CHANDLER WATSON
CONSULTANCY

Planning Policy Statement

Long Edge House
Pines Lane
Biddulph Park
ST8 7SP

May 2020

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This Planning Policy Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for the change of use of a detached garage into self-contained holiday accommodation

At Long Edge House, Pines Lane, Biddulph Park, ST8 7SP

The application site is owned by Mr P Stirk ('The Applicant')

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning policy statement has been prepared by Chandler Watson Consultancy on behalf of Mr & Mrs Stirk who reside at Long Edge House, Biddulph Park and is in support of the change of use of a detached garage into self-contained holiday accommodation.

1.2 The statement is intended to provide a comprehensive overview and explanation of the background to the proposed scheme, and in particular provides :

- A description of the current smallholding system
- The planning policy context within which the application should be considered and determined
- An overall assessment of the planning values of the application; and
- A site specific review of key planning issues

2.0 Site and Smallholding Description

2.1 The building proposed for conversion is owned by Mr & Mrs Stirk and is located to the East of the farmhouse at Long Edge House, benefitting from its own separate access route.

2.2 A site location plan is provided at **Appendix 1.** The proposed site comprises a small, concrete block building of no architectural merit which is currently used for low-key domestic storage, please see site photographs at **Appendix 2**. It is easily accessible for both the owners in terms of cleaning, maintenance, etc. and potential visiting guests. The plan also helps to illustrate the site's proximity to local amenities and transport links.

2.3 Long Edge House is a family owned smallholding, comprising approximately 3 acres of owned land. The site has an Agricultural Holding Number (37/064/0696) and the applicant currently keeps 3 suckler cows currently in calf, 3 young stirks, 5 breeding ewes with lambs, turkeys, and layer hens.

2.4 Rural tourism offers an opportunity for landowners and smallholders to offer consumers with a different type of holiday, incorporating education. There is a growing interest in Staycations and more people in the UK are looking for locations for a short break in the countryside. As a result, the benefits of a tourism enterprise are encouraging growing numbers of rural landowners to explore this opportunity.

2.5 The setting of the site looks out over the pastureland and the wider local countryside. The area has numerous public footpaths and is also close to the Macclesfield canal network and old Biddulph Valley railway line (now a footpath). The local amenities (village pubs, Post Office, shop, church, bus stop) can be found in the village of Biddulph Moor, with The Talbot Pub & Restaurant within walking distance to the application site. It is also within easy access of the M6 motorway and connecting A roads.

2.6 The aerial picture (Figure 1) below shows the setting of the smallholding and the site's relationship to the locality. With tourism projects a balance needs to be struck between locations that are close to services, owners, access, etc. and areas away from the working elements of the agricultural holding.

