



Appeal Decision

by N Jones BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Decision date: 04/09/2023

Appeal reference: CAS-02469-J6J4B8

Site address: Plasynghedio, Boduan, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, LL53 8YL

- 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 Mrs Anwen Jane Davies against the decision of Gwynedd Council.
 - The application Ref C20/0102/33/LL, dated 10 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is to extend the existing touring caravan site to adjacent land by creating a new access from existing camp site, relocating one touring caravan and adding 8 new touring caravans.
 - A site visit was made on 1 August 2023.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have used the site address as it appears on the application form but have used the Council's description of development as it is more concise.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Western Llŷn Special Landscape Area (SLA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is accessed off a minor road south of the A497 Bryn Cynan roundabout within the designated SLA. The proposal would extend an established caravan park which accommodates 19 touring caravan pitches, 2 holiday pods and associated facilities, into an elevated adjoining field. The appeal site is located to the west of the farm dwelling, and its buildings which adjoin the minor road to the east. 8 additional pitches, as well as space for one existing pitch relocated to allow access, would be provided, positioned parallel to the existing units.
5. Policy TWR 5 of the Ynys Mon and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) states that proposals for touring caravan, camping and temporary alternative camping

accommodation, including extensions to existing touring caravan sites and additional pitches, will be granted provided they conform to its listed criteria. In terms of these, the site is close to the highway network and would have adequate access; occupation of the units would be for holiday purposes only and the proposed units would have limited physical connection to the ground and would be removed from the site when not in use; there would be no excessive areas of hardstanding and facilities would be provided within an existing building. However, Policy TWR 5 also seeks to avoid harm to the visual quality of the landscape by requiring that any proposal is sited in an unobtrusive location which is well screened by existing landscape features and/or where the units can be readily assimilated into the landscape. The explanation to the policy states that an unobtrusive location is defined as one which is well screened by existing landscape features and/or where touring units can be readily assimilated into the landscape without the need for excessive man-made features such as hard-standing and fencing.

6. JLDP Policies PCYFF 4 and AMG 2 also require that proposals should, amongst other things, integrate into their surroundings and should aim to maintain, enhance or restore the recognised character and qualities of the SLA. Whilst the Council has not provided any information in relation to the value or significance of the SLA, I have taken into account the appellant's Landscape Statement which, based on the site's location within the North-West plateau of Llŷn moderate value visual sensory area defined within LANDMAP, describes the locale as pleasant farmland with medium sized fields bounded by a mixture of hedges/post and wire fences, with scattered conifer plantations and some areas of gorse scrub especially nearer the coast and where farmland is often fringed by hedges that connect the mainly scattered farmsteads and small villages.
7. Due to a difference of some 2m in surface levels and lack of any screening between the existing caravan site and the proposed extended area, the appeal proposal would not be located in an unobtrusive location which is well screened by existing landscape features. In order to screen the proposed development, substantial engineering works would be required to lower the appeal site surface by about a metre along much of the length of the field and to reprofile its boundaries with a 6m wide bank reaching up to 2m in height. Neither therefore can the proposal be readily assimilated into the landscape without the need for excessive man-made features.
8. Although it would be of an undulating form, due to its considerable length and height, the proposed bank would not be a natural feature but would be a noticeably large and incongruous engineered element. Whilst extensive natural landscaping would also be undertaken, much of this would be on the reprofiled boundaries of the appeal site, accentuating its considerable scale. The appellant states that this planting of native tree and hedge species would, over time, enhance and restore the character of the SLA by adding extra mature wooded areas interspersed with wild flowers which would transform a large mono-culture grassland into a more biodiverse landscape feature. However, I saw that this part of the SLA is characterised by its open and expansive landscape and consistent patchwork of agricultural fields defined by linear banks and hedges, largely devoid of trees and wooded areas. The introduction of landscaping of the scale and type proposed would be at odds with this distinctively regular pattern. Consequently, the proposal would form a prominent and obtrusive scheme which would not integrate appropriately with its surroundings or maintain, enhance or restore the recognised character and qualities of the SLA.
9. I acknowledge that localised views of the proposal, including from the nearest footpath, would be limited due to the topography and that the additional planting on the existing site would provide some additional screening. However, I saw that the intended bank and planting would not entirely screen the proposed touring caravans from roadside views

along the A497 and B4412 or from elevated views near footpath links on minor roads to the north from which the proposal would be seen as a detracting and conspicuous feature in an otherwise attractive pastoral landscape.

10. Although the appellant points to the existing telecommunications mast as a distracting feature, I saw that due to its height and colour, it has no more effect on the landscape than existing telegraph poles. Moreover, its existence would not justify the appeal scheme which is a different form of development. I have taken into account other developments in the locality brought to my attention by the appellant, but I saw that whilst the site in Tudweiliog is in a particularly visible location, it is located close to other similar developments. The other examples are also within different settings to the appeal scheme which I have therefore considered the appeal on its own merits. I have also had regard to the farm diversification and biodiversity and environmental improvement benefits of the scheme, but they are not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.
11. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and fail to maintain, enhance or restore the character and qualities of this part of the SLA. It would therefore be contrary to JLDP Policies TWR 5, PCYFF 4 and AMG 2.

Other Matter

12. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has advised that the site is within 120 metres of the Llŷn Fens Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which forms part of the National Sites Network, which is also part of the Anglesey and Llŷn Fens wetland site designated under the Ramsar Convention and the Cors Geirch Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It advises that a test of likely significant effects of the proposal on this designated site should be undertaken. I acknowledge the Council states that discussions in relation to a previous application indicated that concerns about potential effects were addressed by proposed drainage measures, however no details are provided in support of the current proposal to enable it to be screened out of a requirement for a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the Regulations'). Nevertheless, as I am dismissing the appeal on the main issue, I give no further consideration to this matter.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.
14. In reaching my decision I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable principle through contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Minister's wellbeing objectives as required by section 8 of the Act.

N Jones

Inspector