

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	LE	Date:	08.03.21	Manager:		Date:	
Site Notice displayed	Y	Photos uploaded	Y					

Application Ref:	3/2020/1091	 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk	
Date Inspected:	26/01/2021		
Officer:	LE		
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		Decision	REFUSE

Development Description:	Proposed redevelopment of site for 30 no. holiday chalets, conversion of existing holiday house and adjacent barn to a 20 person holiday let. Extension of existing cafe, construction of reception building with managers flat, alteration to existing garden centre to form a farm shop and plant display area. Creation of car parking, landscaping and associated works.
Site Address/Location:	Coars Farm Garden Centre, Settle Road, Bolton By Bowland, BD23 4SN

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Object to the proposal for the following (summarised) reasons • The overall scale & size of the proposed development is contrary to the rural landscape of the area and the quiet enjoyment of the unspoilt landscape of the surroundings • This will create a disturbance of the nearby SSSI and impact on the adjacent AONB • A development of this size would generate excess nuisance to the local infrastructure • It would give a negative economic & commercial impact on the local community which is already well served with visitor accommodation and garden centres • Site access including the local roads is completely unsuitable for large construction plant & equipment, giving rise to longer term contamination of roads, water courses & drainage due to movements on & off site. LCC Highways Officer early response suggests improvement / further consultation is needed and that the suggested visibility splays given by the applicant are incorrect.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	No objection in principle but request amendments / clarification. In summary. • The parking provision seems excessive • 6 metres required to rear of parking spaces • Gated access should be set back • Visibility splays should be maximised to account for higher vehicle speeds • Swept path analysis for emergency vehicles required • Better links to public rights of way should be explored • Land drainage consent required from LCC
LLFA:	Request further clarification / amendments on a number of points

	• Full details of the route and proposed diversion of the culvert are not provided • An explanation of how the surface water flood risk will be suitably managed over the lifetime of the development is required. • A 40% allowance for climate change is required, only a 30% allowance has been made. • The drainage strategy does not allow for urban creep, i.e additional hard surfaces, extensions.
AONB partnership:	Object to the development for the following reasons • The proposed development is located within the AONB Landscape Character type, Rolling Upland Farmland, L1 Harrop Fold. This landscape character type is considered 'to have limited capacity to accommodate change without compromising key characteristics'. The proposal is likely to have a significant impact on these key characteristics – it will introduce new elements into the local landscape not in keeping with the character of the rolling upland farmland with isolated, traditional farmsteads. • Whilst recognising the site is not actually within the AONB, it is within the setting and has landscape and visual effects on the local landscape, particularly as it is situated on one of the 'gateway' roads into the AONB from Ribblesdale/North Yorkshire. The proposed number and density of units and the size and location of the large car park on the site suggest that existing tree and vegetation screening available will need to be thinned or removed, making the proposed development more visible within many local views.
Environmental Health:	Ensure that the development complies with the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.
Fire Service:	It should be ensured that the scheme fully meets all the requirements of Building Regulations Approved Document B, Part B5 'Access and facilities for the Fire Service'
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
7 representations have been received (6 objections 1 neutral but raising concerns) The issues raised are summarised as follows: Water supply Lighting Noise Highway Safety Fire Safety Excessive Scale Impact on landscape	
RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:	
Ribble Valley Core Strategy: Policy DS1: Development Strategy Policy DS2: Sustainable Development	

Policy EN2: Landscape
Policy EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
Policy EC3: Visitor Economy
Policy DMG1: General Considerations
Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations
Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility
Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands
Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection
Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation
Policy DME6: Water Management
Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and The Local Economy
Policy DMB2: The Conversion of Barns and Other Rural Buildings for Employment Uses
Policy DMB3: Recreation and Tourism Development
Policy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways
NPPF

Relevant Planning History:

2016/0088 - Alterations to existing garden centre including enclosing existing storage area, re-cladding existing building and a link extension. Approved
RV/2019/ENQ/00029 – pre application advice.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The site is accessed via Forest Becks Brow and sits immediately adjacent to the highway network. It is approximately 3km away from Wigglesworth and lies in an area of open countryside approx. 475m from the boundary of the AONB. The northern part of the site is currently occupied by a garden centre, architectural reclamation business, café and small 4 bed holiday let.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

The application seeks consent for

- Proposed redevelopment of site for 30 no. holiday chalets
- Conversion of existing holiday house and adjacent barn to a 20 person holiday let.
- Extension of existing café
- Construction of reception building with managers flat
- Alteration to existing garden centre to form a farm shop and plant display area.
- Creation of car parking, landscaping and associated works.

