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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2018

**by C L Humphrey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/T9501/W/18/3197743**

**Tarset Tor Greystones, Lanehead, Tarset, Hexham NE48 1NT**

**Grid Reference Easting: 379208, Grid Reference Northing: 585780**

- 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 Mr Rob Cocker against the decision of Northumberland National Park Authority.
  - The application Ref 17NP0104, dated 16 September 2017, was refused by notice dated 15 November 2017.
  - The development proposed is a 2 storey 12/15 bed bunkhouse.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Background and Main Issue

2. The National Park Authority accepts that the principle of the proposed tourism development would not conflict with the aims of Policies 5, 6, 14 and 15 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework Core Strategy & Development Policies (CSDP) with regard to the location of new development, the local economy, tourism and recreation. Moreover, subject to appropriate conditions, the Authority raises no objections in principle to the design of the building, or to the effect of the proposal on the National Park's special qualities of ecology and biodiversity, tranquillity and cultural heritage, on neighbours' living conditions, renewable energy or highway safety. Based upon the evidence before me, I see no reason to take a different view.
3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, with particular regard to the effect on the character and appearance of Lanehead.

## Reasons

4. Lanehead is characterised by a loose-knit dispersed scattering of buildings set in the rolling upland valleys of Northumberland National Park. A fundamental purpose of a National Park is conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. The distinctive landscape character of Northumberland National Park is one of its special qualities. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection.
5. The proposed bunkhouse would be situated to the west of the Greenhaugh road, towards the northern extent of the settlement between the village hall

- and Hunter's Lodge. The road rises up to the north and, whilst there are some taller buildings further down the valley, those in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development are single storey and widely spaced. The gaps between these buildings afford views of the surrounding open countryside.
6. The appeal proposal would result in the loss of a significant undeveloped gap in a highly prominent and exposed location on the edge of Lanehead. Although the 2 storey building would be partly set into the hillside, the ridge would nevertheless be markedly higher than the village hall immediately to the south and would be the same height as Hunter's Lodge which is situated at a higher level to the north. Significant excavation would be necessary to accommodate the building within the rising topography of the site. Thus, the appeal proposal would erode the characteristically wide spacing between buildings, intensify the pattern of development within Lanehead, reduce views through to the open countryside and insert an unwelcome urbanising element into the natural rolling topography of the rural landscape.
  7. I note that the nature and scale of the development has been reduced following earlier appeal decisions. Nevertheless, the resultant building would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the settlement. This harm would not be adequately mitigated by the proposed soft landscaping and, indeed, significant areas of tree planting in this location could detrimentally erode the open nature of this part of the settlement. Whilst the proposal would not harm the wider landscape, it would adversely affect the local character and setting of Lanehead. There is no evidence before me to demonstrate that the appeal site is made ground and, in any event, its current rolling open form makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
  8. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of Lanehead and, in doing so, would fail to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park contrary to the design, landscape conservation and enhancement aims of CSDP Policies 1, 3 and 20 and the Framework.

## **Conclusion**

9. The proposed development would provide accommodation for visitors to the National Park and the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park. In doing so it would fulfil one of the purposes of National Park designations, namely promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public. However, as set out in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, greater weight shall be attached to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park. The appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of Lanehead and so would fail to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park. I attach great weight to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.
10. For the reasons above, and having regard to all other matters raised, including the letters of support, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*CL Humphrey*

INSPECTOR