

Planning applications team
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street, Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 6HQ
United Kingdom

September 9th 2018

SMD/2018/0575

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Planning application to change use of land to high quality tourism (glamping) involving bases for portable shepherd huts, tent pitches etc...with especial attention on accommodation for the pursuit of outdoor activities

Please find the following to support this planning application;

- 1 Completed planning forms
- 2 Location plan and site layout plan
- 3 Design/access and planning statement
- 4 Planning fee of £462.00

Yours Sincerely

Gerald Willard

Chartered Town and Country Planner.
MRTPI

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DESIGN/ACCESS and PLANNING STATEMENT
August 2018

Proposed glamping site on Main Road. Hollington



This document seeks to describe the development and to explain key planning considerations that support the development

High quality tourism (glamping) for visitors seeking outdoor adventures

The aim of the development is to provide a limited number of high quality pitches or sites for visitors to Staffordshire Moorlands who seek a high quality camping or glamping experience.

The site has view over the Staffordshire moorlands and yet because of existing ground levels and location of hedges is well screened from public view. It offers greatest visitor attractions with little local disturbance.

The development seeks only 6 hard standing areas upon which to site Shepherds huts or similar together with 12 pitches for tents in a meadow and a further 12 pitches with a woodland.

A new and safe access into the site is to be formed together with parking to meet the needs of visitors. There will be parking adjacent to the tent pitches as the vision is to create a high quality but wild camping experience.

A new woodland is to be planted to add additional screening and a wildflower meadow will be cultivated to add beauty and bio-diversity.



The wild camping theme and meadow planting

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Site location

The site lies within the Staffordshire moorlands. It lies on high ground which has direct views looking eastwards towards the Alton Towers resort. The site lies adjacent to a single dwelling and adjoins the main road that links Rocester with Tean and Cheadle. The image below looks towards where the 6 hardstandings would lie. The sloping nature of the ground is clear from the image. This gradient along with existing and new tree and hedge planting will mask the site from ready views from the main Road. The new planting is shown on the submission plan.



Visitors to the site will be treated to open and uninterrupted views towards Alton Towers and



the Weaver Hills.

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The site is not within the Green Belt and neither has the site any known ecological or geological constraints or recorded interest.

There is a mains water pipe which lies deep underground but cuts across the site. All works avoid this pipe route and the development will maintain access to it should it ever be required.

Target visitors

The business is targeted at those visitors to the area who seek to explore the countryside by walking or on bicycle. The aim is to provide a high quality and well managed site from where visitors can simply cycle around the area on the main roads and local tracks suitable for road bike and mountain bike fans.

There will be water and drainage provisions on site along with electric hook ups for those that want them.

Future phases

The development is based upon a 2 phase business model. The first phase subject to this application is to change the use of the site and to set it out to provide spacious, attractive and serviced sites upon which visitors can rent a shepherd hut or go wild tenting in a meadow or wood.

Future phases would include improved tourist facilities in the form of a toilet and shower block along with laundry and bike store and workshop together with cleaning area for bikes, walking gear and dogs.

It is a new venture and as such there is no commitment to future phases at this stage as further investment will depend upon the business viability of the first phase.

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Environmental credentials

The development follows a number of sensitive and important design ambitions as follows:

- * The site uses the existing topography to ensure that the siting proposed is both not readily seen and at the same affords best views. It is clever and sensitive siting. The only works required are limited and localised works to provide for a level road and 6 pitches.
- * The site entrance will be sufficient to allow vehicles to enter and leave safely in a forward gear. By planting at the throat of the entrance views into the site will be screened by tree planting



Entrance screening

- * A new woodland will be created around the border of the site both to screen views and to serve to provide both habitat for wildlife and wild pitches for a few tents. Around 300 indigenous trees will be planted in this area and this will in due course mirror the success of the ad-



adjacent Rays Wood which was planted by the applicant about 8 years ago.

Rays wood (new)

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Recycled construction material will form the road way base with a permeable top layer of gravel used to finish the driveway.

Cars will be parked away from the tenting area to encourage visitors to leave their cars on the site and to use the local roads any paths to cycle on. A secure cycle store and wash off area will be provided.

A wildflower meadow will be formed and maintained as such seasonally with appropriate management as and when necessary. Boundary hedges will be laid over time and reinforced where they are weak.

