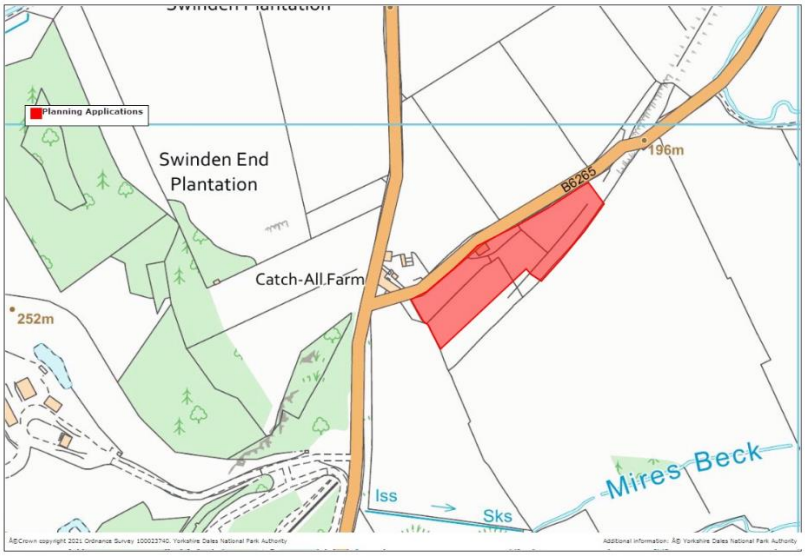
YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Committee:	Planning	**Parish:**	Linton
Date:	23rd March 2021	**Officer:**	Wendy Thompson
Applicant:	DSMC UK	**Application No:**	C/50/58C
Site Address:	Catchall Barn, Lauradale Lane, Linton, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 6BE		
Proposal:	Full planning permission for change of use of barn to office accommodation/secure storage; erection of storage building to house further administration, welfare and workshop facilities and covered internal storage of shipping containers; and associated works to vehicular access, turning and parking areas		



REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

1. This application is reported to Committee as in the opinion of the Head of Development Management it is in the best interests of the National Park Authority that the application is considered by the Committee.

APPLICATION SITE

2. The site lays midway between the settlements of Cracoe, 1.3 miles away and Linton, approx. 1mile away. It is close to the junction of Lauradale Lane and the B6265 Skipton-Threshfield road some 130m away and the entrance to Swinden Quarry. It is close to Catchall Farmhouse which is a Grade 2 listed building, approximately 55m away from the proposed building.

3. The site is relatively open and undeveloped and comprises a stone building which, whilst having the visual appearance of a traditional field barn, is a modern agricultural building having been granted planning permission in 1992. There is a small area to the west of it which has some dilapidated external enclosures and a small stone lean-to. There is an area of hardstanding to the south-west of the barn, and a two informal car parking spaces to the north-east. Access to the site is gained at the north east of the barn directly on to Lauradale Lane.

4. To the south of the barn, the site slopes down to an open, rough, unimproved field with boggy, marshy areas in it. A small open field drain runs across it in wet weather. The site to the south-west is bounded by a broken dry-stone wall and post and wire fence with several trees on the northern part of this boundary. To the south, the site is bounded by a post and rail fence and the old Grassington railway line route forms part of the southern boundary.

5. The northern boundary is a dry-stone wall which forms the boundary with Lauradale Lane, which has intermittent self-seeded trees and large shrubs along this boundary. The site, to the north-east of the barn is also rough unimproved grass land which slopes quite steeply to the south. To the centre of the site, running south from the barn, is a thicker established area of trees and large shrubs.

6. This part of Wharfedale has been identified within the National Park Authority's recently published Landscape Character Assessment 2020 as the Craven Fault area. For this area, the assessment notes that "the valley broadens, becoming more undulating and with a less distinct valley form…. This part of Wharfedale seems relatively more open as the surrounding hills are more indented and lower than the areas to the north and south… Dale sides are a mosaic of pasture and small woodlands"

7. The site is highly visible in close up views from Lauradale Lane and the B6265 and from public footpaths nos 05/68/4, 05/68/5 and 05/75/4 which run to the south of the site. The site can also be seen in longer distance views from Thorpe Lane 0.75 miles (directly) to the south and also from public footpaths on Kail, Elbolton and Stebden hills to the south. Owing to changes in the topography, the site is not visible from the north.

