

Mr Mark Moore  
Craven District Council  
1 Belle Vue Square  
Broughton Road  
Skipton  
North Yorkshire  
BD23 1FJ

By email to: mmoore@cravendc.gov.uk

8 October 2018

Dear Mr Moore

**Response from the Campaign for National Parks to Application ref: 42/2016/17496**

**Address: Land To The West Of Hellifield Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 4HJ**

**Proposal: Outline application for the development of a leisure centre, including swimming pool, hotel and visitor accommodation, including up to 300 lodges, a park & ride facility, pedestrian access to Hellifield Station, parking areas, bus and coach drop off point.**

**Landscaping including ground modelling and water features**

Campaign for National Parks is the independent national voice for the 13 National Parks in England and Wales. Our mission is to inspire everyone to enjoy and look after National Parks – the nation's green treasures.

We object to the outline application for the development of visitor accommodation and associated facilities on the land to the west of Hellifield. The proposed location is very close to the boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and is therefore completely inappropriate for development of this nature.

National Parks are the finest landscapes which have been granted the highest level of protection. The statutory purposes of National Parks are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks.
- To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks.

Current legislation requires that 'in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land' within National Parks, a 'relevant authority shall have regard to' their statutory purposes. The requirement is in Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended by Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 and is often referred to as the S62 duty. The definition of relevant authority includes any public body and the duty applies to all decisions and activities that may affect land within a National Park. The duty also applies to activities undertaken outside National Park boundaries which may affect land within them so clearly applies to the determination of this planning application.

We believe that the Hellifield proposals are incompatible with National Park purposes and the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which state that great weight should be

given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks (paragraph 172). We are particularly concerned that:

- The scale of the proposed development is completely inappropriate for the location. A major development of this type would completely transform the rural landscape character of an area within the setting of the National Park.
- There would be a negative impact on wildlife both during and after construction. We understand that the site is host to Great Crested Newts which are protected and that of the 157 bird species present, 35 are on the conservation “red list”. Disturbance or attempted reconfiguration of the flash ponds could result in significant damage to the habitat that these species depend on.
- There would be adverse visual impacts for users of open access land and public rights of way within the Park.
- There would be a negative impact on the tranquility of the area and the adjacent area of the National Park both as a result of the development itself and of associated activities, particularly increased levels of traffic on narrow rural roads.
- Increased traffic levels would also have a negative impact on local communities in the area and would lead to pressure for changes to the road system that would result in further negative landscape impacts.
- There would be increased light pollution in an area that otherwise benefits from dark skies. The Yorkshire Dales National Park is ranked as the 3rd darkest English National Park, with 79% of the Park having pristine dark skies, free from light pollution. Figure 1 (overleaf) is taken from the *Night Blight* maps published by CPRE in June 2016 and shows both how close the development is to the National Park and the potential for it to have a negative impact in areas which currently experience little light pollution. The red arrow indicates the location of the proposed development and the pale blue line is the National Park boundary. Craven District itself is the 9<sup>th</sup> darkest district in all of England, with almost 95% of the night skies falling under the three darkest categories. Detailed interactive maps can be viewed here: <http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk>

We recognise that there may be support for this development because of the promise of increased employment opportunities. However, it is essential to recognise that an inappropriate development of this nature could actually have a negative impact on economic growth and regeneration if it makes the area a less attractive place to visit. The local economy relies heavily on tourism and many visitors are specifically attracted to this area for its wildlife and scenic beauty.

In summary, we object to this planning application for the reasons set out above and urge Craven District Council to refuse planning permission for it.

Yours sincerely



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Figure 1