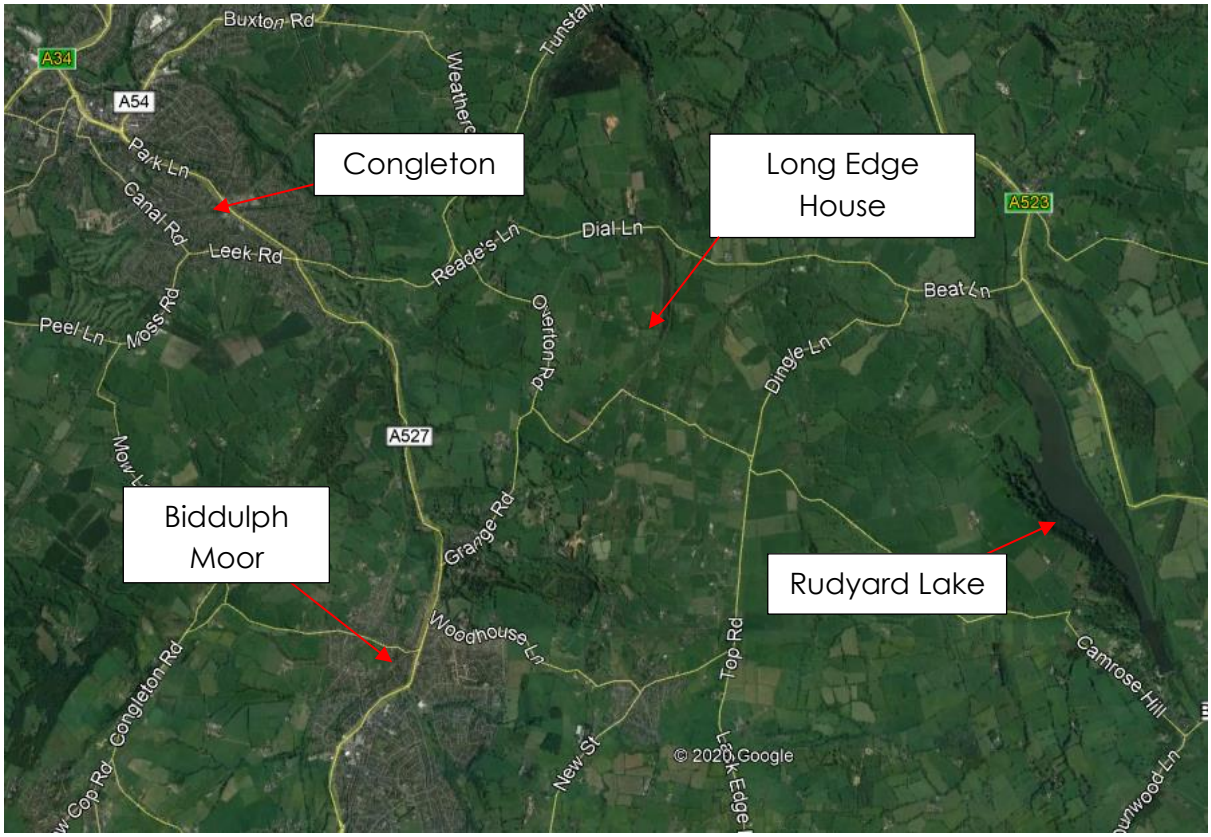


Figure 1

2.7 In terms of the wider location, the vibrant town of Congleton is only 4 miles to the north west, the attractive market town of Leek is 7 miles to the south east, Rudyard Lake is 4 miles to the east, Biddulph Grange National Trust Gardens are 2 miles to the south, Alton Towers theme park is 19 miles to the south east, the entrance to the Peak District National Park is 5 miles to the east and the large market town of Macclesfield with a variety of things to do is 11 miles to the north.

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The proposal is to seek approval for the change of use of a detached garage into a one-bedroom self-contained holiday unit. This development will compliment the

current site through the improvement of the external appearance of the existing building. It will also play a role in supporting the local rural economy through the increase of secondary spending to the area from visiting the local pubs and restaurants, tourist attractions and local shops.

3.2 Access to the proposed development will be via the existing access to Long Edge House, where the garage benefits from its own separate access route. The development will have a negligible impact in respect of traffic volumes on highways to and from the site as the applicants target market will predominantly be couples. There is good visibility in both directions when entering and exiting the site.

3.3 The site will be owned and operated by the Stirk family who aim to provide a unique and relaxing experience for couples which will encourage repeat bookings. Visitors will be able to purchase fresh free-range eggs from the hens on site and are able to experience locally sourced produce from regular local produce food markets such as the "Totally Locally Leek Sunday Supplement Market". This is a significant factor for the applicants in educating guests about the importance of food miles and supporting the local economy to encourage a low carbon footprint.

3.4 Landscaping and planting will be implemented as shown on the proposed plans to ensure an aesthetically pleasing site appearance for visitors and to enhance screening for the surrounding environment.

3.5 The objective for the applicants is to be able to breathe new life into the existing garage unit which is of no architectural merit and is currently used for low-key domestic storage. They wish to supply the growing demand for high quality accommodation to attract consumers to the area, which in turn will bring greater benefits to the local rural economy for the area of Biddulph Moor and the Staffordshire Moorlands.

