

North Lincolnshire Council

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Church Square House
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North Lincolnshire
DN15 6NL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPEAL STATEMENT

APPEAL BY MR LEE OF ADWICK

**AGAINST THE REFUSAL BY NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL TO GRANT
PLANNING PERMISSION FOR ADDITIONAL AND RECONFIGURED
STATIC/LODGE PITCHES, NEW RECEPTION BLOCK, NEW PARKING BAYS
AND NEW POND (INCLUDING FILLING IN THE EXISTING POND).**

SITE ADDRESS:

**EPWORTH FIELDS HOLIDAY PARK, ACCESS ROAD TO FARM OFF
BLACKDYKE ROAD, EPWORTH, DN9 1JA**

**Local Planning Authority's Reference:
PA/2022/1536**

**Planning Inspectorate's Reference:
APP/Y2003/W/24/3340305**

September 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This appeal relates to the refusal of Planning permission for additional and reconfigured static/lodge pitches, a new reception block, new parking bays and a new pond (including filling in the existing pond) at Epworth Fields Holiday Park, access road to the farm, off Blackdyke Road, Epworth, DN9 1JA.

1.2 The application was refused on 11 September 2023 for the following reason:

1.

The proposed development would adversely affect the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme, a heritage asset of national significance, contrary to policies LC14, LC7, RD2 and DS1 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan, and policies CS5 and CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy. Also, the proposed development would not be in accordance with paragraphs 197 and 206 of the National Planning Policy Framework as it would not make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and would detract from the significance of the historic landscape in this location. The proposals therefore fail the key objective of the NPPF to conserve the historic environment for this and future generations.

2. APPEAL SITE AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

2.1 Planning permission is sought for additional and reconfigured existing static/lodge pitches, a new reception block, new parking bays and a new pond (including filling in the existing pond) at Epworth Fields Holiday Park, off Blackdyke Road, Epworth.

The site is outside the development boundary of Epworth and is an established holiday park. A field to the east of the site is currently used as a recreational park for visitors to the holiday park. The field is grassed and contains picnic tables and caravans which have permitted development rights to remain on the field for 28 days. The field is sufficiently screened by mature trees.

The proposal seeks to provide additional facilities at the site to meet the demands of the business.

By way of background, the original proposal involved moving the existing pond to the field and erecting new static/lodges within the footprint of the pond plus a new one-and-a-half-storey reception block within the site at the vehicular entry point. Furthermore, the proposal sought to erect additional static/lodges on the field to the east of the site.

Following concerns raised by the planning department, the applicant has downsized the proposed development. Currently, the revised proposal would add 17 new static/lodges to the existing site. The pond would be relocated to the field as originally proposed to enable the 17 new static/lodges to be located within the existing site.

Currently, there are a total of 24 static/lodges on the site. With the addition of 17 new static/lodges, the overall number of static/lodges on the existing site would be 41. There would be no static/lodges on the grass field to the east of the site as originally proposed.

Discussions took place between the applicant and the planning department concerning the one-and-a-half-storey reception block. The planning department recommended it be lowered to single-storey, but the applicant responded that the proposed one-and-a-half-storey reception block was recommended by the Environment Agency in the interest of public safety, as a safe refuge area. Accordingly, the planning department accepted the Environment Agency's recommendation as the justification for a one-and-a-half-storey reception block on the site.

Regarding the planning history of the site, planning permission PA/2003/0240 was approved on 24/07/2003 to convert a disused barn on the site into six self-contained holiday cottages. PA/2003/0344 was also granted for planning permission to change the use of land to a caravan park (static and touring) on 24/07/2003. This established the principle of a caravan park (static and touring) on the site.

Furthermore, planning permission PA/2007/1482 for an extension of the existing caravan holiday home park with associated roads and hardstanding (a resubmission of PA/2006/1834) was refused on the basis that the site is located within the open countryside and the Isle of Axholme Area of Historic Landscape Interest. The proposed siting of the caravans in this exposed position does not benefit from adequate landscaping and the number of caravans proposed would harm the character, setting and appearance of the historic landscape.

In addition, in determining PA/2007/1482 the local planning authority did not consider that this type of development could be regarded as a small-scale tourist and recreational development that is related to the historic landscape and features by the number of caravans proposed and the siting of the site in such a prominent location within this area of an open flat landscape. The proposal was therefore contrary to policies RD2, LC14 and DS1 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan and Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

Planning appeal APP/Y2003/A/08/206616/NWF was also dismissed.

In this case, while the site is in the countryside, the current proposal is not an extension of the caravan park per se, but more lodges are to be placed within

the existing caravan park the site and therefore the reasons for the refusal of the above application and the dismissed appeal would not apply.

In support of the proposal, the applicant has indicated that they purchased Epworth Fields Holiday Park in October 2021 as an investment opportunity to continue the operation of the site as a caravan park and invest in the reconstruction of the holiday cottages, infrastructure of the roads, curbing and the creation of driveways for the holiday homes.

The applicant indicated that, as part of the reconstruction of the caravan park, the proposed reception block would serve as the first place of call by visitors and its primary function is to greet visitors and provide information or advice.

The reception block would be constructed in the same brickwork, tiled roofs, doors, and windows as the holiday cottages adjacent to the site.