PROPOSAL

8. This application proposes the conversion of a stone agricultural building, the erection of a new purpose-built building for storage and maintenance and associated landscaping and ground works.

9. The applicant already operates the diving, surveying, and marine contracting business (DSMC) from Woodside Barn in Threshfield. It is understood that the existing accommodation is now too small and many of its staff work from home (pre-Covid). Some of the firm's heavy-duty equipment is currently stored off site nearby, however this is a short-term measure. The business currently employs 5 staff and uses a pool of contractors for specific projects, the application form indicates

that these people will move but the application forms indicate that there will be no additional employment generated by this development, however clarification of this is awaited.

10. The large building would provide new accommodation for DSMC. This would house a number of shipping containers. These are used for oceanographic surveys spending time on ships, then returning to the current site in Threshfield for the collected data to be analysed. The building would also house other equipment that the company currently own, or plan to purchase. It would also provide workshops, offices, training rooms and welfare rooms, an internal gantry for moving the containers and other equipment.

11. The proposal involves the conversion of Catchall Barn to form an office and reception area, which three meeting rooms, a kitchen WC, and a storage area. Externally it would have a four space car park on the site of the existing pull-in.

12. The proposed development includes the erection of a large portal framed building. This would measure 36m x 25m and would be 7.4m to the eaves and 9.2m to its highest point. It would have stonework lower walls and vertically boarded timber upper walls. It would have a grassed curved roof which has an overhang of 3.4m at the front and 1.4m at the rear and this would be supported on galvanised struts.

13. The building would be lit with 6 sets of narrow, vertical windows in the front elevation and the north western side would have angled “overlapping” walls with recessed windows in them. The north west side would also have an external fire escape from a first-floor door. The rear elevation is solid, and the north east side elevation would have a large roller shutter door and a smaller personnel door within it.

14. The proposed development would see several low impact sustainability and low energy technologies used within the development. These include the use of sustainably grown larch cladding, the proposed grass roof to provide biodiversity habitat and help water attenuation, a ground source heat pump for heating and hot water and rainwater harvesting system and reed bed filtration system for grey water.

15. Externally, there would be a large hardstanding of 17m x 27m and this would be surfaced with crushed limestone and owing to the changes in level would be dug in and gabions would be used to retain the wall. The site would be accessed from a newly built twin wheeling access track approximately 290m in length surfaced with crushed limestone. The access would curve round the length of the site to allow ease of movement by the lorries that would use the site and two car parking areas of 6 car spaces, surfaced with grasscrete are to be created off this track.

16. An extensive landscaping and tree planting scheme is proposed, in the centre of the access track there will be an area seeded and planted with 21 trees, and an area of shrubs; the northern and southern boundaries will be planted with a native shrub hedge and supplemented with more substantial trees. To the west of the site is an open area and this is to be planted with 21 trees of various native species and sizes and smaller shrubs and seeded with grass.

17. Additional biodiversity habitats are proposed including two balancing ponds, the proposed green roof on the building and a bat loft to be created within Catchall Barn.

18. An application for a larger scale development at this site comprising two portal framed buildings, one for DSMC and one for a proposed underwater sound stage and filming facility was submitted but withdrawn in May 2020. There were significant objections to that application and

this reduced application has been submitted considering many of the issues raised during that application process. This proposal is now much smaller than the first, as one of the buildings, the filming facility has been removed, the access track has been changed from a wide concrete track to a twin wheeling track, a comprehensive Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has been submitted, a detailed landscaping has been proposed, and confirmation of the biodiversity opportunities have been provided.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

At Catchall Barn Site:

C/50/58A Conversion of roadside barn to form a 2 bed local occupancy dwelling / Holiday Let Withdrawn 15/10/2018

C/50/58B Full planning permission for change of use of barn to office accommodation; erection of two portal frame structures to provide i) storage, workshop and welfare facilities and ii) diving pool for training and media facility; and associated works to vehicular access, turning and parking areas Withdrawn 05/05/2020