4.0 Planning Policy Assessment

National Planning Policy Background

4.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated on 19 February 2019 and replaces most former planning policy statements and guidance notes as a key part of Government reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. Paragraph 2 of the NPPF provides that the "*National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions*".

4.2 Paragraph 7 states that "*The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*".

4.3 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

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

4.4 In the case of the proposed tourism development, the project will provide key economic benefits due to the strong evidence of tourism and visitors as contributors to Staffordshire's economy. This reflects the national trend for the rise in popularity for UK staycations which has secured growth within the tourism industry, thus presenting an opportunity for the agricultural holding to develop whilst positively sustaining the local rural economy.

4.5 Visitor accommodation will help support local pubs, restaurants, shops and visitor attractions in the area, thereby helping the local community retain more services and facilities than would otherwise be the case. In addition, the use of local produce used in welcome packs and available at local food markets/eateries will help to support other local dairy, stock and arable farms within the locality. Therefore, an increase in visitor numbers will support the rural economy for a number of other businesses.

4.6 In terms of social benefits the availability of holiday accommodation is important. The proposed expansion will enhance the range of holiday accommodation available in the local area, enabling visitors to enjoy the area and thereby supporting their health, social and cultural well-being. In addition, a greater volume of public access to the open countryside has been given specific support within the Governments Agricultural Bill 2019.

4.7 Environmentally, there is a growing demand for 'greener' holidays, involving less travel and allowing the quiet enjoyment of the natural environment. This proposal will help achieve these objectives, providing holiday accommodation that does not require air travel and which is sited in a location that encourages walking, cycling and quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

4.8 The proposed use is a low impact development that has minimal effect on the local environment, therefore, the proposal will aesthetically blend in with the existing site. The site itself has low ecological value and impact.

4.9 The development site is located in an area designated as Flood Zone 1 and thus at negligible risk from flooding as confirmed by the Environment Agency's flood map. A flood risk report is provided at ***Appendix 3.***

4.10 The NPPF also provides strong policy support for a prosperous rural economy. Paragraph 83 states that 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*;

4.11 The scheme at Long Edge House is a sustainable tourism development which requires a modest conversion of an existing building to help meet local demand and to help provide rural diversification to the area.

4.12 The application site is designated within the Biddulph and Biddulph Moor Green Belt area. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF states that "*certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*

d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction"

4.13 In this case, the development proposes a sensitive re-use of an existing permanent building of substantial construction and its proposed improved design will aesthetically blend its appearance within the landscape.

4.14 The proposal submitted will promote sustainable rural tourism and the small-scale nature of this development will have no adverse impacts on the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt. Therefore, the NPPF provides that this nature of development should be supported.

Local Planning Policy Background

4.15 Local plan policy is contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Core Strategy, which was adopted in March 2014 and this is currently being used to determine applications until the emerging Local Plan is fully adopted. The Core Strategy should be read in conjunction with the NPPF as well as local Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

4.16 Therefore, Policies SS6, SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy are applicable in this case, which aim to strictly control development in rural areas, and restrictive policies relating to the protection of the Green Belt.

4.17 Policies SS6 and SS6c provide support for the proposed development by "*allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policies E3 and R1"*.

4.18 Policy E3 – Tourism and Cultural Development states that new tourist accommodation within the Green Belt should *"normally be limited to the conversion of existing buildings"* and *"are capable of offering good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling"*.

4.19 In this case it has been demonstrated that the proposal is a small-scale tourism development which will be facilitated through the conversion of an existing building that is underused and is located close to tourist attractions and a network of public footpaths and cycle paths.

4.20 Policy R1 – Rural Diversification states that *"wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion."* and *"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.*

4.21 In this case, the application building is suitably located and appropriate for conversion. It benefits from its own access point, which will only generate traffic from one additional vehicle as the holiday unit will be aimed at the couple's market. In addition, the building is not isolated away from the main farmhouse. This proposal also benefits from strong policy support under R1 as the development is for tourism purposes and its proposed use does not harm the buildings character or its surroundings as it is only currently used for low-key domestic storage.

