



Planning Statement

Planning application for 17 log cabins at Quarry Walk Park
Ltd, Coppice lane, Cheadle ST10 1RQ

for Quarry Walk Park Ltd

EP ref: 6100



Project : 6100
Site address : Quarry Walk Park Ltd,
Coppice lane, ST10 1RQ
Client : Quarry Walk Park Ltd

Date : 05 June 2017
Author : Jane Griffin

Approved by : Stephen Harris

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Contents:

1. Introduction	1
2. The application and background	1
3. Context	2
4. Policy context	4
5. Planning considerations	10
6. Summary and conclusions	13
7. Appendix	14



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Emery Planning Partnership is instructed by Quarry Walk Park Ltd to submit a full planning application for 17 additional log cabins at Quarry Walk Park, Coppice Lane, Hollington. This application follows previous approvals for the erection of log cabins on the site via application and appeal. The log cabins are to replace existing touring pitches.
- 1.2 The application will enable the upgrading of the caravan park to provide a higher quality of accommodation for tourists coming to Staffordshire Moorlands.

2. The application and background

- 2.1 This planning application is for the erection of 17 additional log cabins at Quarry Walk Park. The floor plans submitted show one bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom cabins. The site plan submitted shows the location of the 17 proposed cabins. The plans show the location of the three bedroom cabins proposed and the applicant proposes to locate either one or two bedroom cabins dependent upon demand.
- 2.2 The site currently comprises 32 no. log cabins. The new cabins will be of a similar design, appearance and size to the existing log cabins on site. The cabins are a single storey structure built from natural and sustainable resources.
- 2.3 The site currently employs 11 full time and part time staff. The proposal would result in a further 3 people being employed on site to run the cabins.
- 2.4 The site is an existing caravan park located off Coppice Lane, Winnothdale, near Hollington. The site was formerly a quarry before planning permission was granted in 1994 for the creation of the caravan park. The original permission was for a total of 40 pitches, 34 of which were originally for touring caravans. The remaining six pitches were for static caravans. Subsequent permissions have resulted in the approval for 20 log cabins and permission was granted in 2008 for a further 20 log cabins on the site.
- 2.5 Following the granting of planning permission in 2008 not all the approved log cabins have been positioned on all the approved plots. Since the application was granted various practical reasons and constraints have prevented some cabins being positioned on site but 32 have been built. These include that some plot sizes are not of a sufficient size to accommodate a

cabin; one plot (27) being too close to the cliffs and an existing electrical substation on a plot which has not been resited.

- 2.6 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Assessment by Barnes Walker and Landscaping Plan by The Plant Room.

3. Context

Site location and description

- 3.1 The application site is located 4km to the east of Cheadle which is the largest settlement in the vicinity. Other settlements close to the appeal site are Upper Tean which is 2km to the west and Alton which is 2.5km to the north east. Hollington is 1km to the south of the site.
- 3.2 There are a number of ways to access the caravan park depending on which direction one is travelling from. However the site entrance is located off Coppice Lane, which can be accessed off either Sandy Lane to the east or the A522 to the west. Tourist signs direct visitors from the A522.
- 3.3 The site has two distinct parts, which are separated by a cliff which cuts through the middle of the site. The lower part of the site comprises a long sloping shelf below the south facing quarry face. It is this lower part where the existing touring caravan pitches and log cabins are located.
- 3.4 On entering the site from the north, the reception and manager's accommodation is immediately on the left hand side. The only vehicular access runs down towards the lower level where the touring caravan pitches and log cabins are located. In addition to the existing caravan pitches and log cabins, there is also a toilet/shower block and a children's play area.
- 3.5 The internal link road splits into a number of loops which serve the touring caravan pitches and log cabins.
- 3.6 One of the advantages of the holiday park is that it is heavily vegetated and views into the site are minimal, if non-existent even in the winter.
- 3.7 The site is also in close proximity to Alton Towers which is one of the country's major tourist's attractions. In addition, the wider countryside and landscape are a significant attraction for visitors to the area.