Background and Principle of Development:

An application was granted in 2016 for alterations to the garden centre, it is understood that at this time the site had been vacant and the refurbishment to bring it back into use was supported by the LPA however this work was not carried out. This site is currently being operated as a garden centre, architectural reclamation, cafe and small 4 bed holiday let.

This proposal was the subject of preapplication advice in 2018 in which it was advised that the response would primarily concentrate on the principle of development with technical details assessed as part of a formal application. The advice in summary was that the council's core strategy policies are generally supportive of rural businesses however concerns were raised with regards to the scale of the proposed new build element of the proposal.

There is currently a 10 person 4 bed holiday home at the site as well as the existing garden centre, architectural reclamation and café. This and the associated hard standings occupy roughly half of the site area to the North of the site with much of it undeveloped by buildings.

The proposal seeks to expand this current use of the site to a 20 bed holiday home encompassing the barn, the plans indicate 12 bedrooms within the farm and barn including at least a double bed in each,

and 30 individual lodges which indicate 2 double bedrooms each on the submitted floor plans. As well as this there are extensions to the garden centre buildings proposed and a new build reception with managers accommodation above.

Policy DMG2 states that new development outside of defined settlements must meet at least one of six considerations:

1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social well-being of the area.
2. The development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture.
3. The development is for local needs housing which meets an identified need and is secured as such.
4. The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area.
5. The development is for small-scale uses appropriate to a rural area where local/need or benefit can be demonstrated.
6. The development is compatible with the enterprise zone designation.

Policy DMB3 also requires new tourism development to be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village; or to an existing group of buildings. In this respect, the application site is not located within a main settlement or village it is approx. 3km away from Wigglesworth. However, there is an existing business with buildings on site therefore Key Statement EC3 and Policy DMB1 are also engaged with support given to the expansion of firms outside of settlements where it is essential to maintain existing sources of employment and can be assimilated in to the local landscape.

In terms of the reconfiguration and expansion of the existing garden centre this would accord with the development plan in principle if it were demonstrated that this is essential to maintain employment and subject to an assessment of the impact on landscape and other planning considerations.

The conversion of the existing barn to accommodation would represent a sustainable re-use of the building and subject to appropriate designs, would not generate any significant visual impacts.

The primary issue with regard to the new-build lodges and other new buildings whether the scheme can be considered 'small-scale' in introducing 30 units to the site. Recent consents were reviewed as part of the pre-application enquiry and numbers generally range between 5 and 15 for new/start-up schemes. Some of the larger existing sites have expanded in greater numbers; however, this is usually to support a long-established business. This application due to its scale constitutes "major development" and will significantly increase the tourism element from an existing 4 bedroom holiday let, as well as the new managers accommodation, reception, extensions to the café and parking. The additional internal floorspace (including the barn conversion) is 3292m³ which is a 450% increase on the existing. Therefore, it is not considered to be small scale and therefore is in conflict with policy DMG2 in this respect.

A planning justification incorporating a business plan has been submitted with the application. The proposed business model is to provide 30 chalet style lodges which are of a more permanent construction than caravans for short term let. The aim is to provide an income all year round which is not subject to seasonal fluctuations. It is not intended to let these as long-term accommodation but to encourage short stays which will boost tourism and spending in the local area. The justification includes a letter of intent from a holiday letting agency and concludes that the current uses of the site are not maximising the business potential. This is not disputed and there are no objections in principle from an economic development perspective. The application form states that a total of 20 full time equivalent staff will be employed in comparison to the existing 4. However, this is in essence a start up business and there is no long-term track record of large scale tourism at this site. As such, it is difficult to accept the argument that this business is essential to the local economy or employment. notwithstanding the concerns as to whether it can be successfully assimilated in to the landscape which are discussed in more detail below.

Residential Amenity:

The nearest dwelling to the site is Acre Field Bungalow located approximately 135m to the North East. Despite the distance a development of this scale will undoubtedly have an impact on the local area. As potentially around 140 people could be staying at the site at any one time.

No objections have been received from Environmental Health providing that the proposal is managed in accordance with licence conditions. A management plan is also submitted which outlines the measures proposed to ensure that the development will not have a detrimental impact in terms of noise and disturbance and the presence of a manager on site would assist with this.

Visual Amenity / Landscape:

The main concern here is the encroachment of significant built form and associated paraphernalia into a currently undeveloped field which occupies a prominent position alongside Settle Road. Para 172 of the NPPF states that:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.”

The site is not within the Forest of Bowland AONB but it is within the setting and has landscape and visual effects on the local landscape, particularly as it is situated on one of the 'gateway' roads into the AONB from Ribblesdale/North Yorkshire.

