
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2025

by **C Mayes CMLI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A3010/W/25/3364042

Willow Beck Retreat, Main Street, North Leverton, Retford DN22 0AZ

- 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 Abraham Marshall against the decision of Bassetlaw District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00904/FUL.
 - The development proposed is 'change of use of land for a touring and camping site'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the development in the banner heading is taken from the application form and refers only to change of use of the land. However, the decision notice also includes reference to a proposed amenity block, reception office/shop and play equipment which would comprise operational development. These elements along with hardstanding are shown on the submitted plans and while the appellant has indicated that the office/shop element has been removed from the scheme, the structure would remain, providing for an information hub. I have therefore considered the appeal as including operational development as shown on the plans.
3. The development has commenced. I saw at my site visit that the proposed hardstanding, mobile amenity block, office/reception block and children's play equipment were present on site. The proposed shepherd's huts were not.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and,
 - whether or not the proposal would be suitably located having regard to relevant development plan policies concerning development outside of settlement boundaries and in the rural area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a smallholding located on the outskirts of the village of North Leverton. It is currently operating as certified location with the Caravan and

Motorhome Club. The site is predominantly laid to grass, bounded by hedgerows, with agricultural fields surrounding it on all sides, including opposite the site across Main Street. The site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary and is therefore within open countryside.

6. The surrounding landscape exhibits a coherent pattern of elements, for example, rectilinear fields and boundary hedgerows, and a visually unified open, agrarian character with only a few detracting features, such as the adjacent Sheffield to Lincoln railway line. The railway line forms a distinct physical and visual barrier between the developed area of North Leverton and the surrounding open countryside, including the appeal site.
7. The proposed development would introduce several dispersed and varied structures across the site that would have a cluttered and domestic appearance. I acknowledge that there were considerable areas of hardstanding in place on the site prior to the appellant's ownership. However, the more formalised appearance of the current layout and extent of hardstanding, combined with the proposed structures, would have an urbanising effect and would appear incongruous within the context of the surrounding countryside.
8. The proposed landscaping scheme would, in part, contribute to integrating the development into its surroundings, but would have little screening effect. I also acknowledge the changes made to the site since its acquisition by the appellant. However, while the removal of the former stables and cumulative clutter on the site is a visual enhancement, the domestic character and appearance of the proposed development would still represent a departure from the site's rural character and that of the surrounding area. Overall, the appeal proposal would be a more visually detracting feature in the countryside, inconsistent with the coherent rural character of the area, even when considered against the previous condition of the site or its use as a Certified Location.
9. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would conflict with Policies ST8, ST33 and ST35 of the Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038, May 2024, (the LP) and Policies 2 and 5 of the Sturton Ward Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2037 (the NP). In combination, these policies seek to ensure development respects local context, would have no adverse impact on the character of the location, and protects the distinctive qualities of the landscape.

Principle of development

10. Policy ST8 of the LP sets out criteria for assessing the acceptability of development in the countryside. I acknowledge that caravan and camping sites, incorporating more permanent features such as the proposed shepherd's huts and other infrastructure, would generally be located within a rural setting and may contribute to the local rural economy. I also note the Nottinghamshire County Council's Visitor Economy Strategy which indicates that there is a requirement for accommodation of this type. For the reasons given above however, the proposed scheme would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding landscape and, therefore, would not be of an appropriate scale or design to meet criteria c) and e) of Policy ST8.
11. Moreover, the existing site does not constitute previously developed land. As such, the proposed development does not make efficient use of previously developed

land and there is no firm evidence to demonstrate that opportunities to do so have been considered. Hence, the proposed scheme fails to meet criteria d) of Policy ST8.

12. The proposed development seeks to expand an established business use which operates within the boundaries of the existing site, with no neighbouring residential properties and which the local Highways Authority considers having safe access. The appellant has provided some indication that the site is popular with users and that available pitches fall short of demand. Hence, the proposed development represents an opportunity for the appellant to expand the established business. In these regards, the proposed development would generally accord with criteria a), f) and g) of Policy ST8.
13. However, to be supported under Policy ST8, development proposals must meet all the identified criteria, and in this regard, the scheme falls short for the reasons given above.
14. I acknowledge that Policy 7 of the NP states that development outside of the development boundary will be supported where it would provide overnight accommodation for visitors, and bed and breakfast accommodation, in particular. In this regard, the scheme would generally accord with the NP. However, overall, I find that the location of the appeal proposal would be unacceptable due to the adverse effect on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding landscape.
15. Having regard to the overall policy position outlined above, I conclude that the principle of the proposed development in this location would not be acceptable and the proposal conflicts with Policies ST1 and ST8 of the LP, which seek, among other things, to ensure development is appropriate to its location.

Other Matters

16. The appellant refers to other tourism facilities in the wider area. However, I have no details regarding their planning status or how they came about. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that they are directly comparable to the appeal site in terms of context, scale or location. As each case must be assessed on its merits, I have considered this appeal accordingly.
17. While I note the appellant's reference to plans for a solar farm nearby, I have no substantive information about the status of these plans and whether it will go ahead, and therefore I afford this matter very little weight.
18. I acknowledge the Landscaping Masterplan and its potential benefits for biodiversity and rural character. Nonetheless, these benefits do not sufficiently outweigh the harm identified.
19. The appellant asserts that the site is in a sustainable location with access to local facilities and services, and that the scheme would support local businesses and the rural economy. I acknowledge that policies within the National Planning Policy Framework support development that provides economic benefits, and particularly a prosperous rural economy. However, the economic benefits would be limited in scale and do not outweigh the significant harm to the area's character and appearance that I have found.

20. I have taken account of the matters raised by third parties in support of the proposed development, but none outweigh the conclusions I have reached.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would accord with Policy 7 of the NP, but I find, given the above, that it would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

C Mayes

INSPECTOR