At Woodside Barn, Threshfield:

C/71/195A - Full planning permission for conversion of barn for diversification for business use Approved 30/11/2004

C/71/195B- Full planning permission for conversion of the barn to business use with amended vehicular access. Approved 3/08/2007

CONSULTATIONS

19. The comments of statutory and non-statutory consultees are summarised below:

Senior Listed Building Officer -View 2 from the main road with the Listed Building (Catchall Farmhouse) as the landmark: the assessment concluded the visual impact would be Moderate-Major Adverse, and it seems that the most important view would be worst affected. In addition, this view confirms, alongside the site plan, that the new building would be perceived as being very close to the LB.

Wildlife Conservation Officer - As well as the bat loft, there is a need to see in the region of £5.5k notional value of biodiversity enhancement. This would probably be achieved through the various landscaping measures that are proposed if one takes into account the creation of balancing ponds (that could be constructed so as to have high biodiversity value) the tree planting and, importantly, the green roof (if that is constructed using appropriate seed mixes and techniques). A condition requiring these benefits might be needed as well as the bat loft.

Trees & Woodlands - There are no issues with this application - there are 25 trees/shrubs listed for removal which are mostly fast growing pioneer species and / or in poor condition. The majority of trees will be retained.

The landscaping advice providing as part of the withdrawn application (58B) is reflected in the proposed landscaping plan with the level and diversity of planting (hedgerow, tree groups, individual trees and scrub area) more than adequately compensates for the proposed tree removal.

Natural England – Objects to this application: The proposed location of the development is not allocated for industrial / business development within the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2015-2030). The proposed development will be a significant detractor within the landscape and have adverse visual impacts on the National Park. The massing and scale of the new building, along with the vehicles and curtilage of the proposal, will have a significant and adverse impact to views from the Public Rights of way and roads to the east and south of the proposal, along with the B6265. The development is not in keeping with the settlement pattern of the area and it extends the footprint of the built environment, making it more visible within the landscape.

Linton Parish Council – Objects to this application. The Parish Council letter is seven pages long, and the key points are:

The proposed change of use for the site from a small agricultural barn in keeping with local architecture, materials and landscape to an office and a large industrial unit is unnecessary and unsuitable for the location.

In addition to the change of use, the scale of the proposed development is wholly excessive and inappropriate for its highly visible and rural position within the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP). We believe that this proposal contradicts several core tenets of the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the local plan.

There are no exceptional circumstances for a major development such as this

It is contrary to Policies SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4 and BE3 of the local plan and NPPF advice.

It is materially detrimental to the National Park.

Notes that the applicant's Landscape Visual Impact Assessment concludes that the sensitivity of the landscape is high.

Concern is raised over excessive lighting, hours and intensity of use, visual intrusion.

There are other sites outside of the National Park that are better suited locationally for the company

SABIC UK Petrochemicals -Not received

NYCC - Drainage & Floods – Not received

Environment Agency – Not received

Yorkshire Water Services Ltd - This proposal is in an area not served by the public sewerage network. In this instance, the application should be referred to the Environment Agency and the Local Authority's Environmental Health Section for comment on private treatment facilities.

Police - North Yorkshire – No objections and suggests crime prevention measures to be incoporated into the development.

Fire Officer – No objections

CEHO – Water sampling - The water supply to the building will be supplied by Yorkshire Water.No additional comments. Suggests unexpected contaminated land, hours of work and dust prevention conditions.

Highways - In assessing the submitted proposals and reaching its recommendation the Local Highway Authority has taken into account the following matters:

The design standard for the site is DRMB and the required visibility splay is 2 metres by 215 metres. The available visibility in an Easterly direction is 2 metres by 166 metres. The available visibility in a westerly direction in 2 metres by 96 metres. A condition ensuring the retention of the visibility splays is suggested.

