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Recreation and Tourism

Strategic Context

- 5.1 One of the two statutory purposes of National Parks is to promote “opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (valued characteristics) of those areas by the public”⁶²
- 5.2 Tourism makes a significant contribution to the local economy. Between 2009 and 2013, the overall economic impact of tourism has increased by 19%. In 2013, the total economic impact of the Peak District National Park and its area of influence was £540 million and it is estimated to support over 9500 jobs. In an area such as the National Park it is essential that recreation and tourism development is sustainable, i.e. ensuring that activities or development today do not harm those qualities which future generations would wish to enjoy. The National Park Authority’s approach to tourism and recreation development is to support only that which has a particular need to use the valued characteristics of the National Park. But in doing so it aims to maximise the local economic benefits of recreation and tourism and influence behaviours by facilitating enjoyment in tune with the very assets that underpin the designation of the area as a National Park, namely its valued landscapes, cultural heritage and wildlife.
- 5.3 Many millions of visitor days are spent in the National Park each year, and the numbers who arrive by private vehicle continue to be a major source of concern. However at a time where public transport provision has declined, the role of the Authority has moved to one of influencing and leading on sustainable alternatives to private vehicles.
- 5.4 The National Park possesses a wealth of natural and historic attractions that with careful management can offer adventure and stimulation to inspire this and future generations.
- 5.5 **Core Strategy policy RT1** is clear that proposals for recreation, environmental education and interpretation will be supported where they encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park’s valued characteristics. Furthermore, opportunities for sustainable access will be encouraged. New provision must justify its location in relation to environmental capacity, scale and intensity of use or activity, and be informed by the Peak District Landscape Strategy.
- 5.6 New development should be focussed in or on the edge of settlements with the re-use of traditional buildings being encouraged wherever possible. In the open countryside, clear demonstration of need will be necessary.
- 5.7 **Policy RT1** is also clear that development must not prejudice or disadvantage people’s enjoyment of other existing and appropriate recreation, environmental education or interpretation activities, including the informal quiet enjoyment of the National Park;
- 5.8 **Core strategy policy RT2** clarifies that accommodation for staying visitors will be permitted by extension or improvement of existing accommodation or by conversion of traditional buildings of historic or vernacular merit, however, the use of entire farmsteads for holiday accommodation will not be permitted. New build holiday accommodation will not be permitted, except for a new hotel in Bakewell.
- 5.9 **Core strategy policy RT3** supports the provision of touring camping and caravan sites particularly in areas where there are few sites, and where they can be well integrated with the landscape;. However the introduction of more permanent, non-traditional structures including static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted.
- 5.10 **Core strategy policy RT3** supports improved facilities on camp sites where they are of appropriate scale. Moreover development that would improve the quality of existing sites, including improvement to the appearance of existing static caravans will be encouraged.
- 5.11 Many measures to manage visitor pressure are dealt with without recourse to, or outside the control of, the land-use planning system. Current policies set out in the National Park Management Plan, Recreation Strategy, and Cycle Strategy have been negotiated and put into practice with our partner organisations, and form a crucial part of this approach. Work continues, to find further methods to sustain the National Park’s attractive features despite increased use. The National Park Authority aims to ensure consistency between these methods and its spatial policy.
- 5.12 The Planning Acts provide for control over the use or development of land or buildings. Recreation impact in a National Park is

62 Section 5 National Parks and Countryside Act 1949 as amended by section 61 of the Environment Act 1995

usually more related to land use and activity levels rather than built development. Recent examples include the competition between cycling, walking and horse riding, or helicopter trips requiring take-off and landing sites.