The proposed development is located within the AONB Landscape Character type, Rolling Upland Farmland, L1 Harrop Fold. This landscape character type is considered 'to have limited capacity to accommodate change without compromising key characteristics'. The proposal is likely to have a significant impact on these key characteristics – it will introduce new elements into the local landscape not in keeping with the character of the rolling upland farmland with isolated, traditional farmsteads.

Given the proposal is located within the immediate setting of the Forest of Bowland AONB Key Statement EN2 remains fully engaged. In this respect, EN2 requires that 'any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced' with the requirements of EN2 further stipulating that 'the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials'.

Consideration must therefore be given to the proposal and as to whether it reflects local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials, further consideration must also be given in respect of the likely visual impacts of the proposal and as to whether such impacts are likely to result in detriment to the character or visual amenities of the protected AONB landscape.

The proposed lodges are to be constructed in stone and timber with slate roofs partially covered in solar panels in a semi-formal layout with expanses of hardstanding providing each with a vehicular access point. Each lodge also appears to have a covered hot tub area to the front. It has an appearance akin to a small housing development. In this respect it cannot be reasonably argued that the design, external appearance nor materiality of the structures aligns with the criterion of Key Statement EN2 in respect of being 'in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials'. Nor does it reflect the particular landscape character of "Rolling Upland Farmland" described above. The discordant appearance of the proposed development is exacerbated by the expanses of hardstanding, parking and encroachment into a previously undeveloped area of the site alongside the road. Lighting required to serve a development of such a scale could cause excessive light pollution into an area that is currently largely devoid of development which would impact on dark skies

and be another factor that would cause damage to the visual qualities of the landscape. Screening is not considered to be an acceptable form of mitigation for a development which is unacceptable in terms of landscape impact and will be visible in long distance views.

It cannot be considered that the proposal would contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area nor could it be argued that the proposal would result in enhancement of the area. In view of the above it is considered that approval would result in a form of development that would result in significant detriment to the character and visual amenities of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As well as the visual intrusion the AONB is noted for its tranquil character and the introduction of significant vehicle movements, lighting and noise associated with holiday makers on a large scale would also negatively impact on this character. The perceived economic benefits of the proposal are not considered to outweigh this significant harm.

Highways:

The highway authority has raised a number of concerns with respect to the details of the proposal although do not object to the principle in terms of the impact on the highway network. It is noted that the use could generate a large number of vehicles however the NPPF stresses that the test as to whether an impact is severe enough to warrant refusal on highway grounds is high. Amendments have not been invited in view of the objections to the proposal in terms of landscape impact.

Notwithstanding this a number of amendments / clarifications have been sought. These issues may not be unsurmountable but in its current form the proposal would be unacceptable in terms of highway issues.

In summary.

- The parking provision seems excessive
- 6 metres is required to the rear of parking spaces
- Gated access should be set back further than is shown
- Visibility splays should be maximised to account for higher vehicle speeds
- A swept path analysis for emergency vehicles is required
- Better links to public rights of way should be explored
- Land drainage consent is required from LCC

Water Management:

The Lead Local Flood Authority have also raised a number of concerns and again whilst these issues potentially could be address amendments have not been sought.

In summary:

- Full details of the route and proposed diversion of the culvert are not provided
- An explanation of how the surface water flood risk will be suitably managed over the lifetime of the development is required.
- A 40% allowance for climate change is required, only a 30% allowance has been made.
- The drainage strategy does not allow for urban creep, i.e additional hard surfaces, extensions.

The concerns raised by near neighbours with regards to water supply are noted but this would be a private matter and not a reason to refuse planning permission.

Ecology and Trees:

A preliminary ecological appraisal has been submitted with the application dated October 2020. This concludes that there is no need for further surveys and providing good practice is followed with regard to construction there are no concerns with regards to protected species or habitats.

An arboricultural survey has also been submitted dated September 2020. The higher quality trees will be retained and protected during construction which is considered acceptable.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

It is considered that some form of small scale tourism development may be acceptable in principle at this site but the development at the scale proposed is considered to be in conflict with policy DMG2 of the

core strategy in principle and unacceptable in terms of the material planning issues discussed above particularly the impact on landscape quality. Therefore it is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission is refused
The proposal is considered to be conflict with DMG2, DMB3 and EN2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and para 172 of the NPPF as it would introduce a large-scale development into an area of largely undeveloped open countryside within the immediate setting of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The proposal by virtue of its scale, design, associated paraphernalia, lighting and hard standings would be an incongruous form of development that would not successfully amalgamate into this landscape and would have a significant harmful impact on this prominent gateway to the AONB. It is not considered that the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh this measurable harm.