

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0534
Valid 12/08/2021

TITTESWORTH VISITORS
CENTRE BLACKSHAW
LANE
MEERBROOK
LEEK

INSTALLATION OF 2 NO.
CABINS

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is in the countryside a few miles to the north of Leek but is not in the Green Belt. It comprises part of a Severn Trent Water visitor centre and is adjacent to Tittesworth Reservoir which lies to the west. The site is to the west of the visitor centre buildings and is a small open clearing with an untidy storage yard surrounded by trees. It is reached by a track off the main access road which goes down the side of the buildings towards the waters edge. The site is in the Churnet Valley.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for two small portacabin type structures with “timber effect” cladding, placed side by side with the fronts facing the visitor centre buildings to the east and the backs facing the reservoir to the west. These are already in place and this is therefore a retrospective planning application required to retain the structures and regularise unauthorised development.

The accompanying Planning, Design and Access Statement explains the following of note:

The cabins have been installed to provide additional office space, meeting space and dry storage for the Severn Trent rangers working at Tittesworth Water Visitor Centre. The cabins were delivered and installed on 23rd July 2021.

At Tittesworth Water, the rangers currently have access to various stores, but these are not water tight so do not offer adequate dry storage. The rangers also have an office available to them, but this is not large enough to accommodate all the rangers that work at Tittesworth Water at any one time, nor does it allow space for meetings.

The proposed works comprise the installation of 2 no. identical cabins, each measuring 5m in width, 3.6m in depth and 2.66m in height. The front elevation has a single personnel door measuring 0.9m in width, with a window measuring 150mm in width and 1255mm in height. The two side elevations and rear elevation have a

single window in the centre, each measuring 690mm in width by 790mm in height. Both cabins are sited on 40mm high slabs, making the overall height above ground level 2.7m.

The cabins are constructed from plasticol steel external cladding.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
E4 Tourism and Cultural Development
DC1 – Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 6 (Economy) and 12 (Design).

Other

Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan.

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 5.10.21
Neighbour consultation period ends: 5.10.21
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

OFFICER COMMENTS

With regard to the principle of the development already provided, Policy E4 encourages tourism-related development, which can include development to assist with the running of a visitor centre which would attract tourists, particularly in the Churnet Valley, providing this would not lead to any harm to the character and

appearance of the area or generate significant traffic or harm the natural or historic environment in general.

The cabins are required for additional meeting, office and storage space for the rangers. Whilst ideally the existing more solid buildings should be first explored to provide the required floorspace, the cabins, which are already in place, are small low-key structures of limited height and a temporary appearance but with a timber-effect finish which is not out of keeping in an area surrounded by trees and woodland. The cabins are very well screened by the surrounding trees and are not prominent from either the water or the visitor centre or anywhere else within the public realm as they are hidden on a lower ground clearing at the end of a private track. The cabins, placed on an untidy yard area that is very well screened, do not harm the character and appearance of the area and are not visible in the wider landscape. As the structures are placed on slabs, they do not appear to harm the surrounding trees. The development is not associated with any increase in staff so there would be no impact on traffic generation.

For these reasons, the cabins comply with Policy E4 and also therefore comply with Policy SS10. The development also complies with Policy SS11 as it does not harm the Churnet Valley.

There is no conflict with the Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development is associated with improving the running of a visitor centre and the maintenance of the attractive rural surroundings. It is not harming the character and amenities of the area. It complies with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore a retrospective planning permission can be granted to retain the unauthorised development.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 6.10.21

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council