Relevant planning history

- 3.8 The caravan park has been an established use on the site since the mid-1990s when planning permission was granted on appeal (T/APP/B3438/A/229978/P4) on 20 January 1994. This permission was for 40 touring caravans together with a warden's static caravan, a reception lodge and a toilet/shower block.
- 3.9 Since the original permission, there have been a number of planning applications and permissions on the site. The first was for a reception building at the entrance to the park (SM95-0337) which was approved.
- 3.10 Permission was then granted on 21 August 1996 (SM96-0522) for the siting of six static caravans. These six static caravans replaced six of the existing touring pitches granted by the Inspector in the 1994 appeal.
- 3.11 Permission was granted on 25 July 2000 (00/00434/FUL) for a reception lodge. This proposal was for a larger reception building than that previously approved by Application No SM95-0337.
- 3.12 An application (04/00187/FUL) was submitted by Quarry Walk Caravan Park Ltd for the erection of six log cabins on the six static caravan pitches permitted by Application No SM96-0522. An extension to the reception building was also permitted for manager's accommodation as part of that application. This application was approved by the planning committee who welcomed the proposal to improve holiday accommodation at the park.
- 3.13 A subsequent planning application (05/00892/FUL) was submitted by Quarry Walk Caravan Park Ltd for the replacement of 14 touring caravan pitches with log cabins. The application was refused on 7 December 2005. Following the refusal of the application for 14 log cabins, an appeal was submitted.
- 3.14 A revised application (05/01449/FUL) was submitted on 20th December 2005 for the erection of 6 log cabins. The planning application was approved under delegated powers on 15th February 2006.
- 3.15 The planning application for 14 log cabins was the subject of an appeal decision in March 2007. The appeal decision is enclosed at Appendix EPP1. Permission was granted for the replacement of the touring caravan pitches with the log cabins. An application for costs against the council was successful. This in essence increased the number of log cabins on the site to 20.

3.16 As stated in paragraph 2.4 the most recently approved application was for a further 20 log cabins on site (08/00973/FUL-MJ).

4. Policy context

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 For the purposes of the proposed development, the relevant development plan comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands LDF – Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted version 26 March 2014.
- 4.3 Consideration should also be given to the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (the “Framework”).

National planning policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (the “Framework”) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of the Framework, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.
- 4.5 There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:
- an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
 - a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

- an environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.6 Chapter 3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should, inter alia:

- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.

Development plan context

4.7 The development plan comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands LDF – Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted version 26 March 2014.

Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2014.

4.8 **Chapter 2 – A Portrait of Staffordshire Moorlands** in paragraph 2.11 states that tourism plays an important role in supporting the local economy through both its job creation (providing diverse employment opportunities that support about 3000 jobs in the District) and direct/indirect visitor spend. The value of tourism within the Staffordshire Moorlands is estimated to generate over £122 million.

4.9 **Chapter 3 - The Challenges** sets out a summary of challenges and related issues that have been identified from work undertaken on the policy context, the evidence base, and consultations carried out. Those relevant to this application are below:

- **Strengthening the District's sub-regional role** states that tourism is identified as one of the key areas where the District can have a major role in the sub-region to help bring more people in and diversify its economy. There is a need to strengthen connections with North Staffordshire service providers and ensure better accessibility by road and public transport to major attractors and strategic infrastructure. The role with the Peak District is particularly important – relieving the pressure of tourism, limiting impact on landscape and protecting sites of value.
- **Fostering business growth and economic sustainability** – The service sector is seen as the main driver for economic growth with an opportunity to capitalise on the growth of

the 'experience economy' – tourism, leisure and retail - in particular developing the District's tourism role.

- **Tackling social exclusion and economic decline in the rural areas** - Economic development needs to recognise the contribution which the rural areas can make to the District's economy with a major role for tourism in terms of providing opportunities for jobs, attracting investment and bringing in wealth.
- **Protecting and enhancing the distinctive quality of the environment** - Whilst continuing to protect, manage and enhance the quality of the District's physical, natural and historic environment including its biodiversity is crucial, there is also opportunity to capitalise on the built and natural assets of the District and its heritage to maximise the quality of life for local residents, attract new investment and achieve economic

4.10 **Policy SS1 – Development Principles** states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering in partnership with other agencies and services. These include:

- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;
- a healthy, safe, attractive and well-maintained environment;
- development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas both now and for future generations.
- development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

4.11 **Policy SS6c - Other Rural Areas Area Strategy** - The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development and infill boundaries of the towns and villages, as defined in the Site Allocations DPD, including those small settlements and dispersed developments not identified in Policies SS5, SS6a and SS6b. These areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions which include to:

5. Enhance tourist opportunities by:

- Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS7;
- Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policies E3 and R1);
- Establishing strong linkages between recreational and tourist resources;
- Recognising and developing the close linkages to the Peak District National Park.

