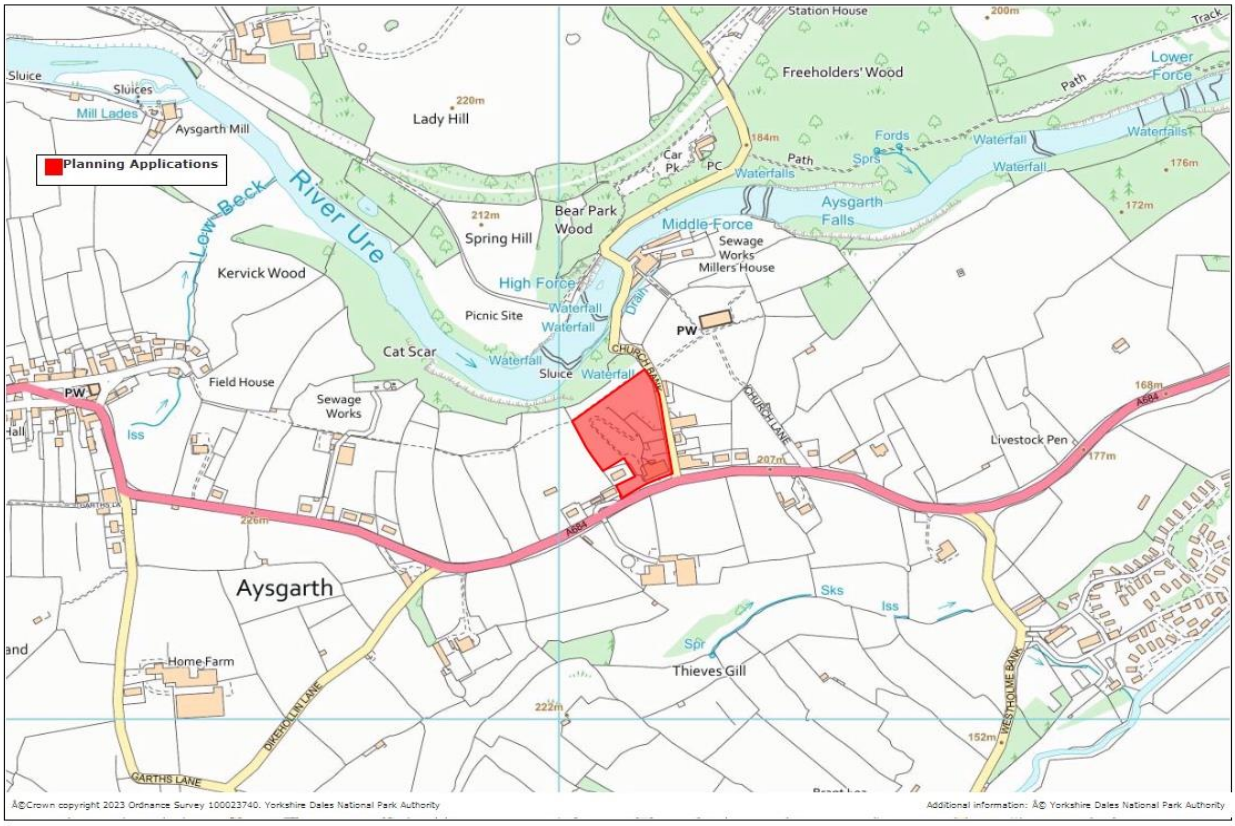
YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Committee:	Planning	**Parish:**	Aysgarth
Date:	3 October 2023	**Officer:**	Emma Heron
Applicant:	BR Aysgarth Ltd	**Application No:**	R/51/25L
Site Address:	Aysgarth Falls Hotel, Aysgarth, DL8 3SR		
Proposal:	Full planning permission for 14 hotel lodges and facilities, alongside refurbishment of and extension to existing hotel		



REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

1. This application is reported to Committee for the following reason: the Parish Council recommendation is contrary to the decision which the Head of Development Management proposes to take.

APPLICATION SITE

2. The site is land to the rear of Aysgarth Falls Hotel, and the rear elevation of the hotel. The land comprises grassed areas for camping, surfaced static caravan pitches, a vehicular track and a games area, at varying levels across the site. The rear of the hotel includes a range of outbuildings of varying ages, and a rear dining room extension.

3. The land falls away from south to north with the hotel at the highest point, and mature woodland forming the northern boundary. The land then falls sharply to the river Ure, beyond the woodland (SSSI). A footpath runs west-east at the lower end of the site providing a well-used link through the churchyard and along the fields into the Aysgarth village core.

PROPOSAL

4. Full planning permission is sought for 14 hotel lodges (2 accessible, 3 family and 9 regular) and two facility buildings, together with alterations to the hotel including additional restaurant and bar area, enlarged kitchen facility, minor external layout configuration and staff accommodation. The proposals also include an 18-space car park, landscaping and drainage proposals including an attenuation pond.