4.22 Therefore, the proposed development accords with both national and local planning policy and will bring economic benefits to the area through the increase of secondary spending for local businesses such as local fishing pools, golf courses, pubs/cafes/restaurants, farm shops, theme parks, equestrian centres offering holiday livery, wildlife parks, national parks etc.

5.0 Development Appraisal

5.1 The proposals enable visitors to enjoy Staffordshire's rural areas whilst being located in a sustainable location in the countryside. There is an existing demand for visitor accommodation in the area, therefore this proposal will extend and compliment the range of visitor accommodation available within the locality.

5.2 There is a growing demand for holiday accommodation across the UK. According to research carried out by Barclays' Bank, two years after their initial Destination UK report, which identified a surge in domestic tourism. Their 2019 findings reveal continuing growth within the Staycation market on an undiminished scale **(Figure 2)**, with 3 in 10 domestic holidaymakers planning to spend more holiday time in the UK in 2019 than they did in previous years.



Figure 2

5.3 The Staffordshire Tourism review, strategy and action plan 2015-2018 has identified that there is a lack of quality accommodation in some areas of Staffordshire. Therefore, a key market demand is to enhance the luxury accommodation stock and increase the number of overnight visitors. This will consequently increase tourist spending within the local economy and will not cause any displacement for other accommodation providers due to levels of demand.

5.4 In addition, all welcome packs for the accommodation will be locally sourced which subsequently benefits the produce providers in Staffordshire and will also educate guests on the food miles of the produce contained within their welcome packs.

5.5 Holidaying in the UK is considered 'greener' than holidaying abroad, due to shorter travel distances. For a typical journey comparison, a family would save 8.6 hours of travel time, spend 92% less on transport costs, and save 95% of their CO^2 emissions when holidaying in the UK rather than taking a flight abroad.

5.6 The local County Council's economic strategy supports increasing the potential of the visitor economy as an important contributor to the economic health of the Staffordshire Moorlands economy.

5.7 The applicants have a strong passion for promoting local produce and to encourage visitors to utilise the nearby footpath and canal networks so that the local area can be fully experienced and enjoyed by guests.

5.8 Staffordshire itself is a diverse county, attracting over 26 million tourism trips in 2018, and has experienced a 37% increase in overnight stays between 2008 and 2013. In addition, over £1.8 billion was generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure.

5.9 Overall, many small rural businesses depend on the opportunities tourism brings. It is the lifeblood of many of Staffordshire's market towns as money spent by visitors helps to keep communities together. Tourism is a vital part of the landscape's future, with many people coming to the county to enjoy the unspoiled open spaces, stunning views, wildlife and rich heritage.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 This statement provides an appraisal of the proposed conversion of an existing garage building into a high-quality tourist accommodation enterprise at Long Edge House.

6.2 The UK Staycation market is growing in popularity and it offers the opportunity for the applicants to tap into the market for people taking more breaks in the UK and having more time to take holidays or short breaks.

6.3 The development would provide a positive use that supports the growing demand for couples retreats and the economy. The proposed change of use is appropriate to the character of the area, providing low intensity visitor accommodation. Visitors will benefit from the economic and social vitality of the area, increasing expenditure in local pubs, restaurants / cafes, shops, etc. located in the Biddulph Moor, Leek, Congleton and surrounding areas.

6.4 Planning policy guidance provides strong policy support for a prosperous rural economy and rural diversification. The proposed development will not give rise to any adverse impacts on the environment or local amenities and overall provides a net benefit to the local economy and environment. The proposal also accords with both

national and local planning policy, which in summary supports developments offering high-quality, sustainable tourism that diversify the rural economy and which cater for new tourists to the area.

6.5 The proposed tourism project at Long Edge House does not create any adverse impacts and therefore, the applicant respectfully seeks permission for this development.