Regarding the pond, the applicant has indicated that the current pond area was not constructed correctly and does not hold water, which is not good for the fish, wildlife, or the visual appearance of the park. The design of the pond is not appropriate because it is a bowl shape and the fishing pegs are sited too close together, which is not a good design of a pond and is not suitable for public safety. Furthermore, the pond is not cost-effective, and it is better to move it to the field to the east of the site which is currently a camping field.

The business model would be to concentrate on the holiday lodges rentals market, therefore ceasing caravanning and camping. The business would provide employment opportunities, such as receptionists, sales teams, cleaners, maintenance teams and groundskeepers, which would hopefully be sourced from the surrounding villages.

The business would promote Epworth's tourist attraction, not only because of the history of the Wesley brothers, the old rectory, and the attractive market town but with the addition of accommodation.

3. PLANNING POLICY

The policies below are the most relevant concerning the current appeal proposal.

North Lincolnshire Local Plan:

Policy DS1: General Requirements

Policy DS14: Foul Sewage and Surface Water Drainage

Policy DS16: Flood Risk

Policy R12: New Caravan and Camping Facilities

Policy LC7: Landscape Protection

Policy LC14: Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest

Policy T6: Pedestrian Routes and Footpaths

Policy T2: Access to Development

Policy T19: Car Parking Provision and Standards

North Lincolnshire Core Strategy:

Policy CS1: Spatial Strategy for North Lincolnshire
Policy CS2: Delivering More Sustainable Development
Policy CS3: Development Limits
Policy CS5: Delivering Quality Design in North Lincolnshire
Policy CS6: Historic Environment
Policy CS15: Culture and Tourism
Policy CS17: Biodiversity
Policy CS19: Flood Risk
Policy CS25: Promoting Sustainable Transport

New North Lincolnshire Local Plan Submission:

The new North Lincolnshire Local Plan was submitted for public examination to the Planning Inspectorate on 11 November 2022. Examination of the Plan has therefore commenced, although public hearing sessions are not anticipated until later in 2024. The Submitted North Lincolnshire Local Plan can be given some weight as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The relevant policies regarding this application include:

Policy SS1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy SS2: A Spatial Strategy for North Lincolnshire
Policy SS3: Development Principles
Policy SS5: Overall Housing Provision
Policy SS6: Spatial Distribution of Housing Sites
Policy SS10: Development Limits
Policy RD1: Supporting Sustainable Development in the Countryside
Policy DQE1: Protection of Landscape, Townscape and Views
Policy DQE5: Managing Flood Risk
Policy DQE6: Sustainable Drainage Systems
Policy CSC17: Camping and Caravan Sites
Policy HE2: Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest

4.2 North Lincolnshire Local Planning Authority Appeal Statement

As indicated earlier, the main reason for refusal is the adverse effect of the proposed development on the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme, a heritage asset of national significance, contrary to policies LC14, LC7, RD2 and DS1 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan, and policies CS5 and CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy.

The appellant's justification for the appeal is that the reason for refusal is not detailed concerning the actual harm to the Historic Landscape.

The Historic Environment Records officer (Archaeology) has explained the harm to the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of

Axholme, it refers to the adverse effect of the proposed change of use and expansion of the holiday park on the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme.

For your information, the Archaeology officer initially objected to the application on the basis that the site is within the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme (local plan policy LC14). This area is designated for its unique historic landscape retaining the pattern of ancient open strip fields and enclosures surrounding the villages on the Isle.

The Archaeology officer commented that the proposed development introduces static residential units and an amenity building into a grass field, which would be an unacceptable extension and intrusion of the built environment into the historic landscape, contributing to adverse character change and affecting the setting and legibility. Accordingly, the development would adversely affect the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape contrary to the NPPF, Core Strategy policies CS5 and CS6, and local plan policies LC14, LC7, RD2, and DS1.

A revised drawing was submitted, and the Archaeology officer was reconsulted, however, the officer retained the objection. The officer noted that the amended layout shows the removal of the pitches and structures within the eastern field. However, the proposed fishing pond has remained within the eastern field.

The planning department made a balanced judgement. The department acknowledged that the pond creation can be both a threat and an opportunity for archaeology. Digging holes in areas that are scheduled ancient monuments raises concerns. In terms of advantages, the proposal would result in economic benefits to the local area arising from the potential increases in visitor numbers. There is no heritage, highway safety, drainage (subject to conditions) or residential amenity impacts that would result in any demonstrable harm being caused. The proposal was therefore recommended for approval.

The planning committee members carried out a site visit to familiarise themselves with the site and the surrounding area before the planning meeting. At the meeting, the applicant addressed the committee. Objectors were also allowed to address the meeting. Following the discussions, members agreed to refuse the application.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, on a balance of assessment between the harm and the economic benefit of the development, the officer concluded that the development would have a level of harm on the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme, however, the benefit of the development would outweigh the harm to the LC14 area.

The planning committee following the site visit, at the meeting, considered the details of the application, the officer's report as well as the consultee comments and objections from the public before reaching a different conclusion from the case officer. The planning committee decided to overturn the case officer's recommendation to approve the application and refused it because the harm of the development to the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme would outweigh the economic benefit.

Although a decision was made against the officer's recommendation, the Council's position is the planning committee's position on the site. It is worth noting that the planning committee position is consistent with the North Lincolnshire Local Plan and the Core Strategy for refusal of planning permission. The local planning authority believes that the decision to refuse planning permission is reasonable in this case and the reasons for refusal are valid. The Planning Inspector is respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal.