Appeal Decision
Hearing held and site visit made on 9 June 2009

by Victor Crumley DipTP DMS MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 10 June 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/Q9495/A/09/2097509
Lakeland Great Outdoors Ltd, Plantation Bridge, Staveley, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 9JA

- 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 Lakeland Great Outdoors Ltd against the decision of the Lake District National Park Authority.
- The development proposed is described as ‘extension to shop premises to include tourist information centre and demolition of office and storeroom’.

Procedural matters
1. Although the development proposed was described as set out above, I consider that it would be more accurately described as ‘extension to shop premises comprising storeroom, office, retail space and tourist information centre’.

Decision
2. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issues
3. I consider the main issues in this appeal to be:

   a) the effect of the entrance atrium proposed on the character and appearance of the building and the immediate surroundings;

   b) the effect of the traffic generated by the proposal on road safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance
4. The appellant company operates an outdoor equipment shop in an attractive, modern building of traditional appearance with main road frontage in the small hamlet of Plantation Bridge. To the rear of the shop, and detached from it is a former dwelling, now used as a store and office, which is considered to be inadequate and is to be removed. A new building similar to the existing shop, and set at right angles to it, would accommodate a new storage facility and office, while a small extension to the existing retail building is also proposed. The two buildings would be linked by an octagonal-shaped glazed atrium which would provide a new entrance to the buildings and accommodate a tourist information centre.
5. The existing retail building is attractively built of local stone and slate, and in its shape, massing and details of openings has the appearance of a rural barn. The new storage building now proposed would be of similar appearance. By contrast, the entrance atrium would be glazed except for a slate canopy, would be octagonal in plan and have a conical slate roof with a glazed lantern. The roof structure would be wholly above the ridge of the ‘barns’. The overall height of the new entrance atrium would be 10m, some 3.5m higher than the ridge height of the existing building. The appellant argued that the glazed atrium was not designed to attract the attention of people in passing vehicles, but to create a distinctive and attractive entrance to the building for people on the site, and to provide a prominent position for the display of tourist information. It was also argued to be an effective and attractive method of achieving the right-angled junction between the existing shop and the proposed storage building.

6. I accept that the siting and wooded surroundings of the atrium would mean that it would not be highly visible to passing traffic, and I acknowledge the importance of designing the building to give prominence to the entrance. However, while its glazed structure would be transparent and would have a 'light-weight' appearance, its size, extensive glazing and distinctly modern form would dominate the appearance of the scheme as a whole, and would not fit in well with the low-key, local rural character of the existing building. In my view the atrium building would be more appropriate in a larger urban commercial setting. The commercial function here is set in a small village in a National Park, and I consider that the extension proposed should respect this. The atrium proposal is not the only means by which improved access to the building and a better tourism information service could be achieved. I conclude that its appearance would not reflect the character and appearance of the existing building or the immediate surroundings.

7. Government advice set out in ‘Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development’ (PPS 1) stresses (in paras. 34 and 36) the importance of good design, and the need to reflect the local context of the development. This is further emphasised in PPS 7 (para. 12). The need for development to reflect its setting is also reflected in Policy DP7 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England. I conclude that the proposal would contravene the advice in these sources.

Road safety

8. Immediately to the south of the shop is a petrol filling station. Both premises front on to the A591 road which provides a main route to and from the Lake District. The access to both premises from the north is from a short deceleration lane, and from the south by means of a right-turning lane in the centre of the carriageway. There is in my view considerable scope for confusion and conflict between drivers entering and leaving both premises; this is compounded by the high speeds of traffic on the main road, and the presence of a number of private accesses. I consider the existing arrangements to be distinctly hazardous, and I have sympathy with the general safety concerns expressed by the National Park Authority (NPA) and residents.

9. The appellant calculated that the modest additional retail space proposed would result in the addition of just 14 additional car trips to and from the site per day.
No change in service traffic was anticipated. These figures have not been disputed by the NPA or the Highway Authority (HA). The NPA, supported by local residents, argued that any additional traffic using the entrance to the appeal site car park would make the existing situation worse. However, the HA advised that the extension of the central waiting lane to provide for right-turning traffic into the appeal site would offer safety improvements. I agree with this view, and I also consider that further improvements could be achieved by improved lining and minor works at the junction between the site access and the highway. This could be achieved through a condition of any planning permission. In these circumstances, in spite of my concern about the present arrangements, I accept that the small additional traffic generation from the proposal would not materially harm road safety, and could promote limited improvements. I conclude that the proposal would not conflict with Policy TR4 of the Lake District National Park Local Plan.

**Conclusion**

10. Although I accept that the proposal would not be harmful to road safety, I have determined that the entrance atrium would not respect the character and appearance of the existing buildings or the immediate surroundings. I consider that this outweighs the absence of harm to road safety, and I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed and planning permission refused.

*Victor Crumley*

INSPECTOR
APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT

Mr Keith Jones                      Steve Abbott Associates, Wigan, Agents
Mr Phillip Chadwick                Savage and Chadwick, Kendal, Architects
Mr Colin Hartley                   Appellant

FOR THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Mr Neil Henderson                  Planner

THIRD PARTIES

Mr Alan Barnes                     Gale Syke, Plantation Bridge
Mr John Kaye                       Crows nest, Plantation Bridge
Mr Brian Newton-Taylor             Heathcote, Plantation Bridge

DOCUMENTS

No additional documents were submitted to the Hearing.

PLANS

Plans 1-2                          Application plans

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Drawings 1-4                       Application drawings