



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2026

by John Dowsett MA DipURP DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 July 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/U2750/W/25/3367178

Willerby Grange Cottage, Wains Lane, Staxton, North Yorkshire YO12 4SH

- 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 Mrs Joanne Dalby against the decision of North Yorkshire Council.
 - The application Reference is: ZE25/00104/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as: Change of use of land for the siting of a static caravan.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development has already been carried out, and the caravan has been located on the site. I was thus able to see it during my site visit. The planning application form states that the development was completed on 1 October 2020. Although the development was described as “retrospective” on the decision notice issued by the Council, and the appellant has subsequently adopted that wording on the appeal form, Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the Act) describes development as the carrying out of building operations, or the making of material changes of use, as opposed to their retention or continuation. Section 73A of the Act makes allowance for the submission of a planning application for development which has been carried out before the date of the application and, consequently, I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the Countryside;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether the proposed development would provide suitable living conditions for the occupiers.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to the siting of a static caravan on part of a wider site, which it is stated is in use as a smallholding. The planning application form states that this is used as accommodation for the person responsible for ensuring the welfare of animals kept at the site. The area of land around the static caravan also contains

a riding manège, a modern barn type building located next to the static caravan, and an enclosure used for housing chickens and ducks.

Whether there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at the site.

5. Policy SP1 of the Ryedale Local Plan Strategy 2013 (hereinafter the RLPS) establishes the general locations for new development and a settlement hierarchy for the area that it covers. This seeks to focus growth in the identified Principal Town, the Market Towns, and in identified Service Villages. The contiguous settlements of Staxton and Willerby are identified as a Service Village. Service villages are seen as a tertiary focus for growth. However, it is not in dispute that the appeal site is located outside the settlement boundary for Staxton and Willerby and is within the open countryside for the purposes of planning policy. RLPS Policy SP1 restricts development in the countryside to, among other things, that which is necessary to support a sustainable, vibrant, and healthy rural economy and communities.
6. Policy SP2 of the RLPS, deals with the delivery and distribution of new housing. It sets out that within the wider open countryside, new build dwellings necessary to support the land-based economy, and where an essential need for residential development in that location can be justified, may be acceptable.
7. RLPS Policy SP9 allows for new buildings that are necessary to support land-based activity and a working countryside, including for farming and equine purposes. This is in order to support the area's land-based economy.
8. Policy SP21 of the RLPS, which addresses occupancy restrictions, states that proposals for new residential development in the open countryside to support land-based activity, will be required to demonstrate that there is an essential need for the dwelling that cannot be met elsewhere and, if permitted, such dwellings would be subject to an occupancy condition. It goes on to state that time restricted conditions and occupancy conditions will be applied to temporary residential accommodation to support a new farming or rural enterprise activity where the need for the accommodation can be justified. This latter clause refers specifically to caravans or wooden structures.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless, among other things, there is an essential need for a rural worker, to live permanently at, or near, their place of work in the countryside.
10. The question, therefore, is whether there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at the site. The original planning application contained very little information in respect of the activities carried on at the site. The appellant's statement of case sets out that the livestock referred to comprises 8 horses, 6 ducks, and 27 hens.
11. Although the application describes the appeal site as a smallholding, there is nothing in the evidence which would indicate that it is operated as a commercial venture. The Council characterise the use as either domestic, or a small scale hobby farm. It also points out that the planning permission for the manège on the land contains a condition that it is only to be used for domestic purposes by the occupier of Willerby Grange Cottage, the appellant's residence. Neither of these points has been gainsaid by the appellant.

12. When I visited the site, I saw that whilst there were ducks and poultry on a small part of the wider site, the majority of the land adjacent to where the caravan is located appeared to be given over to equestrian activities. No technical evidence has been adduced to demonstrate that the activities at the site require a full time equivalent worker to carry them out, or that they could financially support a wage for a rural worker.
13. Give the above, there is little in the evidence to suggest that that the site plays any meaningful role in the rural economy. As the planning application states that the caravan was sited on the land in 2020, the activities at the site could not realistically now, or indeed in January 2025 when the original planning application was submitted, be described as a new farming or rural enterprise activity.
14. The appellants arguments are primarily based around animal welfare issues. I accept that there may be occasions when urgent attention is required for health issues, injuries or other complications. I am also aware that routine checks on livestock are beneficial and that there may be concerns regarding potential theft of equipment vandalism, or animals escaping from the site.
15. Nevertheless, the appellant's own residence is located a few metres from the land, on the opposite side of Wain's Lane, and there is no suggestion that the appellant has any constraints that would prevent them from carrying out any routine checks, care routines, or providing urgent assistance to the livestock outside of normal working hours. Similarly, there is no suggestion that technical solutions such as closed circuit television and/or motion detectors could not provide monitoring of the site from the appellant's property. In any event, parts of the land, notably the doorway to the barn, are not in direct line of sight of the caravan. I have had regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. However, there is no compelling evidence before me that the appeal proposal would prevent crime and disorder.
16. I have not had any evidence put to me that there are no suitable, or affordable, properties in the villages of Willerby and Staxton, a short distance from the appeal site, which could house a worker at the site.
17. The planning application form sets out that the appellant is planning to establish a Mental Wellness clinic, incorporating equine therapy, and that the caravan would serve as a space for related classes and provide shelter during inclement weather. Whilst this does not form part of the appeal proposal and is not a matter than is before me for decision, if this use is being contemplated for the caravan, it does undermine the credibility of the argument that the caravan is essential to provide living accommodation for a rural worker.
18. There is nothing which would indicate that the activities at the site are any kind of business, or charitable, operation. A carer looking after the livestock may be technically a rural worker, but there is no substantive evidence that the scale or extent of the animal welfare activities warrant, or could support, a full time worker. It has not been shown that there are no other suitable dwellings available nearby, nor is there anything which would show that out of hours activity required could not be carried out by the appellant themselves.