4.12 Policy E3 - Tourism and Cultural Development - New tourism and cultural development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports the local economy and promotes the distinctive character and quality of the District and enhances the role of Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS5, SS6 and SS7.

In addition:

- New tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations, including within the Green Belt, new accommodation, attractions and facilities should:
 - be of a scale and design which can be easily assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner;
 - normally be limited to the conversion of existing buildings; or
 - exceptionally, may be new build where it is required to support or complement existing accommodation, facilities or attractions and there is an identified need which cannot be met in other ways. Preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.SS7.

4.13 Spatial Objectives SO8 and SO9 aim to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District and to protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources.

4.14 Policy DC1 - Design Considerations seeks to ensure that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special

character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. These include that new development should:

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

4.15 Policy R1 - Rural Diversification – states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment.

4.16 Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

Other material considerations

The Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study (2011)

4.17 Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study (2011) provides an appraisal of the role and impact of the visitor economy, and the opportunities for its economic growth across the District and in particular in the Churnet Valley corridor.

4.18 The aim of the study was to provide an appraisal of the role and impact of the visitor economy and the opportunities for its economic growth across the District.

4.19 It identifies key national trends in tourism (Executive Summary Part One). These include recent UK economic conditions have influenced domestic tourism and encouraged the rise of the 'staycation' a trend which is set to continue. Trends in accommodation demands have also seen a movement towards self-catering accommodation.

- 4.20 The Study states that the District is seen to have key strengths and opportunities (Executive Summary Part Two) including two tourism brands of genuine national significance – Alton Towers and the Peak District.
- 4.21 With regard to economic contribution tourism generated £158m of expenditure directly to the local economy in 2009. The main attractions which provide the basis for economic growth in tourism in the District include the Peak District National Park and Alton Towers.
- 4.22 Outside the Peak Park and Alton Towers area, there are no major concentrations of accommodation – the area around Leek has just over 40 establishments – many of these in close proximity (but not actually in) the Peak District National Park. In particular there is a lack of provision in Leek and Cheadle town centres.
- 4.23 The Staffordshire Moorlands Integrated Transport Strategy sets out the transport challenges and projects for the District for the period 2011 – 2026 and will be reviewed annually. It identifies challenges which include supporting growth in tourism, particularly within the Churnet Valley.

The West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy (March 2008).

- 4.24 The West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy is a term-review that updates the West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy launched in 2004. It continues to advocate an approach that develops and manages the visitor economy through visitor destinations, themes and underpinning programmes delivered by partnerships between the public sector and the industry.
- 4.25 Tourism and leisure is vital to the economic well-being of the West Midlands and continues to be a growing sector of the regional economy, generating approximately £6 billion per annum, in addition to supporting 115,000 jobs.
- 4.26 The Strategy states that there are a number of market segments currently being targeted at the sub-regional and local level. In most cases these are broadly defined. In summary, across the region, the greatest potential comes from short breaks, specifically from London and the South East, by older and younger couples, and groups of friends, who are relatively upmarket (ABC1) with high disposable income. Day visitors are important to specific places, attractions and products and the greatest economic benefit can be gained from targeting high-spending day visitors – families and couples, including those holidaying outside the region.

- 4.27 The Strategy identifies both the Peak District and Alton Towers as being two such attractions.

The Local Plan 2016-2031

- 4.28 The Council is currently working on a new Local Plan which will be used to decide the outcome of planning applications in the future. The Council intends to publish the Preferred Options Local Plan during the summer of 2017.

5. Planning considerations

- 5.1 The proposed development is to provide 17 new log cabins on an existing holiday park which would replace existing touring pitches at the park. The site currently accommodates 32 cabins with consent for 8 yet to be built.

Proximity to Existing Tourist Facilities

- 5.2 It is clear in the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy that tourism plays a vital part in supporting the local economy through the creation of jobs and visitor spend.
- 5.3 The Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study identifies key national trends in tourism which include a movement towards self-catering accommodation. It goes on to state that self-catering trips have increased to 22.4% which is perceived to be a budget option or that allows visitors freedom and flexibility. The accommodation proposed is the ideal form of accommodation as identified in the Tourism Study.
- 5.4 Quarry Walk Park is ideally placed to take advantage of both the major tourist attraction of Alton Towers, 4 miles from the site, identified in the Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study as being one of the District's "tourism brands of genuine national significance", and the Peak District. These were the two main generators of income from tourism to the District. The site itself comprises some 46 acres and contains woodland trails. The site is well placed to take advantage of activities that can be enjoyed in the surrounding countryside such as walking and cycling.
- 5.5 The aims of Policy R1 are clear in that rural diversification should promote sustainable diversification of the rural economy and facilitate economic activity. The proposal is to replace existing touring pitches with cabins at an existing tourist facility. It has been demonstrated with the granting of the previous application and earlier appeal that the cabins have been

considered to represent an appropriate form of development of which there is no harm to the rural character or environmental quality of the area. It is not considered that traffic movements would increase to any material extent. The accommodation would replace touring caravan plots and therefore would mean that caravan traffic on the surrounding roads would decrease.

- 5.6 The proposal fully accords with the aims of Policy E3 in particular promoting the distinctive character and quality of the District in bringing visitors to the area.
- 5.7 There are a small number of camping and touring caravan sites in the area close to the site and in the vicinity of Alton Towers which offer static caravans and camping pods. However, the type of high-quality log cabin accommodation at Quarry Walk is unique to the area.
- 5.8 The log cabins attract visitors to Staffordshire Moorlands out of the main holiday season and enable visitors to stay throughout the year. This ensures visitor spend is not limited to the main peak holiday season.
- 5.9 The additional log cabins proposed will enhance the existing successful tourist facility at Quarry Walk Park in response to anticipated visitor numbers (Policy SS1 Development Principles).

Landscape Impact

- 5.10 In his Officer Report for the previously approved application for 20 log cabins 08/00973/FUL-MJ the Planning Case Officer made reference to the allowed appeal following refusal of 05/0089/FU-MJ. He highlighted that the Inspector found that the muted, natural tones of the log cabins would be more sympathetic to the surrounding landscape than the touring caravans and considered that the topography of the site, the extensive tree cover and siting of the proposed cabins would mean that the proposed development would have a negligible impact on the landscape. This was considered to be a material consideration in the determination of application 08/00973-FUL-MJ and it was accepted that the proposal would not detract from the character and appearance of the Special Landscape Area.
- 5.11 The Landscape and Visual Assessment which accompanies this application provides an overview of the potential landscape visual effects associated with the proposed development.
- 5.12 The assessment emphasises that the existing lodge/caravan park exists without detriment to the surrounding landscape and it is not discernable from both its immediate surroundings and the

wider landscape setting. This is clear from the photographs taken from various vantage points included in the report.

- 5.13 It is considered that the timber lodges are better assimilated than the transient and potentially obtrusive nature of the touring caravans and that this change has not resulted in any demonstrable levels of landscape or visual effect upon the landscape and visual receptors located within the surrounding countryside.
- 5.14 The proposal therefore fully accords with Policies SO8 and SO9 in promoting local distinctiveness and protecting and improving the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources and DC1 Design Considerations.

Accessibility

- 5.15 Policy E3 relates to new tourism and cultural development. Specifically relevant to this proposal it states that new tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities. Importantly they should be normally located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development.
- 5.16 The existing touring caravan pitches generate traffic movements. Each tourist visiting the site would be towing their caravan with them. Therefore their only mode of transport is a private car or van. The replacement of the existing touring caravan pitches with log cabins would result in tourists travelling to the caravan park without towing a caravan.
- 5.17 Therefore, the replacement of the touring caravan pitches with log cabins will benefit the use of the local highway network. In addition there will be a like for like replacement of vehicle movements. This was confirmed in the Council's assessment of the original application for six log cabins. With regard to traffic generation the committee report stated:

"As the proposal is a like for like replacement rather than the provision of additional units, no issues of additional traffic generation are raised."

- 5.18 Therefore we consider the proposal meets the policies in the Core Strategy.

6. Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed log cabins are part of the continued upgrading of Quarry Walk Caravan Park to provide an improved holiday facility for visitors coming into the area. Since 2004, the Council has permitted applications, which result in a total of forty log cabins. However, due to various constraints as detailed in paragraph 2.4 of this statement only 32 of the approved log cabins have been sited at the park.
- 6.2 The log cabins offer a high standard of accommodation for visitors coming into the area. They also enable more year-round bookings as the log cabins are more suitable for visitors to stay in off peak periods thus increasing tourism spend outside of the peak holiday season.
- 6.3 The scheme would enable a further 3 people to be employed to run the proposed cabins in addition to the 11 people currently employed on site.
- 6.4 It is recognised that new development should not be at the expense of the existing landscape character. However, each of the log cabins would be located within their own self-contained bays which have trees surrounding three sides. Additional landscaping is also proposed.
- 6.5 Aesthetically, log cabins are considered more appropriate in this location than touring caravans due to the natural materials used in their construction and the screening around the existing pitches. The topography and existing planting on the site is an important consideration in the determination of this application. This was accepted by the Inspectors in the 1994 and 2007 appeals.
- 6.6 Therefore the proposed development will not have any adverse impact on the character of the existing landscape and will meet the policy objectives to improve tourist accommodation in the area.
- 6.7 With regard to highways, the application is for the replacement of the touring caravan pitches with log cabins and will have no adverse impact on the local highway network. The proposal would result in fewer towing caravans on the highway network.

To conclude, the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of the development plan and as there are no material considerations to outweigh the presumption in favour of planning permission being granted.

7. Appendix

- EP1. Appeal Decision APP/B3438/A/06/2016707 – Quarry Walk Caravan Park – 28 March 2007

EP1



Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 8 February 2007

Site visit made on 21 February 2007

by **Paul Crysell** BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government

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Date: 28 March 2007

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/A/06/2016707

Quarry Walk Caravan Park, Coppice Lane, Hollington

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Quarry Walk Park Limited against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref 05/00892/FUL_MJ, dated 21 July 2005, was refused by notice dated 7 December 2005.
- The development proposed is the replacement of 8 touring caravan pitches with log cabins.

Summary of Decision: The appeal is allowed, and planning permission granted subject to conditions set out below in the Formal Decision.

Procedural Matters

1. At the Inquiry an application for costs was made by Quarry Walk Park Limited against Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.
2. Following refusal of this scheme a further application was submitted for the replacement of 6 touring caravan pitches by log cabins (Ref: 05/01449/FUL). This was granted on 15 February 2006 meaning that 6 of the original 14 replacement cabins have now received planning permission. I was informed that construction of these has commenced. Consequently it was agreed at the Inquiry that the appeal relates to the remaining 8 caravan pitches and I have adjusted the description of the development to reflect this. It was also agreed that the caravan pitches, the subject of this appeal, are plots 1 – 7 and 14.

Main Issues

3. I consider the main issues in this case are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Special Landscape Area;
 - The effect of traffic movements on the character of the area;
 - Whether the development would be accessible by a range of means of transport; and,
 - The effect of the proposal in relation to tourism.

Planning Policy

4. The development plan includes the adopted Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996 - 2011 (SP) and the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 1998. Policy E11A of the SP says that proposals for new or the expansion of existing tourist attractions or facilities will be supported provided they reflect the inherent character of their location, are in keeping with policies to conserve and promote the landscape and have regard to the provision of public transport services/facilities. Policy E12 permits new tourist and visitor accommodation, including self-catering accommodation, where it is associated with existing built development in rural areas. Policy NC1 points out that the countryside will be safeguarded for its own sake and that new building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements will be strictly controlled while Policy NC2 says that development should be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality.
5. Policy N8 of the LP says that in the Special Landscape Area permission will not be given for development which would materially detract from the high quality of the landscape because of its siting, scale, design and materials and associated traffic generation. Policy R14 encourages tourism development where it is compatible with the scale and character of the area. Policy R16 points out that new tourist accommodation will be encouraged particularly where this will increase the range of size, type and quality of accommodation.
6. Policy R17 of the LP expects new build tourist accommodation outside towns and villages will be closely related to existing tourist development and of a scale which can easily be accommodated into the local landscape and is accessible by a range of means of transport. The Council has previously accepted that the site was close enough to Alton Towers to comply with one element of this policy but did not consider it was accessible by a range of means of transport. While this policy did not form a reason for refusal in the current appeal. I regard it as relevant to this case and have taken it into account in arriving at my decision.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is within a designated Special Landscape Area identified in the SP and is located at the eastern end of an existing caravan park located in a former quarry off Coppice Lane, Winnothdale, some 5 km south east of Cheadle and a similar distance from the major tourist attraction of Alton Towers to the north east. The park lies below the steep quarry face in the central part of a well-wooded area which extends to about 18 ha. The site originally had 40 pitches to accommodate touring caravans but twelve pitches are now in the process of being replaced by log cabins. Other buildings include a reception lodge/manager's accommodation and a toilet/shower block.

The character and appearance of the Special Landscape Area

8. The Council is concerned that the log cabins would be permanent fixtures and that the proposal would mean that they would occupy potentially 50% of the caravan park. This would reduce the site's open character by cutting the number of pitches for touring caravans which come and go throughout the year. Furthermore, with more cabins on site the potential visual impact on the open countryside would increase.
9. The only visible presence of the caravan park close to the site is the entrance off Coppice Lane. From the lane to the south it is possible to see part of one cabin although in summer this would be obscured by foliage. In longer distance views, across open farmland and the

road along the ridge further to the south, the scar of the quarry face is distinctive against the wooded hillside. While the roofs of a few caravans can be glimpsed their shape and form is masked by the tree cover making it difficult for any casual observer to recognise what these structures might be.

10. Some very limited views of cabins and caravans may be possible during the winter but these are at best fleeting. In the summer months I consider it highly unlikely that any part of the caravan park could be seen from outside the site, a point conceded by the Council. The Council's Tree Officer provides, in my opinion, a realistic assessment of the effect of the proposal on the landscape by concluding that the development would not have any significant visual impact on the surrounding countryside or on the character of the Special Landscape Area. This view is endorsed by the comprehensive analysis carried out by the appellant's landscape consultant.
11. I noticed, during my site visit, that a large number of pitches were occupied by caravans, though not all appeared to be in use. Nevertheless this endorsed the view, expressed at the Inquiry, that the construction standards and facilities of modern caravans mean that they can be used during all seasons. I consider it is feasible for caravans to be on this site at any time of the year and I therefore attach little weight to the fact that the replacement log cabins would be permanent structures.
12. The proposed development would reduce the touring caravan capacity of the site replacing the predominantly white caravans with the more muted natural tones of the log cabins. In my view the latter would be more sympathetic elements in the landscape. I am also conscious that the current proposal for 8 cabins relates to pitches set well into the site so that they would be even less apparent than the cabins which have already been built. Similarly, while the Council expressed reservations about the effect of the cabins on the internal appearance of the Park, I consider the less garish form of the cabins would merge more easily into the well treed character of the site.
13. The previous Inspector (T/APP/B3438/A/93/229978/P4) pointed out that because new development might not be seen it was not a reason to allow proposals which otherwise would be objectionable. In this case, however, the caravan park is already there. I find that the topography of the site, the extensive tree cover and the siting of the proposed cabins would mean that the proposed development would have a negligible impact on the landscape. In my view the only reason why the site can be identified is because the quarry wall is an obvious feature in the wider landscape.
14. For the reasons set out above, I do not consider the proposed development would materially detract from the high quality or appearance of the Special Landscape Area. I conclude that there would be no conflict with policy N8 of the LP or other development plan policies directed at maintaining the character and quality of the landscape.

The effect of traffic movements on the character of the area

15. The Council accepts that the replacement of touring caravan pitches with log cabins would reduce the number of larger vehicles otherwise required when towing caravans. I agree the holiday accommodation proposed would not be likely to require the use of less fuel efficient motor vehicles although, if the letting period were to be significantly extended and closer to the average for this region, I do not consider that the net effect would necessarily be very different.

16. I accept that other benefits would accrue such as removing touring caravans from the road network, in the vicinity of the site, and I note that the Highway Authority has not objected to the proposal. I consider the traffic generated by the development would have no greater impact on the road network and, in my opinion, I consider the proposal would comply with this aspect of policy N8 of the LP.

