

PLANNING STATEMENT

**WELLINGTON FARM
BRADNOP**

JUNE 2021

Site Address:

Wellington Farm, Morridge Top Road, Bradnop, Staffordshire, ST13 7NG

Applicant:

Mr. M. Chafer

Proposal:

Erection of 1no. Holiday Lodge

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 8th June 2021

Job Reference: RDP/2021/011

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. M. Chafer to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany an application prepared by CTD Architects for the erection of 1no. holiday lodge on land at Wellington Farm, Morridge Top Road, Bradnop.
- 1.2 The proposed lodge will occupy a footprint of 69 square metres and will have a mono-pitched roof that stands to a maximum height of 3.2 metres. Its accommodation will comprise of an open plan kitchen and living space, double bedroom, bunk-bed room and bathroom, served via a lobby to the rear of the building. The building is to be finished with horizontal painted larch timber cladding, with dark glazed aluminium windows and doors, a sedum green roof and dark coloured flashing.
- 1.3 Parking to serve the lodge is to be accommodated within the existing farmyard to the north, with a mowed reinforced grass pathway created to provide pedestrian access to the lodge.
- 1.4 Pre-application advice has been sought in respect of a larger proposal of 2no. holiday units on this site, spread across the field, which the Local Authority expressed concerns about, both in terms of the principle of development and in terms of visual impact and sustainability. The submitted proposal has sought to respond constructively to those pre-application comments, and incorporates a reduced number of lodges, and its re-siting closer to the existing cluster of buildings.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site lies within the open countryside and comprises a parcel of agricultural land that lies to the south of Wellington Farm. Wellington Farm itself comprises of a two-storey farmhouse and an associated small cluster of outbuildings. The site is accessed off Morridge Top Road to the east, via a long driveway.
- 2.2 The landscape drops away in a westerly direction from Morridge Top and continues downwards to Bradnop village. The proposed lodge is to be located on an existing natural plateau within the field, with a hedgerow that encloses the northern field boundary located a short distance beyond. The land to the west of the building continues to slope downwards a further plateau where the applicant has secured approval from the Freedom Camping Club to operate a caravan and camping site (Schedule 2, Part 5, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 refers).
- 2.3 The site as a whole lies approximately 2.2 miles from the historic market towns of Leek and approximately 10 miles from the city of Stoke-on-Trent and 14 miles from Newcastle-under-Lyme and Ashbourne town centres. The site is furthermore served by the Moorlands Connect Bus Service and has close proximity to the Peak District National Park and a variety of other local attractions. An extensive public footpath network is also available in the immediate vicinity of the site.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering (amongst others):

- Quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce
- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy goes on to state that these objectives will be achieved by, amongst others,

- Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS11 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD
- Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E4).

3.4 Policy SS11 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Churnet Valley Strategy' and states that within this area particular support will be given to the following forms of development and measures:

- Short stay and long stay visitor accommodation
- The expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities
- Measures to enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley
- Measures to remediate and restore derelict land, buildings and features including the appropriate redevelopment of sites
- Actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the valley, including the maintenance, buffering and connection of designated sites and actions to mitigate climate change.
- Measures that support and integrate the heritage transport infrastructure of the valley, sympathetically with enhancing and developing links to strategic footpaths, cycle and horse riding routes.

- Measures to improve connectivity and accessibility to and within the Churnet Valley by sustainable transport means having regard to the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

3.5 Policy SS11 goes on to state that any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area. Strong sustainable development and environmental management principles should also be demonstrated. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximise opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.

3.6 Policy E4 of the Local Plan relates to 'Tourism and Cultural Development' and states that new tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS5 to SS10. In addition:

1. New tourist, visitor and cultural accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering either:
 - A) good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling; or
 - B) in locations in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available; or
 - C) in areas specifically identified for tourism development in the Churnet Valley Masterplan or other relevant documents.

3.7 Policy E4 goes on to state that new accommodation, attractions and facilities should support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities, and that 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

3.8 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst other requirements):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution

- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use
- require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links

3.9 Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence
2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence
3. Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds
4. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape
5. Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of boosting the rural economy and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into account in the preparation of this Planning Statement.