No material is to be imported in or exported out to change levels. There will be limited and localised works undertaken by cut and fill method as the cross section shows.

If necessary and appropriate the shepherd huts can be moved off site when not needed during winter closure.

The details

This application initially seeks full planning permission to change the use of this field from agricultural use into a tourist use. It will involve the initial works set out as part of this current proposal and including:

- Formation of access.
- Limited site works to form 6 flat bases and parking spaces .
- Laying permeable road surface and formation of car park.
- Landscaping works with formation of new woodland.
- Provision on underground main electricity supply and drainage provision.
- Formation of 12 small flat areas for wild camping in a meadow.
- Gaps to be left within woodland for up to 12 wild camping pitches.

These initial works will allow a simple tourist development to be set out and managed. Should the venture initially not succeed these works are limited and reversible. Should the initial phase succeed then future development is expected to involve the addition of a facilities build-

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ing for showers, bike rental, washing and drying clothes etc along with a high quality tourist lodge development.

Shepherd Huts and Tents

It is proposed at this stage that 6 Shepherd Huts will be sited about 8 metres apart which is significantly more than the 6 metre separation required by any site license.

In addition to this there will be 24 pitches for tents. These pitches are likely to be taken up with a mixture of bell tents erected as part of the development and visitors own tents.



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Example of shepherd huts and bell tents.

Site Licence allowance

The following provisions are cited as a useful example of the lawful way in which the site could otherwise be used.

Planning permission for use as a caravan site is not required where a caravan site licence is not also required.

Members of recreational organisations which meet certain requirements can camp on land without a site licence and without the need to apply for planning permission if their organisation holds a camping exemption certificate.

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960

This long standing Act allows the use of land as a site for caravans (which would include shepherd huts) without the need for planning permission

The act says;

"Sites approved by exempted organisations

- *Subject to the provisions of paragraph 13 of this Schedule, a site licence shall not be required for the use as a caravan site of land as respects which there is in force a certificate issued under this paragraph by an exempted organisation if not more than five caravans are at the time stationed for the purposes of human habitation on the land to which the certificate relates.*
- *For the purposes of this paragraph an exempted organisation may issue as respects any land a certificate stating that the land has been approved by the exempted organisation for use by its members for the purposes of recreation.*
- *The certificate shall be issued to the occupier of the land to which it relates, and the organisation shall send particulars to the Minister of all certificates issued by the organisation under this paragraph. "*

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- *A certificate issued by an exempted organisation under this paragraph shall specify the date on which it is to come into force and the period for which it is to continue in force, being a period not exceeding one year."*

In this case then up to 5 portable units such as caravans or shepherd huts could be sited without the need for planning permission for such a use of land where the use is by an exempted organisation such as the caravan club.

Main planning policy provisions

NPPF 2 July 2018

The framework confirms at paragraph 7 *"that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development."*

Paragraph 8 sets out the 3 objectives of sustainable development as follows:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective—to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and

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pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The framework confirms at paragraphs 10 and 11 that *"sustainable development should pursued in a positive way"* and that *"at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development"*.

Section 8 deals with economic matters including that within rural areas.

Paragraph 83 is especially relevant. It says:

83. Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and

d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

and paragraph 84 says:

84. Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

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This proposal is a diversification into a rural tourist business from an existing agricultural use which in truth amounts to no more than taking grass from the field for winter feed and some occasional winter grazing by sheep.

The development is sustainable in both its nature and its intended use and function. This being to encourage users to enjoy the various cycle routes and roads/paths available to cyclists and walkers from the site. The proposal is carefully prepared to work with existing site contours and features and to include significant new woodland planting so as to enhance the appearance of the countryside.

Turning to paragraph 84 of the framework it is clear that the framework recognises the new rural developments may lie in locations not well served by public transport as this case with this application. As the application proposal is sensitive to its surroundings, safe in highway terms and is aimed at meeting the special needs of cyclists and walkers by being next to cycle routes and footways it is the case that the proposal is compliant with the framework.

The Development Plan

The statutory Development Plan for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council comprises the Core Strategy (CS, adopted March 2014).

Policy DC1 'Design Considerations' states that new development should be of high quality design, value the local area and respect the site and its surroundings. It should reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area.

Policy SA3 seeks to encourage a strong and prosperous rural economy and to distribute growth and change across the district.