Touring camping and caravan sites

- 5.13 Touring camping and caravanning are historically the most popular types of visitor accommodation and considerable provision already exists within the National Park.
- 5.14 **Core Strategy policy RT3** includes most of the criteria from the 2001 Local Plan but development management policy clarifies two issues. Firstly, policy stresses the need for development to integrate well with and not dominate its surroundings. Secondly the policy clarifies the criteria applied to applications to change holiday occupancy conditions.
- 5.15 In terms of integrating development into landscape, this is often a challenge because much of the quieter landscape is very open, whilst the busier valleys and dales are often narrow and ecologically sensitive, and already feel the pressure from day visitor use of small roads. Many of these roads are steep, narrow and poorly aligned. If the impact on location, access, and landscape setting, and valued characteristics are satisfactory then new low key sites may be acceptable. What is an appropriate size of site will vary from case to case, but for the scale of development or activity to be considered appropriate it should in no circumstance dominate its surroundings.
- 5.16 For many village facilities, visitor spend is an essential part of the owner's income and helps sustain the facility for the benefit of the community year round. Therefore, the provision of facilities (including shops, restaurants, sports and leisure facilities) on camping and caravan sites will only be permitted when there will be no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of existing facilities in surrounding communities. Nevertheless there may be circumstances where the introduction of small scale facilities on a camping or caravan site may actually provide a useful contribution to community services where they are not otherwise available locally.
- 5.17 **Core Strategy policy HC2** provides the policy basis for consideration of new site warden accommodation. In terms of management of sites, many caravan and camp sites will be located close to farmsteads where conversion of existing buildings can allow supervision of the site without the need for the construction of new dwellings. However there may be cases where there is no scope for accommodation from which to supervise and manage the site. In such cases new build accommodation for site wardens may be acceptable but must be justified in terms of the essential need to live on the site. Where new site warden accommodation is permitted, dwellings will be tied to the business using a section 106 agreement in the same way that dwellings are secured for agricultural workers, justified by the functional need.
- 5.18 **Core Strategy policy RT3** is clear that static caravans, chalets and lodges are not acceptable features in the National Park. The open character of large parts of landscape particularly in the White Peak and Dark Peak mean that the non- traditional and permanent presence of such forms of accommodation are incompatible with the conservation purpose of the National Park. There is however a growing range of alternative forms of accommodation such as camping pods, yurts, shepherd's huts etc. which have come onto the market in response to a demand for greater quality and comfort. For clarity, the National Park Authority considers all such forms of accommodation to have the same potential for adverse landscape impact and therefore they will be determined against **Core Strategy policy RT3 part B**. There may be exceptional circumstances where some structures may be acceptable. For example, experience has highlighted that wooden pod structures can provide a sensitive, low key form of accommodation particularly in woodland settings where the scope for landscape harm is negligible or indeed nil. Such solutions can help to support the local economy by extending the tourism season. Similarly the traditionally styled shepherd's hut accommodation can also provide an alternative form of provision with no landscape harm provided only one hut is installed on any one site and they are located close to existing farmsteads where existing access, parking arrangements and facilities can be utilised.
- 5.19 Development of this nature will still need to blend successfully into the landscape, and allow the valued characteristics of the natural and historic landscape to dominate, before they can be considered favourably.

DMR1 Touring camping and caravan sites

- A. The development of a new touring camping or touring caravan site, or small extension to an existing site will not be permitted unless its scale, location, access, landscape setting and impact upon neighbouring uses are acceptable, and it does not dominate its surroundings.
- B. Shopping, catering or sport and leisure facilities at camping and caravan sites will be permitted provided that there is no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of existing facilities in surrounding communities and the development is of a nature suited to the needs of the site itself.
- C. Exceptionally, the development of structures may be permitted where these are small, simple, wooden pod structures in woodland locations with minimal landscape impact, or a single shepherd's hut where this can be located close to facilities of a farmstead without harm to the natural or historic landscape.

is because caravans and tents (or similar) are not considered appropriate permanent homes in a protected landscape, and because when they are occupied for holiday use they enable a large number of people to visit, experience and enjoy the National Park.

DMR2 Holiday occupancy of camping and caravan sites

- A. Where the development of a touring camping or touring caravan site is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation.
- B. For an existing camping or caravan site, the removal of any existing condition that stipulates months of occupation, and its replacement by a holiday occupancy condition, will be permitted, provided that the site is adequately screened in winter months and that there would be no adverse impact on the valued characteristics of the area or residential amenity.