Whether the development would be accessible by a range of means of transport

17. The appeal site is in an isolated location where alternative means of transport are limited. Two bus routes provide hourly services between Stoke and Uttoxeter but neither service comes sufficiently close, in my view, to the site to be a practical means of travel for those staying there. The caravan park is also some distance from any reasonable range of facilities or services although I was informed at the Inquiry that basic foodstuffs could be obtained from the reception building on the site.
18. The Council has previously accepted that the site is accessible by bicycle¹ and people staying at this location may remain in the immediate area enjoying the attractive countryside on foot or bicycle. I agree with the appellant's contention that people on holiday are more likely to be prepared to walk further than normal. Nevertheless, I consider it would be difficult for residents to get to most facilities and attractions in the wider area and that for practical purposes most journeys will be undertaken by car.
19. However, the level of accessibility is not determined by the type of accommodation on the appeal site. I have already concluded that while some benefits might accrue from a change in the type of vehicles travelling to the site the overall effect would not be so different to the present circumstances. Similarly I consider that the level of accessibility would not change. While I find that the appeal site is not accessible by a range of means of transport it is an established site and the proposed accommodation would not make it worse. Consequently I do not consider the scheme would be contrary either to policy E12(d) of the SP or policy R17 of the LP.

The effect of the proposal in relation to tourism

20. The Council's Tourism Officer supports the proposed scheme suggesting that the development would provide a type of accommodation increasingly in demand and encourage potential visitors at off peak times. Tourism is an important component of the local economy and the Council recognises the need to develop it in a sustainable way to meet the needs of the community and visitors while protecting the environment².
21. The proposal would broaden the range and type of accommodation available at the Caravan Park and I can find no evidence to suggest that the proposed scheme is inconsistent with the thrust of the Council's Tourism Strategy. I have already identified that the site is not accessible to public transport services but in other respects I find that the proposal would accord with policies E11A of the SP and R16 of the LP.

Other Matters

22. The Parish Council is concerned that the proposal would establish the site as a settlement in the green belt. While I acknowledge its concerns the development is for tourist purposes

¹ Delegated Officer Report Ref: 05/01449/FUL

² Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Strategy 2002 - 2007

and occupancy can be controlled by planning conditions as suggested by the local planning authority. I also note that while the appeal site is in very attractive countryside the area is not within a designated green belt.

Conclusions

23. The proposed scheme is at an established holiday location in an attractive rural area. The log cabins would have no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and they would be less conspicuous than the caravans on the site. While the removal of some caravans and their towing vehicles from the road network would be beneficial the overall effect on the road system and the local area I have found would be broadly neutral. I have identified that the development would not be accessible by a range of means of transport but the site already exists and the level of accessibility would not change irrespective of the type of accommodation on the site. The site is close to a major national tourist attraction, is well located for other tourist sites and is in area of attractive countryside which can be enjoyed for its own sake. The proposed log cabins would broaden the choice of accommodation for tourists staying in the area and this would be consistent with the Council's tourism objectives. I therefore find the proposal is acceptable.

Conditions

24. The Council has suggested conditions if the appeal is allowed and I have considered these in relation to Circular 11/95 *The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions*. I shall modify the expiry date of the permission to reflect the date of the application. It was agreed at the Inquiry that a condition requiring a tree planting scheme had been attached to an earlier permission for 6 cabins and was no longer necessary. In order to achieve a satisfactory development details of materials and foul drainage would need to be agreed with the local planning authority. A condition imposing time limits on the occupation of the log cabins is also appropriate to reflect the holiday use of the site and to prevent more extensive or permanent residential use of the buildings.

Final Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Formal Decision

26. I allow the appeal, and grant planning permission for the replacement of 8 touring caravan pitches with log cabins at Quarry Walk Caravan Park, Coppice Lane, Hollington in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 05/00892/FUL_MJ, dated 21 July 2005, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of five years from the date of this decision.
- 2) No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the cabins hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a scheme for the conveyance of foul drainage to a private treatment plant has been submitted to and

approved in writing by the local planning authority. No part of the development shall be brought into use until the appropriate works have been implemented.

- 4) The log cabins hereby permitted shall only be occupied for holiday purposes for periods of not more than 28 days at a time. There shall be no return/repeat visit within 6 months to any part of the Quarry Walk Caravan Park.

P R Crysell
INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

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Instructed by Emery Planning Partnership

He called

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FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Miss J Wigley of Counsel

Instructed by The Solicitor for Staffordshire Moorlands
District Council

She called

Mr T Cannon MRTPI

Senior Planning Officer, Staffordshire Moorlands DC