5. The hotel lodges are proposed to be intrinsically linked to the operation of the hotel. Each lodge would have a bedroom, an en-suite bathroom and an external space. Just as in typical hotel rooms there would be basic tea and coffee making facilities only. Rooms would be let on a nightly basis and would include breakfast served either in the hotel or as room service.. The family lodges include a second room which doubles as a lounge/separate bedroom. The lodges would be linked to the hotel via footpaths within the site, and low-level lighting bollards. The lodges would be of a contemporary design incorporating timber and stone external walling, mono-pitch roofs, and minimalist glazing. Each lodge would also include an external terrace. The 3 family lodges would also incorporate an external hot tub.

6. The restaurant would provide space for 30 additional covers, in a rear contemporary timber clad extension joined to the existing by a low-level glazed link. It would incorporate elements of an existing curved traditional building that sits within the grounds, and a small bar to service outside seating areas.

7. Other alterations include an external staircase on the western elevation of the hotel, use of an element of the building for staff accommodation, a toilet block/bin store and bin store/tractor shed.

8. Amendments have been secured through the course of the application process, including the omission of a unit, the retention of elements of a traditional building, the rearrangement and re-alignment of the pods to work with the contours of the site, including a separation from the footpath, and design changes to the pods and the hotel extension.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

9. The following applications are relevant:

R/51/25F – full planning permission for external and internal alterations to existing hotel including landscaping. Approved 13.2.2012

R/51/25G – full planning permission for change of use of field to campsite and erection of five garden sheds to house toilets and shower (part retrospective). Approved 24.6.2014

R/51/25H – Full planning permission for replacement of flue pipe for oil boiler with 2 smaller steel flues for renewable energy boiler (retrospective) and replacement of green plastic oil tank with wooden clad hut to house wood pellet store and replace fountain feature. Approved 19.12.2014

R/51/25J – full planning permission to create 10 new hardstanding for touring caravans, erection of retaining walls and associated groundworks and erection of toilet/washroom block. Approved 11.1.2018

R/51/25K – full planning permission for alterations to existing double garage store/beer store to facilitate an ancillary Deli counter facility. Approved 16.3.2022

CONSULTATIONS

10. The comments of statutory and non-statutory consultees are summarized below:

Area Ranger (Lower Wensleydale)
The proposed development will not affect the public right of way once works are complete. It is recommended that the footpath line be clearly marked prior and adequate signage and fencing put in place prior to construction, and during construction materials/debris are stored leaving enough width to allow footpath traffic to pass. An informative note is recommended relating to the unobstructed use of the footpath and instructions should a temporary diversion or closure be required.

Highway Authority
No local highway authority objections to the proposed development.

Yorkshire Water
No objections in principle to the drainage and layout details. Recommends conditions ensuring the development is carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy, an easement strip is protected.

Police – North Yorkshire
An application for a Premises Licence would be needed for the proposed hotel extension.
A continuous physical boundary (with gate) between the site and public footpath is recommended

NYCC - Drainage & Floods (LLFA)
No comments received

Yoredale Ward
No comments received

Chief Technical Officer Richmondshire DC
No comments received

Wildlife Conservation Officer
Dormice are unlikely to be present and affected by the proposed development due to a lack of suitable habitat.

Agree with the assessment that the on-site habitats are of negligible value for nature conservation.

Concerns with regards to external lighting, and its impact on the woodland beside the River Ure can be addressed by condition.

Conditions/informative notes required in relation to a prior check for nesting birds if any vegetation clearance takes place in the bird nesting season, and also informative note in relation to bats protected status.

Following receipt of further detailed information in respect of biodiversity enhancements:
The total area of developed area amounts to approximately 2,203 square metres equating to a notional value for biodiversity enhancement of just over £5,500. The 0.12 ha of mixed scrub would cost approximately £1,450, and the total number of bat/bird boxes and hibernacula is not yet known.

When the Biodiversity Metric is used it predicts a 28% increase in biodiversity value which is nearly three times the amount that would be required when BNG becomes mandatory.

Head of Visitor Services
From a tourism point of view this appears to be a positive development. The rationale behind provision of accessible lodges in the grounds as an alternative to trying to make the hotel fully accessible sounds like a good option. Structural changes to the main hotel building to provide better access to the upper floor is likely to result in a reduction of letting rooms and spaces for visitors on the ground floor which would potentially reduce the business.

Although anecdotal we are also aware that visitor requirements have changed during the pandemic with many choosing to stay in self-contained accommodation for example luxury camping pods. The owners of the hotel were keen to provide a high quality experience for those with access needs and family groups with the hotel facilities at the heart of this development.

I would hope that investment in this development will provide economic benefits to the area with employment opportunities for staff employed in hospitality. There could also be opportunities for the hotel to link with other local businesses to provide services to their guests (eg cycle hire, or guides to access outdoor experiences) and to also participate in activities which promote NP special qualities ie hosting Dark Skies events for their customers or promotion of the food offer with local suppliers.

Fire Officer - Richmondshire
No objections or observations. The Fire and Rescue Authority will make further comment in relation to the suitability of proposed fire safety measures at the time when the building control body submit a statutory Building Regulations consultation.

Chief Environmental Health Officer CEHO
It is considered that the likelihood that the proposed development will cause a nuisance to neighbouring properties will be low.