Holiday occupancy of camping and caravan sites

- 5.20 Planning permissions for camping and caravan sites and self-catering holiday accommodation sometimes come with conditions or legal agreements limiting their use to seasonal occupancy. The Authority supports the view that there is scope to lengthen the holiday season to benefit the local economy and provide more full time employment but, for the benefit of landscape, wildlife and local residents, a period of respite from tourist pressure can be justified. For example, tents and caravans can be particularly visible in the winter months when there is no foliage on trees and hedgerows so the year round impact on valued character needs to be carefully assessed. The National Park Authority defines holiday use as occupation for no more than 28 days per calendar year by any one person. Anything over 28 days occupation by any one person is classed as full time residential use and will be prevented where necessary by the enforcement of conditions or legal agreements.
- 5.21 Applications to relax seasonal occupancy conditions will be considered on their merits but will more often than not be refused. This

Holiday occupancy of self-catering accommodation

- 5.22 In cases where a property is unsuitable as a full-time residence (where there is, for example, poor outdoor or indoor living space, an inappropriate relationship to adjoining houses or unacceptable potential for landscape harm) it may, within legal limits, be possible to approve a form of accommodation that will not represent a permanent year round impact on neighbours' amenity or harm the relationship between buildings.
- 5.23 The removal of a holiday occupancy condition may be acceptable where there would be no adverse impact on valued characteristics of the area or residential amenity. In these cases the opportunity will be taken to tie the property to occupancy in perpetuity by those in housing need and having the required local connection as specified in policies. The recycling of these houses into this sector helps address local problems of affordability and reduces the pressure to build further dwellings.

DMR3 Holiday occupancy of self-catering accommodation

Outside settlements listed in policy DS1 of the Core Strategy:

- A. where self-catering accommodation is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation; and
- B. for existing accommodation, the removal of any condition that stipulates months of occupation will be permitted provided:
 - (i) that there would be no adverse impact on valued characteristics of the area or residential amenity and
 - (ii) the dwelling unit is tied by legal agreement to occupancy in perpetuity by those in housing need and having the required local connection as specified in policies; and
 - (iii) the size of the dwelling unit is within that specified in housing policies beyond which the dwelling unit cannot reasonably be rented or part owned at a price eligible occupants can afford.

Within a settlements listed in policy DS1 of the Core Strategy:

- C. a holiday occupancy condition will be applied to self-catering accommodation if the property being converted has inadequate indoor or outdoor living space or is so closely related to adjoining properties that the introduction of residential use would cause unacceptable harm to their amenity; and
- D. for existing accommodation, the removal of any holiday occupancy condition will be permitted where the criteria in B) above are met.

Facilities for keeping and riding horses

5.24 Horse riding provides opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the National Park. Planning permission is not normally required for the use of land for grazing horses, but stables, exercise rings (or maneges) and the recreational use of land usually do require permission. The popularity of horse riding creates pressure for stabling and exercise rings in places where it is not always easy to find a good design and fit to the valued characteristics of the landscape. The combination of buildings and exercise areas,

security lighting and paddock style fencing can create an over-managed feel to relatively simple pastoral landscapes, particularly where the landscapes are relatively open.

- 5.25 The design and construction of such facilities, including the demand for major changes to landform to create exercise areas has caused some concern. Experience has shown that where stables are built to high, even domestic standards, there can be subsequent pressure for conversion to domestic use. As such it is considered that simpler constructions methods offer a more functional solution, although the acceptability of individual designs will depend always on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 5.26 The impact may also be lessened by siting stables or facilities adjacent to existing groups of buildings, and using materials which reflect the valued character of the area. Consideration should also be given to issues such as the ease of access to an adequate local bridleway network, likely traffic generation, and possible nuisance to local residents, landowners or farmers.

DMR4 Facilities for keeping and riding horses

Facilities for keeping and riding horses will be permitted provided that the development:

- A. is specifically designed to accommodate horses; and
- B. is not constructed of a scale or design or materials, or any combination of these three aspects of a proposal which would be tantamount to creating a new dwelling or a building that would lend itself to future conversion for such purpose; and
- C. is located adjacent to existing buildings or groups of buildings; and
- D. does not alter the valued landscape character by changing the landform or in any other way have an adverse impact on its character and appearance
- E. is not likely to cause road safety problems;
- F. in the case of commercial stables/riding centres, has good access from the strategic and secondary road networks and to an adequate bridleway network that can accommodate the increased activity without harming the valued characteristics of the area or their enjoyment by others.