PUBLIC RESPONSES

20. Nineteen letters of support have been received and summarised, the comments are as follows:

- The building is well designed
- The proposal considers nature and wildlife
- It is good use of a vacant building and unkempt site
- It is in a good location
- It is hidden from view
- It will provide diverse employment opportunities outside of agriculture and hospitality
- It will be in keeping with the National Park
- It will support existing local businesses through contracted work or use of hospitality businesses.
- It will generate more money within the local area.

Four letters of objection have been received:

- The building is too big and too prominent and is 10 times the size of Catchall Barn
- It should not be in this location unless it cannot be avoided, or it has had a long history in this location
- It looks incongruous with the surrounding environment
- It will destroy the setting of Catchall Farm a Grade 2 listed building.
- The change of use should be contained within the building
- The grass roof will stick out like a sore thumb
- The applicant should look elsewhere for a site
- It will not affect business rates or local investment
- It does not meet the tests for exceptional circumstances
- It is too close to Linton
- The road access is dangerous and there will be an increase in traffic and may increase traffic in Linton.
- It will be highly prominent in views from local public rights of way and in views from nearby hills.

ASSESSMENT

Key Issues:

- The principle of development
- Impact on the landscape
- Biodiversity Enhancement
- Impact on the Significance of the Listed Building

Principle of development

21. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (Framework) states that the purpose of the planning system is to "contribute to the achievement of sustainable development". (para.7) and to this end, three overarching objectives have been identified and all proposed development needs to demonstrate these to achieve it. These are economic, social, and environmental objectives with their aims stated. In this case, the most pertinent are the economic and environmental objectives (para 8).

22. The Framework considers "Building a strong, competitive economy" in Chapter 6 and specifically refers to "Supporting a prosperous rural economy" in paragraph 83 which encourages the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas". It goes on to state in paragraph 84 however, that it is important "to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings…The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well related to exiting settlements should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist."

23. Paragraph 127 of the Framework sees the creation of high-quality buildings and places as a fundamental part of the planning process. It supports the use of Design Guides and the National Park has such a document which must be a key informant to the design of any building. The Framework requires new buildings to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and to be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting".

24. With specific reference to National Parks, the Framework states "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited" (para 172)

25. This echoes the first statutory purpose of a National Park from the National Park (Environment Act 1995) which is to "Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage".

26. Policy SP1 "sustainable development" of the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2015-2030) presumes in favour of development that is sustainable contains a set of 14 criteria that aim to achieve that. Most pertinent to this application are sections (a), (c), (d), (g) and (i).

> Part (a) supports new development that makes the National Park a high quality place to live and work – including: improving and supporting the use of existing services, infrastructure and facilities, including the housing stock and workplaces.
>
> Part (c) requires new development to "contribute positively to the built environment but having regard to the site context, and conforms to the National Park design guide;"
>
> Part (d) ensures that new development "conserves or enhances the landscape character of the National Park through the use of high quality design, appropriate landscaping, and removal of unsightly development;"
>
> Part (g) aims to "reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions through compliance with the spatial strategy, improved energy efficiency and making full use of small-scale renewable energy"

Part (i) requires development to “conserve or enhance the historic environment”

27.Policy SP2 permits development that “furthers the statutory National Park purposes of:

a) Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

b) Promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

28. Policy SP3 is the Authority’s Spatial Strategy policy which steers all new development to either within or adjacent to a list of designated settlements unless there are justifiable reasons why another location is more sustainable. If this is not possible, then the application will need to demonstrate that:

a) The location is necessary for a land-based function

b) The location is necessary for the provision of public utilities or infrastructure

c) The development is ancillary to an existing use at the site, or;

d) The location is appropriate in relation to other Local Plan policies

The policy addresses the economy and states “To help grow the local economy, new business development will only be allowed on strategic sites identified on the policies map, subject to the requirements of BE1”.

29. Policy BE1 refers to Business Development Sites and permits new business development in allocated sites, or, for the expansion or redevelopment of an existing business or the development of unallocated land for new small-scale business or employment uses on sites in or adjacent to a list of identified settlement, subject to satisfying Policy SP4. This proposal is considered a large scale business development as defined by Policy BE1 and businesses are steered towards the allocated locations, which are either existing business sites, or brownfield sites close to local service centres or villages which are more sustainable areas for business development; it is considered that owing to its remote location between Linton and Cracoe and on an unallocated site, the proposal does not accord with this policy.

