposals however, the weight to be afforded to these matters is limited.
21. I note that the Council do not consider that there would be any significant adverse impact with regards to highway safety and I have no reason to disagree. The caravan is set well within its grounds and there is unlikely to be any disturbance of significance to neighbours by reason of separation from nearby property.

22. The effect of the proposal on European Sites has been raised although it appears that the relevant financial contribution has been secured with regard to that matter. In any event, I shall not consider that matter in detail as the proposal is unacceptable for other reasons.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

23. Given my conclusion that policies SS 1, SS 2 and EC 7 of the CS are not out of date, it therefore follows that the basket of policies that are most important for determining the application are not out of date. Subsequently, paragraph 11.d) of the Framework is not relevant to the appeal.
24. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm. Considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

T Burnham

INSPECTOR