A condition is recommended with regards to unexpected contamination, plus informative note in relation to the need for license amendment.

Clerk to Aysgarth & District PC
The Parish Council resolved to strongly object to the Planning Application R/51/25L as it stands.

The reasons for strongly objecting are summarised as follows:

Loss of Touring Caravan and camping space which provides more affordable stays in the immediate Parish area.

The biggest touring caravan park in the Parish and surrounding area, Westholme Caravan Park (Aysgarth/Burton-cum-Walden Parish area), was lost in 2008 when the whole site was converted to lodges; this Park had space for 40 touring caravans, 3 sites for camper vans, plus two fields set aside for camping. Much of that regular trade was lost to the area as the only other spaces for touring caravans in the immediate area were the smaller site at what is now The Aysgarth Falls Hotel, and another even smaller site known as Colemans.

Although the site at The Aysgarth Falls Hotel is currently not in use, it remains an important facility in the immediate locality and was well used while in the previous owner's recent tenure. A clear demonstration of the need for touring caravans and camping sites in close proximity to Aysgarth Falls is shown by the demand experienced at Colemans, which is fully booked the year through. The YDNP Local Plan 2015-2030 highlights the importance of retaining budget accommodation to make the National Park more accessible to diverse groups, especially within walking distance to local services and the Park's best natural resources. This application seeks to abolish this existing provision and replace it with a 'high-end hotel offering', which will clearly not be affordable

to the many. It seeks to allay the impact of this disposal by highlighting the presence of other sites several miles away and in adjoining Dales, however we feel it does not lessen the local need or justify closing this site adjoining one of the National Park's most popular attractions.

Impact on existing sewer system from this Major planning application.

Aysgarth village has its own sewage system, however premises outside the village to the East were not connected to it. Those properties, notably the Aysgarth Falls Hotel and the cottages near the river adjacent to Yore Mill had to rely on septic tanks. After many problems with these tanks overflowing into the river, a small new system was installed adjacent to the Mill to cater solely for the Aysgarth Falls Hotel and the small number of cottages. The last house to be connected was Church Bank House which then brought the number of connections up to its maximum design limit. Even so, this system still has problems and tends to overflow in periods of heavy rainfall. This application seeks to more than double the hotel's residential capacity, all year round, in units that each have a luxury bath and separate shower, which would result in the system transporting a far higher volume than the original design capacity (i.e. the Aysgarth Falls Hotel as it stood – 12x bedrooms and 1x camping ablutions block – plus approx. 5 properties). Since the system is now performing to its maximum capacity, there is clearly no spare capacity to accommodate 15 new lodge property connections. The community's residents, especially those connected to this small system, are very concerned that if approved, the overflows will be more frequent and that they will have to deal with the consequences of these within their properties.

Concerns are further raised by the estimates given in the Planning Application of the wastewater that will be produced by the proposed 15 lodges, as they appear to be low (150 litres per person, per day). This quantity is the average water used in one person's 10-minute shower. Each lodge has a luxury bath and separate shower, and with guests returning from a day out walking and preparing for a restaurant meal, there will likely be more than just one shower/bath per person per day in addition to other personal washing and toilet use, risking the system being overwhelmed year-round.

Impact to Local Business and Economy
In these changing economic times touring caravans have become an increasingly important asset to boost the local economy. There is now a Shop/Post Office in Aysgarth which caters for the needs of self-catering visitors, and caravanners and campers are regular users of the facilities. Having a local caravan site at the hotel provides shop customers from at least twelve touring families in addition to those guests camping at the site. The sale of these self-catering consumables makes a significant contribution to the profitability of that enterprise, and this footfall also supports other businesses in the local area. Clearly, closing the site to self-catering visitors would have a detrimental impact on the shop and damage its viability as it currently stands, as well as having a harmful effect to the local economy generally. The Aysgarth Falls Hotel plans to offer food and drinks at all times of the day consisting of fine dining and casual dining in the restaurants, bar facilities, and the planned delicatessen addition; this will result in making visiting other local outlets less attractive from a cost and convenience perspective, especially if guests are offered promotional discounts and packaged in-house services (e.g. guided walks, bike hire, etc with a 'picnic bag'). Essentially, it will become a full-service resort.

There is already a 'Lodge Holiday Park' in the immediate vicinity, which also has planning applications "under consideration" for their own expansion/diversification. The Parish Council have also submitted an `objection' comment to that Application.
Despite the applicants stating that the lodges to be sited in the grounds of The Aysgarth Falls hotel are not `lodges' because they will not have self-catering facilities (i.e. no kitchen), we feel this application will deliver a very similar 'resort' offering to that available from Aysgarth Lodge Holidays and believe the approval of development to either site will set a precedent for the other, which will compound the detrimental impact to the local environment, community and tourism.

Provision of Employment
The Planning Statement accompanying this application states the development will provide 17 additional jobs, but the Planning Application states that full-time employees will only change from 11.5 to 12.0 Full Time Equivalent. There are concerns that whilst there will be a need to increase staff, they may not be sourced from the local community to work onsite e.g. booking agents, off-site business development and managerial roles, and further out-sourcing of services such as laundry/linen and cleaning services.