19. Consequently, I find that it has not been demonstrated that it is essential for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work. The proposal does not comply with the relevant requirements of RLPS Policies SP1, SP2, SP9 and SP21 or the Framework.

Character and appearance

20. The caravan is located in part of a larger field to the west of the main built up area of the villages of Willerby and Staxton, close to the junction of Wain's Lane and Willerby Carr Lane. The appeal site is located on the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering which starts rising up towards the Yorkshire Wolds to the south of the A64 road. The field on which the caravan is located slopes gently to the north towards the valley bottom.
21. Although close to the edge of the built up area of the village the area immediately around the has a distinctly rural character and is comprised of a mosaic of irregularly shaped small to medium sized fields. The appeal site is separated from the village by a field and the width of Willerby Carr Lane. Just before the edge of the village Wain's Lane narrows to become a single track road and beyond the village edge is bounded by hedgerows to each side. Willerby Carr Lane, similarly, is a single track road with hedgerow boundaries.
22. Within the same field as the caravan there is a modern, portal framed barn and a riding manège surrounded by a fence and hedge. To the south of Wain's Lane is the complex of buildings comprising Willerby Grange Farm.
23. St Peter's Church, a mediaeval, stone built, church with a square tower lies adjacent to the boundary of the field that contains the caravan. The churchyard is surrounded by trees on the boundary with a low stone wall to Wain's Lane enclosing the southern edge of the churchyard. On the west side of the churchyard are two modern bungalows, with a further group of farm buildings farther west on the north side of Wain's Lane.
24. The caravan, which is clad in a dark coloured timber, is located to the north of the modern barn. It can be glimpsed from Wains Lane in the vicinity of the gate to the field but is seen in context with the taller and wider barn to the south. There is a greater degree of visibility from Willerby Carr Lane due to the proximity of the caravan to the road and the presence of a gap in the hedgerow just to the north. At the time of my site visit the trees immediately to the rear of the caravan were not in leaf, which increased its visibility. At other times of the year, these trees would provide increased screening.
25. The area around the caravan, whilst having a distinctly rural character which is quite different from that of the village to the east, does contain a number of buildings of different ages and types. In the vicinity of the appeal site many longer and medium range views are truncated by the hedgerows and trees alongside the roads and there are few publicly accessible places from where the caravan is readily visible. It can be seen from within the churchyard at St Peter's Church. However, from this location it is seen in conjunction with the adjacent larger modern barn, and it is the narrower, end elevation, which is visible.
26. As a result of this restricted visibility, combined with the muted colour and external appearance of the caravan, which are fairly typical of rural buildings, although the

caravan is an additional structure in the countryside, its effect on the character and appearance of the area is very slight and does not amount to harm.

27. I conclude that the development does not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It complies with the relevant requirements of Policies SP13, SP16 and SP20 RLPS. When taken together, these seek to ensure that development is of a high standard of design which has regard to its context and the surrounding landscape character, is well integrated with its surroundings, would reinforce local distinctiveness and which would preserve the historic landscape character of the Vale of Pickering.
28. Whilst the reason for refusal also cites RLPS Policy SP8, this policy relates to tourism development. The proposal is not for a tourism related development, and the policy makes no mention of design or landscape protection. I therefore have not considered this as a relevant policy.