Policy SS 1 sets out development principles and these including in summary the following:

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- quality local services, including provision for tourist facilities
- a healthy, safe, attractive and well-maintained environment
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment
- development which secures high quality, sustainable environments

Policy SS1a includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which of course echoes national planning policy.

Policy SS1c supports the diversification of existing farm enterprises. It deals especially with tourism in rural areas and includes the following provisions:

“5 Enhance tourist opportunities by:

- *Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS7;*
- *Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policies E3 and R1);*
- *Establishing strong linkages between recreational and tourist resources;*
- *Recognising and developing the close linkages to the Peak District National Park.”*

This is a small scale tourist use which is designed to promote and support the needs of tourists who seek outdoor cycling and walking holidays especially. As such it is wholly compliant with policy SS6c

Policy E3 reads”

E3 - Tourism and Cultural Development

New tourism and cultural development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports the local economy and promotes the distinctive character and quality of the District and enhances the role of Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS5, SS6 and SS7.

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In addition:

New tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations, including within the Green Belt, new accommodation, attractions and facilities should:

- be of a scale and design which can be easily assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner;*
- normally be limited to the conversion of existing buildings; or exceptionally, may be new build where it is required to support or complement existing accommodation,*
- facilities or attractions and there is an identified need which cannot be met in other ways. Preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.*

Outside the Green Belt permission will be granted for sites for camping and touring caravans provided they are well screened, sited and designed and have good access. Small camping sites may be appropriate in the Green Belt provided they do not prejudice the 'openness', there is appropriate screening and any necessary facilities can be accommodated within existing buildings.

Support will be given to the provision of new cultural facilities in town centres and villages to meet the needs of local communities and visitors.

All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.

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R1 - Rural Diversification

All development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment.

Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.

Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

Priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings

Policy conclusion

To an extent policies (e3 and R1) in the Core Strategy have now been overtaken by the 2018 framework. Whilst the Core Strategy sought to encourage tourist development to sites within or adjacent to settlements by indicating that developments should 'normally' lie adjacent to a settlement the recently released framework takes a different view. It accepts that tourist de-

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developments may on sites not well served by public transport but will still be acceptable where it is sensitive to its surroundings.

In this case the site has no public access connection despite lying adjacent to a main route. It is however well served by road and off road cycle trails (see attached leaflet) and is well placed for visitors wishing to spend time visiting the wide breadth of tourism offers available within the Staffordshire Moorlands. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal is both



both compliant with the existing development plan and the NPPF.



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The kind of high quality 'glamping' accommodation
this use seeks and proposes.

Conclusion

Clearly to an extent some (E3 and R1) policies the development plan is a little out-of-step with the new framework. The recently released NPPF recognises in a clear way that not all tourism opportunities will be near to bus routes or within or adjacent to villages. This is sensible broadening of the support for tourism in the countryside and recognises three clear aspects of such developments.

1 Tourist who chose open countryside location are seeking out precisely that element of tranquility and peace whilst on their holiday breaks. Requiring tourist sites to be next to villages or on bus routes will not meet the needs or wishes of tourists.

2 The growth in recent years of the 'staycation' which has the enormous benefit of reducing holidaymakers need or desire to jump on a plane and cause much greater environmental harm to the planet such air borne holidays cause.

3 In rural parts of the Country most potential tourist sites are likely to be in the countryside nowhere near to an ever diminishing rural bus service. For those tourists who travel to camp sites do so with a reasonable amount of personal belongings have little or no probability of arriving at a site by public transport. It is an illusion to think otherwise.

In short it is the case that up to date rural planning policy for tourism is set out fully within the framework as paragraph 84 makes very clear this does mean that small scale tourist uses can be approved in locations not adjacent to a depleted rural bus network .

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This is especially so in this case where the development seeks so clearly to be attractive to visitors who wish to visit the Staffordshire Moorlands by bike and the site is so well placed to meet the needs and desires of on and off road cyclists.

This is a carefully considered, modest and locally based proposal. It will provide high quality glamping accommodation to visitors in a sustainable way and to help them to adventure on foot and by bicycle around the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Appendix

Extract from Staffordshire Moorlands bicycle route plan close to the site including road routes in yellow and off road (bridleway) routes in brown.