Premises Licence
The Planning Application shows the creation of 2x Function Rooms and 1x Events Space in the new development but states that the operating hours of 08:00 - 21:00hrs will not change. The Parish Council has received confirmation from Richmondshire District Council that a late 2am (every day) Licence, which includes live and recorded music, was applied for/issued in November 2022. There are concerns regarding noise pollution and late-night disruption through heavy traffic leaving events and local disturbance when the full revenue-making opportunities the licence enables are realised.

Impact on Environment
The Parish Council is aware that the Aysgarth Falls Hotel has highlighted that minimising light pollution is a priority and proposed the 0% upward lights to be used.

Parish Council response to further consultation received 17 July 2023:
I write on behalf of Aysgarth & District Parish Council. The Parish Council strongly object to the amended major planning application R/51/25L. The Parish Council re-affirm the strong objection submitted on 02.02.23 and make the following comments:

The Parish Council closed its submission in February with 'The Parish Council welcomes investment in the businesses and infrastructure in our area and will look to support diversification, where appropriate, to deliver maximum local community benefit. We seek to engender a collaborative approach with all parties to support the future prosperity of our area and encourage everyone to communicate and engage with us'. In the five months since this submission, there has been no attempt by the applicant to engage with the Parish Council or rebut any of the serious concerns expressed by the Parish Council and residents.

The amended proposal seems to merely be a rearrangement of the proposed lodges and a change to some of the materials used. We find nothing in the updated proposal that addresses the main concerns and objections, namely:
- Loss of Touring Caravan and Camping space when there is already a Lodge Holiday Park in the immediate vicinity;
- Detrimental impact on the footpath, rural setting, and visual amenity;
- Sewage issues;
- New late premises licence leading to noise pollution and disruption;
- Light pollution;
- Negative impact on local business economy by creating a full-service resort;

We note the amended proposal attempts to address one aspect of visual amenity, however from one direction only.
The amended proposal continues to make four claims which, based on recent history, we believe are unlikely to be delivered. These are as follows:

1. Benefit to local economy through increased spending: the effect of the development, we believe, will in fact damage the local economy by taking away trade from the shop/post office, tea rooms, etc. and, restrict choice for travelling visitors by removing self-catering options. The business is not locally owned so the profits will not be redistributed back into the local area.

2. Provision of additional employment: creating increased competition for recruitment through the large scale of this development will further impact other local businesses as well as the applicant's business as there is a shortage of local workers for this industry already; we understand that the Aysgarth Falls Hotel has needed to bus in workers from its other sites in Barnsley, Penistone and Newcastle.

3. Benefits for local suppliers: during the alterations already undertaken to the hotel, the benefit to local businesses was minimal as tradesmen and supplies were sourced and delivered from outside the local area.

4. No impact on local sewage system: we remain convinced that fifteen lodges with their own toilets and unrestricted use of bath and shower facilities all year round represents a significant increased load on the local service compared to the limited demand from caravans and campers who predominantly use the site in the summer season only. It would appear that Yorkshire Water still have issues with the proposal.

The Parish Council has been approached again by a number of local residents who have serious concerns over this amended major planning application. The Parish Council stands by its previous strong objection.

Trees & Woodlands
The arboricultural impact assessment, method statement and tree protection plan meet the requirements of BS5837.

While the developmental impacts on the trees will be low during the build, it is likely that some of the trees around the edge of the site will come under pressure for work to be carried out in the future due to their proximity to the proposed buildings and associated infrastructure.

The drainage diagram shows the pond very close to the root protection area of some trees. I cannot see how this can be constructed while leaving the tree protection fencing in place. Furthermore the drainage diagram shows the overflow from the pond running into the woodland at the edge of the site. This woodland is priority habitat and should not be disturbed. No information has been given on the predicted amount of discharge there will be from this pipe. Excessive amounts can lead to drowning of the tree roots and death of the tree. In addition to this as this water is coming from run off from the site, there is potential for harmful, long lasting chemicals to be present in the water.

Full detailed landscaping and management plan required by condition.

Environment Agency
An alternative foul drainage system for a neighbouring property (Church View) should be found, and this requirement should form a detailed condition of any approval. Yorkshire Water should be consulted in respect of connection of any increased foul water flows from the proposed development.

YDNPA Senior Historic Environment Officer
Archaeology
A pre-commencement condition requiring an archaeologicial Written Scheme of Investigation is recommended. This is due to the Historic Environment Record entry for medieval cultivation lynchets and ridge and furrow earthworks (YDNPA HER MYD 46277), and due to the fact the hotel is purported to be built on the site of a medieval hospice. The hotel was originally called The Palmer Flatt Hotel, the Palmer element referring to the site of the hospice where pilgrims returning from the Holy Land in poor health were treated. The Flatt element is a locally common agricultural term meaning a section of open field consisting of parallel strips, or land enclosed from a division of the common fields. It is possible that remains of this earlier building may be exposed in the course of construction works.