Miss Amy L Turner BSc (Hons) ABIAC

For and on behalf of Chandler Watson Consultancy

May 2020

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan


Pines Ln
GARAGE
site
Pines Ln
Pines Ln

Appendix 2 – Site Photographs



Southern Elevation



South Western Elevation



Western Elevation



Eastern Elevation

Appendix 3 – Flood Risk Report

Environment Agency

Flood map for planning

Your reference	Location (easting/northing)	Created
ST8 7SP	**390729/361142**	**6 May 2020 16:52**

Your selected location is in flood zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding.

This means:

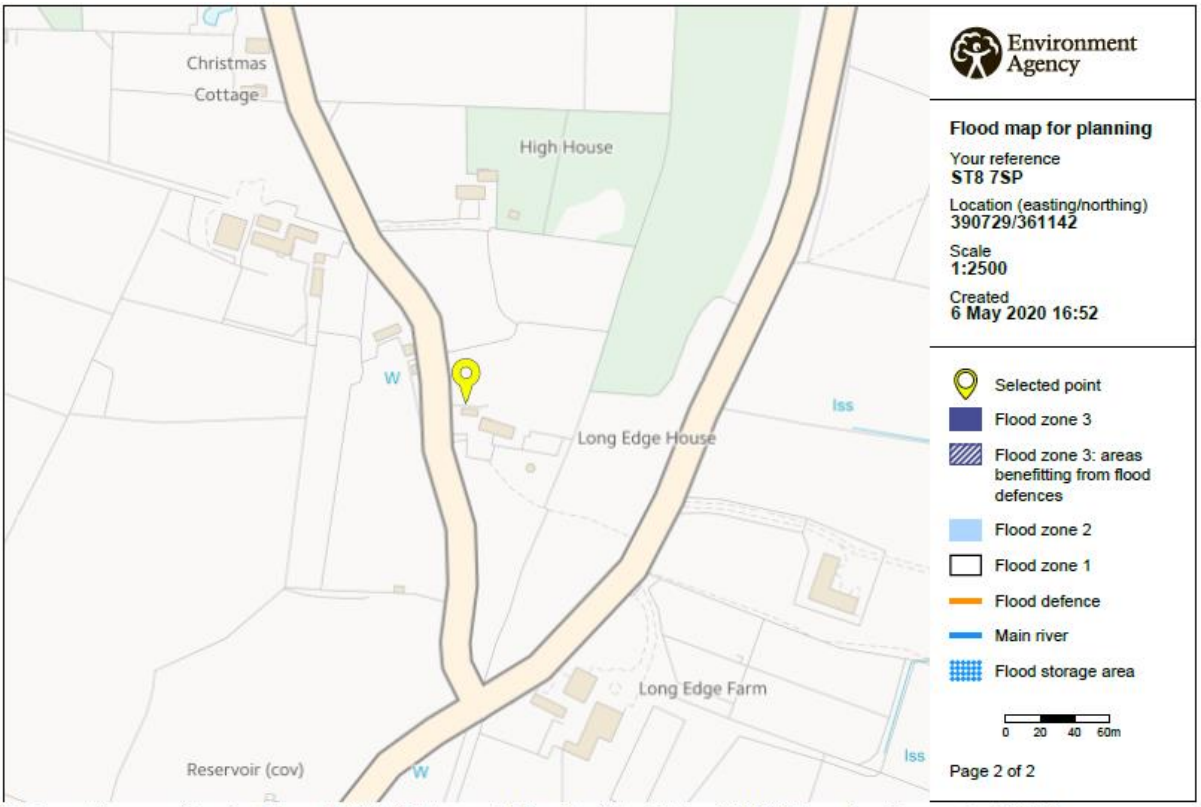
- you don't need to do a flood risk assessment if your development is smaller than 1 hectare and not affected by other sources of flooding
- you may need to do a flood risk assessment if your development is larger than 1 hectare or affected by other sources of flooding or in an area with critical drainage problems

Notes

The flood map for planning shows river and sea flooding data only. It doesn't include other sources of flooding. It is for use in development planning and flood risk assessments.

This information relates to the selected location and is not specific to any property within it. The map is updated regularly and is correct at the time of printing.

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