Churnet Valley Master Plan (2014)

- 3.1 The Churnet Valley Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document sets out guidance aimed at promoting and enhancing the Churnet Valley as a tourist destination within the Moorlands. The content of the Master Plan has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

SMDC Tourism & Economic Impact Assessment

- 3.2 This document was prepared by the Local Authority to provide an appraisal of the role and impact of the visitor economy of the Staffordshire Moorlands. It also aimed to identify the opportunities for economic growth based on the visitor economy, with a particular emphasis on the Churnet Valley corridor. The content of this document is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Staffordshire County Council Planning for Landscape Change SPG

- 3.3 The Planning for Landscape Change SPG appraises landscape character within the county of Staffordshire and identifies the application site as lying within the Gritstone Highland Fringe character area. The content of this document is referenced within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application proposes the erection of 1no. holiday lodge on a parcel of agricultural land located within the open countryside and within the Churnet Valley Master Plan area. Policies SS10 and E4 of the Local Plan give explicit support to sustainable tourism developments in the open countryside and the Churnet Valley where it accords with policy SS11.
- 5.2 The explanatory text to policy SS11 confirms that the policy seeks to manage opportunities for further appropriate visitor accommodation and tourist facilities with an emphasis on increasing overnight stays with visitors staying for longer and throughout the year and on further developing the visitor experience of the Churnet Valley through the development of its heritage, nature based and outdoor recreation products, improving and developing links between existing facilities and activities so that they are benefiting from each other, and maintaining and establishing links with regional tourism facilities.
- 5.3 The explanatory text to policy SS11 reflects the findings of the Local Authority's Tourism Economic Impact Assessment which identified that in 2009 there were 3.35 million visitors to the Moorlands, but of those, only 7% were overnight visitors. The Churnet Valley Master Plan was prepared to help address that and to encourage more people to this tourism area, with the more recently adopted Policy SS11 confirming that *particular support* will be given to the provision of short stay and long stay visitor accommodation within the Churnet Valley.
- 5.4 Paragraph 8.3 of the Churnet Valley Master Plan confirms that:

*"The provision of high quality all year round tourism opportunities is a **key requirement** of any proposal for new or extended tourist*

facilities and services. Businesses and communities are encouraged to work together to benefit their local area by improving the tourism offer. The aim is to help develop healthy, sustainable communities, who will benefit from the positive knock on effects of increased tourism to their area throughout the year”
(my emphasis)

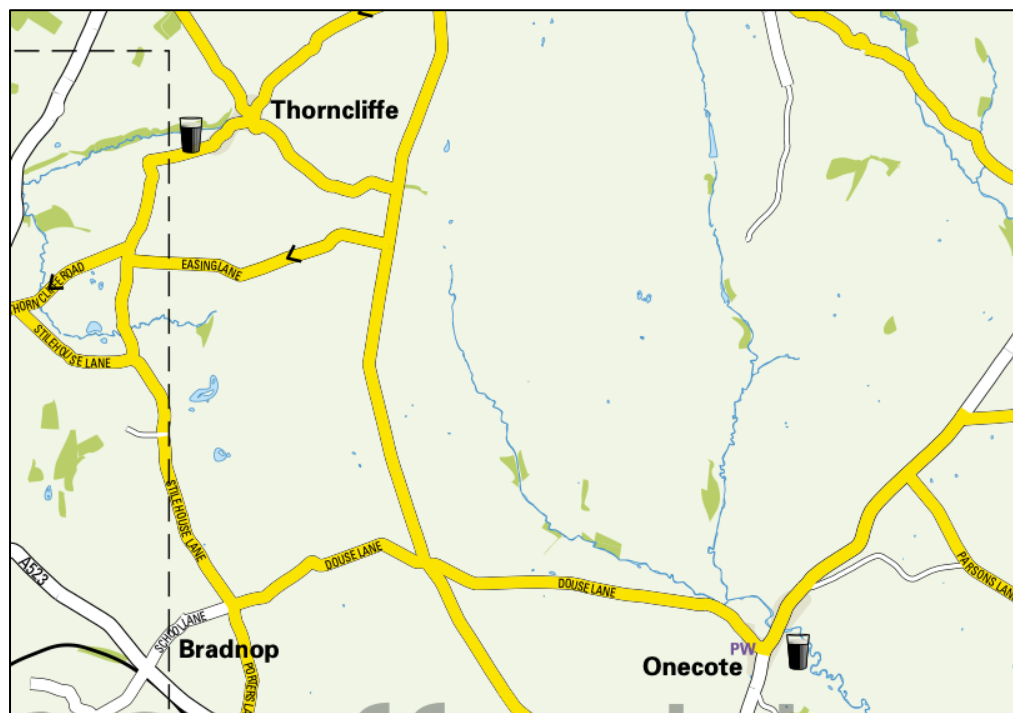
- 5.5 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF reinforces the objectives of the Master Plan, confirming that planning decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside, with paragraph 80 of the NPPF confirming that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth.
- 5.6 The submitted proposal will help to encourage visitors to remain within the Moorlands and the Churnet Valley area, and in doing so the development will facilitate longer stays in the area and associated participation and experience of other tourism activities, to the benefit of the local tourism economy, in accordance with the objectives of policies SS10, SS11 and E4 of the Local Plan and the Churnet Valley Master Plan.

Accessibility

- 5.7 Policy SS11 of the Local Plan states that new tourism development should demonstrate strong sustainable development and environmental management principles. Such provisions are reflected within policy E4 of the Local Plan. During pre-application discussions, concerns were raised by the Local Authority that the proposal would not offer good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, and that as a consequence the proposal would constitute an unsustainable location for new holiday accommodation.

- 5.8 Contrary to the assertions of the Local Authority, this site does benefit from good connectivity to other tourist destinations and amenities, by public transport, walking and cycling. The site lies very close to existing public footpath connections (as shown on page 10 of the accompanying Design & Access Statement prepared by CTD Architects) and consequently affords direct connectivity to local tourist attractions including the Peak District National Park which lies a short distance to the east of the site, and the town centre of Leek which lies 2.2 miles away.
- 5.9 The surrounding road network is also identified as comprising 'Advisory Cycle Routes' by Staffordshire County Council (see Figure 1) and thus affords ample opportunity to access a variety of local attractions, including the Peak District National Park, via bicycle.

Figure 1 – Map of Cycle Routes (Source: Staffordshire County Council)



5.10 In addition, the site is served by the Moorlands Connect Bus Service that operates in the area on an 'on demand' basis. The service operates between 8am and 4pm Mondays to Fridays and one needs to simply book ahead by a couple of hours either via the phone or email. You are collected from your property and taken to your chosen destination within a defined area. A map showing the extent of the Moorlands Connect bus service is shown on page 9 of the accompanying Design & Access Statement prepared by CTD Architects and offers connectivity via public transport to a large proportion of the Peak Park and the Moorlands, including popular destinations such as Hulme End, Alstonefield, Warslow, Waterhouses, Longnor, Alton Towers, Peak Wildlife Park and most notably, Leek. The application site is also served by local supermarket delivery services from Leek which the applicant intends to encourage customers to use.

5.11 As a consequence, future users of the holiday accommodation will benefit from good connectivity to other tourist destinations and amenities by all three means of transport, and as such the application site constitutes a sustainable location for new tourist accommodation, in accordance with the objectives of policies SS1, SS10, SS11 and E4 of the Local Plan.

Landscape Impact

5.12 During pre-application discussions concerns were raised that the draft proposals for two lodges on this site would have been harmful to the landscape. That pre-application scheme differed considerably from the submitted proposal in that it incorporated two lodges, each located much further south into the field and served by a vehicular access track with parking adjacent to each lodge.

5.13 Following receipt of the Local Authority's pre-application comments the scheme has been substantially revised so that there is only one lodge

proposed, which is to be sited much closer to the existing complex of buildings at Wellington Farm, with parking to be provided within the existing farmyard. The proposed lodge will also be sited on an existing plateau within the landscape, and thereby will not give rise to the need for any significant engineering works that might harm the character and appearance of the landscape – that being a further area of concern for the Local Authority. The section drawings accompanying the application clearly demonstrates this.

- 5.14 The site is located within the Gritstone Highland Fringe Character Area as defined within the Planning for Landscape Change SPG, whose characteristic features are noted to comprise strong rectangular pattern of gritstone walls, conifer plantations, a large-scale upland landform with steep slopes, broadleaved woodlands and shelterbelts, stone farmsteads and upland pasture farming. The SPG goes on to identify a number of incongruous landscape features, which include:

“Busy, urbanised roads; quarrying; fencing; modernised commuter properties; camping sites; neglected field boundaries”.

- 5.15 The submitted proposal does not incorporate any of the incongruous landscape features as identified within the Planning for Landscape Change SPG, nor does it involve the erosion of any key landscape characteristics. To this end the proposal will not give rise to harm to the important characteristics of this Gritstone Highland Fringe landscape.
- 5.16 The revised siting of the lodge will furthermore ensure that it is viewed in the context of the existing cluster of buildings nearby and against the backdrop of existing vegetation, in particular a mature tree to the northeast. The landscape rises up behind the lodge as well, thereby providing a green backdrop against which the building will assimilate.

- 5.17 The lodge itself will comprise of a modest, small-scale structure, finished in timber cladding with a sedum roof. Such muted, natural materials will assimilate positively with the rural surroundings of the building, with the dark aluminium windows and doors similarly having a muted appearance. The glazing will be fitted with privacy solar glass to reduce the amount of light transferred in the interests of minimising the impact of the development during the evenings, whilst also improving the thermal efficiency of the building.
- 5.18 In consideration of matters of landscape impact, it is important that due consideration is given to the applicant's fall-back position. The applicant has recently secured consent from the Freedom Camping Club for the flat part of the field to the west of the proposed lodge to be used as a caravan site for up to 5 touring caravans (each permitted to stay on site for up to 28 days at a time) along with a camp site. Whilst touring caravans by their nature can be transient, the provisions of the site licence mean up to 5 caravans can be present at any one time, and each of those can remain on site for up to 28 days at any one time. The site is capable of operating throughout the year. That fall-back position amounts to Permitted Development under the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 5, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended). The applicant intends to proceed with those arrangements in the event that permission is not forthcoming for the current lodge proposal.
- 5.19 The accompanying Design & Access Statement incorporates within it a Visual Impact Assessment which compares the established fall back to the proposed holiday lodge (pages 13 – 26 inclusive). The impact of the development has been assessed from Stile House Lane to the west of the site, the view from the junction of Stile House Lane with Douse Lane to the southwest, and the view from Douse Lane to the south.

- 5.20 The photomontages demonstrate that the caravans and the tents will have a very strident, contrasting, and incongruous appearance within the landscape compared to the much more muted appearance of the proposed holiday lodge. The images pertaining to the lodge itself (pages 23 – 26 inclusive) furthermore demonstrate that its impact will not be significant, and that it will assimilate positively with its surroundings.
- 5.21 The applicant would be prepared to relinquish his rights under Permitted Development to implement the caravan and camping site approval in the event of planning permission being granted for the proposed development. This can be achieved by way of a suitably worded planning condition. In doing so the proposal will avoid the introduction of a feature which is recognised within the Planning for Landscape Change SPG (campsites) as being an incongruous feature within the landscape. The benefits of doing so are considered to carry substantial weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.22 Having regard to the considerations set out above it is concluded that the proposed holiday lodge will not have an adverse impact on the character of the landscape and will comprise a high-quality form of development that assimilates positively with its surroundings, in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, SS11, DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the Churnet Valley Master Plan.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed holiday lodge is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The site is located within the Churnet Valley Masterplan area wherein particular support is given to the provision of short stay and long stay visitor accommodation.
- The site has good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities by both public transport, walking and cycling.
- The proposal will facilitate longer stays in the area and associated participation and experience of other tourism activities, to the benefit of the local tourism economy.
- The proposed lodge is of a modest scale and will be constructed from a muted palette of materials and owing to its siting will not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape.
- The proposed development will have a far lesser degree of impact on the landscape than the applicants established fall-back position to utilise the adjacent land as a caravan and camping site.

6.2 For these reasons the proposed development is in accordance with the provisions of policies SS1, SS10, SS11, E4, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, the Churnet Valley Master Plan and the Planning for Landscape Change SPG.