Piggery building
Although undesignated, this is a characterful traditional building with ample evidence of its past layout and function, and its retention makes a considerable contribution towards the historical character of the site. It is

difficult to make the case that this building is of equivalent significance to a listed building. Nevertheless, its demolition would negatively impact the character and significance of the site, and we would strongly advise that options to retain and re-use the outbuilding are considered, rather than demolition. Some degree of alteration to make the building more suitable for re-use could be considered as a compromise (e.g. unblocking the large former cart door facing east, some alteration of floor levels/steps or widening of doors to the southern wall to improve accessibility), as long as it does not undermine its historical value.

Further comments following amended proposals that incorporate part of the piggery:
Some harm will clearly result from the proposal upon the significance of the undesignated piggery outbuilding, although it appears that reasonable efforts have now been made to retain at least part of the outbuilding and incorporate it into the development. In order to meet the requirements of Policy L1, a planning condition is recommended requiring a historic buildings survey of the outbuilding to Historic England Level 3 standard to be completed and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval prior to any works of demolition to the outbuilding.

PUBLIC RESPONSES

Neighbour/interested parties' responses received: 20

11. The application was advertised by site notice on 28th January, and a newspaper advert published on 20th January. Neighbours were also notified directly.

    12 objections have been received from seven separate households and two organisations. The following is a summary of the concerns raised:

- Loss of low-cost holiday accommodation options diluting diversity of visitor access to the National Park
- Late opening hours and disturbance
- Traffic and road safety
- Shortage of car parking spaces
- Visual impact
- Impact on enjoyment of public footpath
- Harm to setting of St Andrews Church
- Large scale of development and disturbance to peace and tranquility
- Already a large site for lodges in the vicinity
- Overlooking of nearby properties
- Visitor management and disturbance
- Proposal would take local employment away from existing businesses.
- Dark skies impact
- Staff accommodation shortage locally
- Employment will not be local, so no local employment benefits.
- Question over the employment benefits that the application presents
- No benefits to local economy as the enterprise would be fully self-contained
- Concerns relating to drainage
- Undermining of National Park purposes
- Major development, so the test to approve should be exceptional.
- Harm to biodiversity
- Increase in pollution such as littering

12. Six letters of support have been received raising the following points:

- The proposal would support local businesses
- Current owners' positive investment into the business

- More employment for the locality
- Increase in visitors to the area & increased local spending
- Proposals will keep visitors within the Aysgarth area
- Low impact development
- Environmental benefits - dark skies friendly lighting & tree planting
- Reduction in the number of large motorhomes
- Additional car parking would reduce parking on the frontside approach

ASSESSMENT

13. Key Issues:

- Planning policy
- Loss of low-cost visitor accommodation
- Landscape and visual impact
- Heritage and archaeology
- Neighbour amenity
- Highway safety and parking
- Drainage
- Biodiversity
- Beneficial of the proposal
- Parish Council comments
- Conclusion and the Sandford Principle
- Equality Act

PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

14. The National Park has two statutory purposes set out in the 1995 Environment Act:
    - To conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
    - To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

    In taking forward the purposes, the Authority has a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) sets out the purpose of the planning system: to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In setting out what is sustainable development the Frameworks requires that "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks … which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues." (para. 176).

15. The NPPF also requires the supporting of a prosperous rural economy, including "sustainable rural tourism and leisure development which respect the character of the countryside" (para. 84). It also emphasises the importance of good design (para 130).

16. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless there are material reasons to do otherwise. The local plan assists in delivering the ambitions set out in the National Park Management Plan (2019-2024).

17. The most relevant policies of the adopted Yorkshire Dales Local Plan are:
    SP2 (National Park purposes)
    SP4 (development quality)
    T3 (sustainable self-catering visitor accommodation)

T5 (indoor visitor facilities)
L1 (heritage assets)

18. Underpinning the relevant tourism policies is National Park Management Plan objective E2, to "improve the quality, variety and marketing of the tourism 'offer' to encourage more overnight stays and more visitors in the quieter months, so that the value of tourism grows by at least 5% in real terms by 2024".

Principle of development

19. As the lodges are proposed as serviced hotel rooms intrinsically linked to the hotel business and building, as opposed to self-contained holiday accommodation, the proposal is considered principally under policy T5 of the Local Plan. This is a key consideration and separates the proposal from self-contained accommodation associated with glamping accommodation and holiday lodges.

20. Policy T5 supports indoor facilities including hotels, aimed at visitors but not reliant on the special qualities of the National Park where located in existing settlements, or close to existing visitor facilities. Additionally, those facilities that would also provide overall benefits to local communities will be considered favourably. This is in order to encourage development of facilities and attractions that will improve the year round visitor experience in ways that will not reduce special qualities.

21. Elements of policy T3 are also relevant, namely, "the replacement of tent or touring caravan pitches with more permanent types of accommodation will only be permitted where this would not significantly reduce the supply of tent and touring pitches available locally, and the site is capable of such a change without a harmful impact on the special qualities of the National Park".