30.As Catchall Barn itself is a modern agricultural building, albeit with the form of a traditional farm building, Policy BE3 applies “Reuse of modern buildings”. This allows for the change of modern buildings to new business and employment uses if all a set of 5 criteria are met. The most pertinent parts of this policy is part (d). This states “that the proposal should not give rise to demand for the visually intrusive provision, renewal or extension of parking, deliveries, outside storage, external lighting or utility services, or place an unnecessary burden on social, community or emergency services”. Owing to the size and scale of the proposed development to surrounds Catchall Barn, it is considered that part (d) of this policy cannot be complied with.

31. Nearby Catchall Farmhouse is a grade 2 listed building, and policy L1 of the Local Plan applies. This allows development proposals affecting designated heritage assets to be permitted provided they conserve or enhance its significance.

Impact on landscape

32. The landscape here is a wide, flat valley, with the prominent local features of Elbolton, Kail and Stubden Hills to the south. The settlement pattern is one of well-defined villages with a

sparsely developed rural hinterland, characterised with dry stone walls, hedges, fences and few buildings of any sort. The site is extremely open and visible from many local roads and footpaths.

33.The development of a large industrial style building would have a significantly adverse visual impact on the landscape of the National Park in this area. The building and associated development would be unrelated to any other building and whilst it is close to Catchall Barn, this would be dwarfed by it. The massing and scale of the building is such that it would be a significant visual feature in the local landscape and potentially, a harmful visual intrusion. The only other buildings in the countryside of any comparable scale are modern agricultural buildings which are permitted as an exception being needed for agricultural purposes in specific locations.

34. The site is not a site allocated for business development under Local Plan Policy BE1 and is not adjacent to any of the settlements identified within Policy SP3. Policy BE1 steers such business development towards a list of suitable allocated sites which have the capacity to absorb large scale development such as this and are sustainable inasmuch as they are often close to existing settlements and road systems or in established industrial business sites and because they would have a limited visual impact. The applicant has attempted to access one of these sites and has not been able to make any progress in this regard.

35. The applicant has commissioned a comprehensive Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which has concluded that the development would have a “Moderate adverse” impact on the landscape. This survey considered the development from its current base line, and then assessed the site from 8 viewpoints, primarily to the east, south and west of the site. The conclusion of the survey is that the “nature of the landscape effects is assessed to be adverse primarily due to the insertion of a building into a predominantly greenfield site, so, in summary, the overall landscape effects of the proposed development are assessed to be moderate-adverse”

36.To mitigate against some of the landscape impact, the applicant has submitted a comprehensive landscaping scheme showing the widespread planting of native trees and shrubs. Whilst this could never screen the development completely, the planting to the west would break up some of the views of the site from the B6265 and soften its visual impact from the road, although any landscaping scheme would be ineffective until the trees and planting reach semi maturity, and also in winter months when the trees lose their leaves. The planting proposed along the south eastern boundary, particularly in front of the storage building is likely to have no screening or particular softening qualities as it would only be 2.5m from the building.

37.The proposal includes the creation of a 2.5m wide twin wheeling access road to the east of the site. The long, curving track would be surfaced with crushed limestone, which, when new is a bright white colour but weathers down into a dull grey colour in a fairly short time and the central grassed strip would further minimise its visual impact. The car parking areas are shown as being grasscrete which will also be much softer and have less of a visual impact. Other external features such as the hard surfaces around the building and the large limestone surfaced lorry turning area to the side of the building would be highly visible within the landscape. The creation of three new areas for car parking and the large hardstanding to be used by lorries would see the parking of many vehicles and the associated visual impact of reflective windscreens, head lights and bright colours as well as the movement of on-site traffic.