Living conditions of the occupiers of the development

29. The caravan is located adjacent to a building which is used for the housing of livestock, and it is stated by the Council that manure is also stored at the site close to the site of the caravan. The Council's concern is that the occupier of the caravan would be adversely affected by noise and odours from these sources. Whilst the Council accepts that a rural worker's dwelling would experience some noise and odour disturbance from the proximity to agricultural activity, it argues that because the caravan is located immediately adjacent to a building used for housing livestock the level of disturbance experienced would be unacceptable.
30. When I visited the site, there was a stiff breeze blowing and it was raining. There was no noticeable odour, however, this was most likely due, at least in part, to the weather conditions. The Council has not elaborated the extent or duration of any alleged noise, and the appellant has set out that it is intended to construct a bespoke storage area for manure away from the caravan. This latter point could be addressed by a suitably worded planning condition.
31. I saw when I visited the site that poultry are kept in the south west part of the site, some considerable distance from the caravan. In the absence of any other substantive evidence, I am not persuaded that any noise resulting from the normal use of the building for stabling of horses would be so great as to result in significant disturbance to the occupier of the caravan.
32. I therefore find that the proposed development would, subject to an appropriately worded condition, provide suitable living conditions for the occupier. This would comply with the relevant requirements of Policy SP20 of the RLPS which seeks, among other things, to ensure that new development does not have an adverse effect on the amenity of future occupiers.

Other Matters

33. The caravan is within the wider setting of the Grade II* Church of St Peter [List Entry No: 1175601] and its associated Grade II listed boundary wall and gateposts [List Entry No: 1149638]. Neither party has submitted any substantive information in respect of the architectural or historical interest of these, or in respect of their significance and the contribution that their setting makes to that significance. From the List Entry, the church is an example of a mediaeval parish church which,

although restored in the late nineteenth century, appears to have survived largely unaltered since the construction of the tower in the late fourteenth century. As set out above, I saw when I visited that although the caravan is visible from the church yard and is within its wider countryside setting. However, these views are from a distance, and the caravan is seen in conjunction with the adjacent modern barn. From what I saw, the presence of the caravan does not undermine the ability to understand or appreciate the significance of the church and boundary wall, and thus it has a neutral effect on the setting of the listed buildings. I also note that Council have not raised any objections on this ground.

34. No third party representations were received in respect of the original planning application but a petition bearing 35 signatures in support of the proposal was submitted with the appellant's Statement of Case. Although this shows that there is some local support for the appellant's proposal, the text of the petition does not add any further evidence that would show there is an essential need for a rural worker to live on the site.
35. The presence of a dwelling on the site would remove the need for a worker to travel to and from the site for the purposes of work. Whilst this would be a small environmental benefit, there are little in the way of shops, services or other facilities within the neighbouring settlement, and the occupier of the dwelling would still need to travel to meet other needs.
36. The appellant suggests that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. However, no substantive evidence has been put to me which would demonstrate the extent of any shortfall, or indeed if that is in fact the case. The Council's evidence is silent in respect of this matter. The absence of a five year housing land supply would engage paragraph 11(d) of the Framework. Although this would technically deem policies in the development plan out of date, it does not necessarily mean that the policies most relevant to the decision are, in fact, out of date.
37. RLPS Policy SP2 sets a housing target for area. In this respect, the policy could be deemed out of date as a result of changes to the Council's housing targets. However, the policy seeks to maintain strict control over dwellings in the countryside, including the requirement to demonstrate an essential need for rural workers dwellings. This is consistent with Framework. RLPS Policy SP1 is a general locational strategy; Policy SP9 seeks to support the rural economy; and Policy SP21 addresses the use of occupancy conditions. There is nothing in the evidence that would suggest that these policies are inconsistent with the Framework.
38. RLPS Policies SP13, SP16 and SP20 are general policies relating to design, landscape protection, and amenity. These are also consistent with the expectations of the Framework.
39. Although the Framework seeks to support a prosperous rural economy, there is nothing in the evidence that would suggest that the activities at the site make any meaningful contribution to the local rural economy. The occupier of the caravan may well spend money in the local economy and support local services. However, this would be a modest amount and there is no evidence that any local services are at risk of failure. Little weight can be given to this. The Framework is also clear that isolated homes in the countryside should be resisted except where there

is an essential need for a rural worker to live at or near their place of work. As set out above, that has not been demonstrated by the appeal proposal.

40. Even if the Council were not able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, a single new dwelling would make only a very minor contribution to increasing the supply, irrespective of the extent of any shortfall. Consequently, little weight can be given to this.

Conclusion

41. Although I have found that the development does not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, and would provide suitable living conditions the occupiers, these do not overcome the fundamental point that in order to comply with the requirements of the development plan and the Framework, it must be demonstrated that it is essential for a rural worker to live permanently on the site. The appellant's case has not been made out in respect of this point. The proposal does not comply with important policies in the development plan and in the Framework for directing development to sustainable locations. In the event that paragraph 11(d) of the Framework was to be triggered, notwithstanding that I have no substantiated evidence to indicate that this is the case, the adverse impact of this conflict with these key policies would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the minimal benefits of the proposal.
42. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Dowsett

INSPECTOR