22. The proposal is directly linked to the existing hotel business (an existing visitor facility), and provides additional hotel accommodation in one of the National Park's 'honey pot' locations in the north area. The site is within walking distance of the main settlement of Aysgarth (classified as a Service Village in the Local Plan). Aysgarth and the immediate locality benefits from a number of facilities and tourism offers including a shop, garage, cafes, public houses, Aysgarth Falls and the National Park visitor centre. It is accessed directly from an A class road and is on the route of a bus services between Hawes and outlying towns. Furthermore, it is located close to a network of public rights of way, and in a location popular for cycling.

23. The proposal represents sustainable development in strategic terms. It would support the Management Plan objective of providing development that will improve the year round visitor experience, through the expansion of an existing hotel business, and the NPPF requirement of supporting a prosperous rural economy including sustainable rural tourism.

24. Whilst acceptable in principle, the Sandford Principle must be applied: where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment in National Parks, then conservation interest should take priority. Added to this is the balance of assessing the benefits of the proposal against the harms. This analysis forms the basis of the remainder of the report.

Loss of low-cost accommodation options

25. The test for assessing the loss of tent or touring caravan pitches is that it should not significantly reduce the supply of tent and touring pitches available locally, and the site is capable of such a change without a harmful impact on the special qualities of the National Park (policy T3). The basis behind the protection of touring pitches is that touring caravans tend to have a higher turnover of visitors, thus allowing more people to experience the special qualities of the National Park.

26. The existing site has permission for 10 caravan pitches and 20 tent pitches. In establishing what extent of loss may be deemed significant or otherwise, the applicant has undertaken an analysis of touring caravan pitches within a 20 mile radius of the site. Whilst the total number identified amounts to 749 pitches, many are clustered outside of the National Park. A more locally defined analysis of sites within Wensleydale (and including Street Head), the number of touring pitches amounts to approximately 206 pitches, so the proposal would see a decrease of less than 5% which is not considered significant.

27. Camping pitches are harder to quantify, however the applicants have undertaken an analysis of campsites within a 10-mile radius. The figures amount to 130 tent spaces within the Park boundary, 155 if a site in Redmire is taken account of, and 195 taking account of an extant consent at Bainbridge Ings, which could be implemented if demand allows. So the loss would be between 10% and 15%. In addition, with the recent expansion of permitted development rights for 60 days of camping on land within the National Park, the projected impact of the loss of the tent spaces is likely to be much lower.

28. Added to the balance in favour of the proposal, is the fact that the proposed hotel lodges would protect the site for short stay visitors, rather than the 'second home' aspect of privately owned static caravans. This meets the policy objective of protecting sites for higher visitor turnover. It is therefore considered that the development represents an insignificant loss of tent and touring pitches. As such the proposal is considered to meet the requirements of policy T3.

LANDSCAPE IMPACT

29. The landscape character of the area outside of the village core is one of interspersed ribbon development, isolated outlying farmsteads, as well as more intensified development at the southern, top end of Church Bank. On the north side of the A684, linear agricultural fields bounded by drystone walls slope downhill towards woodlands which then drop steeply away to the River Ure. The site drops steeply away from the buildings fronting the road, and is made up of mown grass on several tiers, a levelled grass games area, a partially excavated and levelled area with hardstandings for caravans, and an access track. Mature trees, and more recent landscaping forms the eastern boundary alongside a drystone wall, individual smaller trees are present on the western boundary. The existing use for camping and caravans is relatively low intensity and transient in nature.

30. The proposal intensifies the use of the site, and is a more permanent development of a substantial portion of the land to the rear of the hotel building. Nonetheless it is considered that the site has capacity to absorb the development, subject to a comprehensive landscape scheme. The lodges would be spaced out in an organic manner on various levels within the site, and make good use of site contours. The lodges would be set back from more sensitive vantage points such as along the less developed part of Church Bank, and views from the tree-lined avenue leading to St Andrews church. In these areas, additional landscaping (that is already planted), would assist in breaking up views of the development over time, in addition to the existing mature tree planting.

31. From the public footpath to the west, the majority of the development area would be screened from view, due to the substantial drop in levels between the site and the adjoining field. However, the most northerly lodges 2, 3 and 15 would be at least partially visible, but not in their entirety due to the land levels and intervening boundaries. As the lodges are low-profile, utilise dark wood and natural stone walling, their visual impact is small-scale and can be mitigated by additional landscaping on the western boundary. Additionally, the lighting strategy demonstrates a commitment to providing a low-level, low output scheme, which can be secured by condition.

32. As the footpath crosses the northern portion of the site, users of the PROW would directly experience the development in its entirety, and throughout the year rather than the existing seasonal experience. Taking account of the existing manicured and semi-engineered landform, clear relationship with the hotel

building and other settlement features, and also the design quality, the development in this area would not be so unexpected to the user's experience as to be unduly harmful.

33. Turning to the hotel extension, the building's rear elevation has been much altered, incorporating a range of extensions on multiple levels creating a series of awkward external spaces. The proposal is considered to be a high quality design making use of muted natural materials, a subservient link providing a sense of separation from the main building, and a deeply overhanging roof over the vertically proportioned areas of glazing.

34. Whilst the proposal undoubtedly spreads the extent of development deeper into the site, the proposals for low-profile lodge rooms (including DDA compliant accommodation), is considered to be a positive means of expanding the business without providing a large extension to the hotel building itself, and the design challenges associated with this form of expansion.

35. On balance the proposal has an acceptable landscape impact and design quality, taking account of the existing use and appearance of the site, the landscape proposals, and the sensitive design treatments.

HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

36. The proposal has been assessed by the Senior Historic Environment Officer. An archaeological monitoring condition would be required to record any remains exposed during development work. This is due to the ridge and furrow earthworks associated with medieval farming, and potential for sub-surface remains that may survive of a former building within and around the footprint of the hotel building. This information is not required pre-determination as previous archaeological work has taken place at the site and there has been additional ground disturbance with the insertion of a water main.

37. Aysgarth Falls Hotel and a small stone curved building in its grounds are both non-designated heritage assets. The impact of development on the significance of the assets forms part of the assessment of the development. Policy L1 states that where harm or loss would result, applicants should demonstrate that reasonable efforts have been made to minimise harm and make provisions for suitable recording prior to development taking place.

38. The proposal will not harm the significance of Aysgarth Falls Hotel itself. The heavily altered rear elevation, split levels and separate external spaces would benefit from the cohesively designed extension, and as it incorporates a subservient low-level link to the main building, the separation allows the unaltered first floor elements to be uninterrupted.

39. The piggery building is the small single storey stone curved building within the curtilage of the hotel. It is a characterful traditional building with ample evidence of its past layout and function, making a positive contribution towards the historical character of the site. But, it is not of equivalent significance to a listed building. The applicant has made a sound case for requiring its alteration, based around the functioning of the back of house areas of the hotel building, and in particular having a single centralised kitchen to service each area. Whilst initially proposing the building's demolition, the amended scheme demonstrates reasonable efforts to retain parts of the building and incorporate it into the development. Subject to a Historic England Level 3 building recording condition, the proposal accords with policy L1 of the Local Plan.

40. In relation to the setting of St Andrews Church, the lodges are set well back from the views to and from the church along the key view through the tree-lined avenue. The intervening trees between both sites, the small-scale of the lodges, and a sensitive lighting scheme would negate any impact's on the church's setting.

NEIGHBOUR AMENITY

41. There are a number of residential properties adjoining the application site, notably Church View to the rear of the site's existing car park, and properties along Church Bank opposite the site's eastern boundary.

42. Church View is significantly elevated above the car parking, implement shed and lodge development proposals, and the position of the access track is as per the existing which is already in use as part of the caravan and camping site. The house is some distance from the proposed restaurant extension and physically separated by the existing two storey extensions on the hotel. The restaurant extension faces northwards into the application site with no windows directly facing east towards Church Bank, and it would replace an existing large external seating area. A new smaller external seating area would be located centrally, further from neighbouring properties. These alterations would not impact on residential amenity.

43. The hotel lodges would be set well back from the boundaries of the site, with none directly facing neighbouring properties. The lodge closest to the boundary (no.12), would be positioned 15 metres from the side of The Falls, separated by the highway and a dense stand of mature trees. This relationship is considered acceptable.

44. The proposal represents an expansion of the hotel business and facilities, but is also largely enclosed. There would also be a clear functional link between the hotel and the lodges, with the associated guaranteed management and staffing of the site. A condition of any planning permission would require the development to operate in accordance with a Guest Management Plan. Whilst year round rather than seasonal, it is not considered likely that the proposal would generate more noise disturbance than the existing use. Other concerns relating to a late licence are covered under separate legislative processes.

HIGHWAY SAFETY AND PARKING

45. The proposal incorporates 18 formal car parking spaces including 2no DDA compliant spaces. These would serve the hotel lodges. There is existing informal parking to the front and de-marked parking to the side of the building to serve the hotel. Visibility is good at the access point,and is straight onto an A road which has good capacity for such a development. The Highway Authority has no objections to the proposal.

DRAINAGE

46. Surface water: the proposal incorporates a surface soakaway and infiltration strips serving the hotel and some lodges and a piped surface water system discharging to an attenuation pond in the NE part of the site. The pond incorporates some infiltration to ground and an outfall to the river after passing through trap gullies and filtering through porous surfacing. The surface water discharge is restricted to greenfield run off rates. Flow from the pond would drain to a land drain, designed to overtop along the length of the drain giving a sheet flow discharge over the bank, this is designed to mimic the existing scenario to protect the woodland and prevent washing of soil around tree roots.

47. Foul water: the proposal is to route all foul drainage to the existing on-site drainage system, and onwards to the combined sewer within Church Lane to the east of the site. Where the soakaway of a neighbouring property may be affected by the proposed development appropriate solutions are laid out in an additional drainage strategy that would be controlled by condition.

48. Yorkshire Water has no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions, requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy, and subject to an undeveloped easement in the vicinity of the public sewer.

49. There has been ongoing dialogue with Yorkshire Water in respect of the capacity of the receiving waste water treatment plant as there is local concern about this aspect. The current status is that Yorkshire Water has no objections on the basis that the volume of waste water is less germane than the amount of ammonia created by the predicted number of guests and the plant's ability to process the waste. However, their final comments are awaited. Comments will be provided in an update report.

BIODIVERSITY

50. The ecological appraisal identifies no impacts on species, and the Senior Wildlife Conservation Officer concurs with this view, subject to a sensitive lighting scheme, to be secured by condition.

51. The applicants have provided a breakdown of biodiversity enhancements and costs associated including 13no. bat and bird boxes, 55no. trees, hedgerow, shrubs and seeding. Together this provides an uplift far in excess of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements of 10%, and with labour costs meets policy W2 requirements.

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

52. The proposal would meet objective E2 of the National Park Management Plan. It would expand the short-stay tourism season into the quieter months and also has good potential to increase the number of day/evening visitors to Aysgarth, through the increased food and drink offers. As the site is within a 'honeypot' location, there is a reasonable likelihood that the proposal would compliment existing tourism offers and increase spend in the local economy. The Guest Management Plan clarifies that just as in other hotel offers, visitors would not be required to take all meals within the hotel, only breakfast, and there is a high likelihood that other premises would also be visited during stays given the sustainability of the location.

53. Staff accommodation is also included and would be required to be retained, by condition. The Head of Sustainable Development advises that there is often a problem for staff finding suitable affordable accommodation close to work. This accommodation would ensure staff stay local to their workplace and would spend in the local area. In general, the proposal would increase the number of jobs available, and figures have been supplied to justify the suggested net gain of 17 jobs, based on the Employment Density Matrix. The expansion of the food and drink offer would also be of benefit to local food and drink suppliers.

54. In addition to the economic benefits, the proposal introduces a range of sustainability measures, including electric vehicle charging points, secure cycle storage, a clear waste management strategy including for recycling, and during construction as set out within a Site Waste Management Plan. Additionally, the design of the proposal is centred around sustainability, including surface water drainage, energy efficient and low impact lighting, sustainably sourced timber cladding and fabric first energy efficient lodge rooms. It also includes the provision of DDA compliant lodges, which otherwise may not have been feasible to achieve without significant structural alterations to the main hotel building.

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

55. The Parish Council has provided considered and detailed comments, which are set out in full in the consultee section of this report. Their concerns relate to the following issues: loss of low-cost holiday accommodation; sewerage infrastructure impacts; impact on local economy; neighbour amenity concerns in relation to opening hours (premises licence); biodiversity impacts; impact on the experience of users of the PROW; visual impact and rural setting.

56. The Parish Council's concerns have been largely addressed in the preceding sections of the report, and the sewerage capacity issue will be included in an update report. Whilst the loss of 20 tent and 10 tourer

pitches is a concern for the Parish Council, the proposal meets the test of an insignificant loss, as required by policy T3. Equally importantly, the loss is considered to be offset by the economic, employment, supply chain and year-round tourism benefits associated with the development proposals in this sustainable location.

EQUALITY ACT

57. The Authority has a duty under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it. The relevant characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

58. It is considered that there are no overt reasons why this proposal would affect anyone with the protected characteristics such that the application should be permitted or refused on equality grounds. Indeed, the proposal incorporated DDA compliant hotel lodges.

CONCLUSION

59. The hotel lodges would be serviced hotel rooms, intrinsically linked to the hotel enterprise, and are acceptable in principle as an alternative to an extension to the hotel. Although the proposal represents a more intensive use of the site it is considered to be acceptable in landscape, visual impact and neighbour amenity terms (subject to conditions). It provides for biodiversity net gain and addresses environmental, economic and social sustainability. Some harm will arise from the loss of the tent and touring caravan pitches but this is considered to be offset by the benefits of providing a year round tourism offer, plus economic and employment benefits in a sustainable location. Overall it is considered that the development satisfies the Sandford Principle and would not undermine the conservation of the landscape, wildlife or cultural heritage of the National Park.

60. The proposal, subject to the final comments of Yorkshire Water, accords with policies SP2, SP4, T3, T5 and L1 of the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan, and the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATION

61. It is recommended that permission is GRANTED subject to conditions including the following:
- Three years for implementation
- Compliance with approved plans
- Materials to be agreed
- Number of lodges limited to 14
- External (and bat friendly/dark skies) lighting to be agreed
- Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
- Recording of the piggery building to Historic England Level 3
- Drainage details
- Drainage solution to be agreed and carried out in relation to the property known as Church Bank
- Landscaping to be agreed, approved, carried out and maintained
- Biodiversity enhancement to be approved, carried out and maintained
- Short stay visitor accommodation only
- Hotel staff accommodation to be retained as such
- Adherence to Guest Management Plan (noise & disturbance management, rooms to be fully serviced hotel rooms intrinsically linked to hotel, guest information)
- Construction Management Plan to be submitted and approved
- Requirements for unexpected land contamination

- Method statement – piggery alterations
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment & method – attenuation pond
- To be carried out in accordance with: Sustainability Statement and Waste Management Strategy

Informative notes relating to nesting birds, bats as a protected species, licence requirements, retaining the PROW clear of obstruction, retaining the Yorkshire Water easement