38. There would be a significant visual impact through the lighting of the site and light spill from the buildings. At present there is no light on the site but the development would result in a significant increase in lighting to allow for people and vehicles to move safely around the site,

especially in darker, winter months and where HGV traffic is expected. A detailed lighting plan may go some way to mitigate the impact but lighting on the buildings, car parks, access paths and roads would draw the eye to an otherwise dark, isolated site within the wider landscape. This would conflict with Local Plan Policy SP4(t). Whilst the site lies 180m directly from Swinden Quarry, which is bright even at night, the visual intrusion from that is contained within in its site to the north west of the B6265. This site lies to the east, towards Linton which is dark and undeveloped valley and away from the influence of the quarry.

39. The materials chosen for the new building includes local limestone on the lower levels and vertical timber boarded upper walls. The use of a grass roof would help soften the visual impact of the building. The overall design of the building, leaving aside its scale, is well thought out and if it were located on a more appropriate site would be welcomed.

40. The proposed conversion of the barn to offices is considered an acceptable part of the proposal which is unlikely to have a significantly harmful impact of the wider landscape and would also see the reuse of a modern agricultural building which has been unused for some time.

Biodiversity enhancement

41.The proposal includes a wide range of positive biodiversity enhancement measures, such as the creation of two balancing ponds which will both help with the drainage of the site but also provide an opportunity for wetland species. The proposed grass roof would also provide a meadow habitat for grasses and wildflowers and the proposed planting of a substantial number of trees and shrubs would provide new and improved habitats for birds and insects. The application is accompanied by a bat survey which concluded that the barn was probably a day roost for Brown Long-Eared bats and a bat loft is proposed in the design for the conversion of Catchall Barn. These elements would all accord with local plan policy W2.

Impact on Listed Building

42. Catchall Farmhouse, a Grade 2 listed building, is a landmark building within the area, standing as it does prominently on the junction of the B6265 and Lauradale Lane. Behind it the land rises steeply and is partially wooded. It is not set within expansive grounds and only has a small garden in front of the house and a hardstanding for the adjacent barn.

43. Owing to the road and topography, the setting of the listed building owes much to the wide, open views to the south and east. The proposed building would be approximately 50m from Catchall Farmhouse but the existing planting, which is to be retained and the fact that the building is at a lower height than the Farmhouse would mean that the development is unlikely to have a harmful impact on the setting of the listed building as noted by Policy L1.

Parish Council Comments

44.Linton Parish Council has objected to this application as outlined above. Many of the issues that have been raised have been discussed in detail above. With reference to the point that the business should be located outside of the National Park, closer to bigger cities or motorway links, the applicant has investigated other sites but wishes to remain in the National Park and the business is one of value to the local economy.

CONCLUSION

45. It is considered that the scale, form, massing, and location of the proposed development would have a significant harmful impact on the landscape of this part of the National Park. It is a wide, open, uninterrupted landscape which affords long views to the east towards Linton and any new development within this area would detract from that. The site is not specifically allocated for new business development and it is not adjacent to the nearby villages of Linton or Cracoe.

46. Nevertheless there are several elements of this application that are positive, and the applicant has sought to overcome the objections that were faced by the earlier, much larger application. The conversion of Catchall Barn would see a building, albeit a relatively new one, brought back into use and there could be significant biodiversity improvements to the area because of the proposed new balancing ponds, landscaping and roof top planting. The existing business is an important one within the local economy providing employment outside of the tourism and agriculture sectors. The Authority's planning policies support the expansion of existing business providing they are in an appropriate location and proposals comply with other policies aimed at protecting the special qualities of the Park.

47. On balance it is considered that, despite the obvious merits of the proposal, they do not outweigh the potential impact on the distinctive landscape character of this part of the National Park. As such it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the first Statutory Purpose of the National Park Section 5 (1) National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949, policies SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, BE1, BE3 and L1 of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan 2015-2030 and the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly para. 172).

RECOMMENDATION

48. It is recommended that permission be REFUSED for reasons based on the following:

1. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development, through its scale, form, massing and provision of external hard landscaping and lighting would have a significant and adverse impact on the distinctive landscape character and visual quality of this part of the National Park. The site is visually isolated within the landscape and the development would result in a degree of landscape harm that is inconsistent with the National Park's natural beauty and as such the proposal is contrary to the first Statutory Purpose of the National Park, Section 5 (1) National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949, policies SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, BE1 and BE3 of the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan.