



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 June 2025

by **E Heron MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/W/25/3364202

Higher Trapp Hotel, Trapp Lane, Simonstone, Lancashire BB12 7QW

- 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 J Butterworth, Lakeside Collection Limited (trading as Lavender Hotels) against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/2024/0642.
 - The development proposed is erection of two freestanding hot tub facilities within the hotel grounds for a temporary period each year.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for the erection of two freestanding hot tub facilities within the hotel grounds for a temporary period each year, at Higher Trapp Hotel, Trapp Lane, Simonstone, Lancashire BB12 7QW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3/2024/0642, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing no's: 'Site Location Plan' (dwg no. C-0533-SLP2 rev A), 'Proposed Hot Tub Enclosures' (dwg no. C-0533-40 rev C).
 - 2) Prior to the installation of external lighting, full details including height, design, location and intensity, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lighting shall then be installed in accordance with the approved details on each occasion that the development is in-situ.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been made by Lakeside Collection Limited (the Appellant), against Ribble Valley Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The description of development differs between the application form and the decision notice. The above heading has been taken from the application form, which adequately describes the proposal.
4. At the time of my site visit, I saw that one of the two structures was erected on site in its entirety, including the fenced enclosure. The second was partially constructed by way of a timber deck structure with railings. I have however, dealt with the appeal on the basis of the plans before me.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including its effect on protected trees.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is within the grounds of Higher Trapp Hotel, which is positioned on a hillslope and accessed from Trapp Lane in a countryside location. The focal point of the hotel complex is the south elevation of the hotel building positioned on higher ground, with a two-tier terrace and steps leading down to a formal lawn with central pergola. The manicured lawn is positioned at the lowest ground level within the site, and is framed by dense hedges, mature trees and the hotel building. Perimeter trees and other groups of trees, are subject to Ribble Valley Borough Council Tree Preservation Order 1994, Higher Trapp, Simonstone.
7. Car parking, access roads, an accommodation block and a large utility building are sited around the periphery and beyond this are an equestrian site and dwellings. There are very limited views towards the lawn from outside the site, due to the sylvan enclosure.
8. The area in which the development would be sited is within the far southwestern corner of the lawn, enclosed on three sides by tall trees, hedges and the gable wall of the accommodation block. It is open to the formal lawn on one side but is partially separated from it by the protruding position of a well-established hedge.
9. The development, including the decks, buildings, enclosures and fencing, would be of a modest scale and height. They would be viewed within the context and backdrop of the two-storey accommodation block, and tall trees, and as such would be subservient to their surroundings. The development would also be unobtrusive in the context of the hotel building given the separation distance, ground level differences, and the partially enclosed nature of the southwestern corner of the lawn.
10. Whilst the proposed hot tub facilities have a domestic appearance, this would be softened by the trees and hedges framing the area in which they are sited. The landscaping would also serve to partially screen them from vantage points within the site and from wider views outside of the site.
11. Turning to the long-term health of trees, from the evidence, the hot tubs would be filled by hose and emptied using a pump, such that the regular use of heavy maintenance machinery would not be required. The development including the main post-holes, would be positioned outside of the Root Protection Areas, and ground disturbance associated with either erecting or dismantling the structures would take place infrequently (twice per year). Furthermore, visitors would access the area on foot, which is already the case in its use as part of the formal lawn. Combining these factors, I do not consider that a significantly harmful effect on the health of trees would arise, through soil compaction, degradation of soil quality, or additional root damage.
12. In some circumstances leaf litter and other debris from trees in close proximity to a development, can give rise to pruning and felling pressures. However, in the context of a hospitality business, I consider that the retention and upkeep of high quality surrounding landscaping plays an important role, and cleaning of the hot

tub facilities would form part of regular maintenance duties. In any case, the trees are legally protected under the Tree Preservation Order and any tree work proposals would be subject to scrutiny within an application under that Order.

13. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposed development would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including its effect on protected trees. As such, I find no conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Core Strategy 2008 – 2028, A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adoption Version (the Local Plan). Amongst other things, these policies require new development, including small-scale tourism, to be sympathetic to existing land uses with particular emphasis on visual appearance and relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character.
14. In addition, I find no conflict with Policies DMB1 and DMB3 of the Local Plan. These policies require development relating to rural businesses or that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities, to comply with other development plan policies and to relate well to existing groups of buildings, amongst other things.

Other Matters

15. The Council has found that the proposal would not lead to an unduly harmful impact on neighbouring occupiers in relation to increased noise and disturbance. This takes account of the existing use of the grounds for functions, proximity to neighbouring dwellings, and intervening land. I see no reason to disagree.

Conditions

16. I have imposed the list of approved plans condition, in the interests of certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring details of a lighting scheme to be agreed prior to installation. I have taken account of the appellant's concerns; however I consider it to be reasonable and necessary in the interests of protecting dark rural skies and biodiversity for a lighting scheme to be agreed as no such details are currently before me.
17. I have not imposed the standard time limit condition, as the development has commenced. Nor have I imposed a requirement for materials to be agreed, as they are adequately described on the approved plans. I have also not imposed a condition relating to nesting birds as the ground affected by the proposed development is manicured lawn.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, the proposal would accord with the development plan as a whole. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

E Heron

INSPECTOR