

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0625
Valid 27/12/2023

STONEY ROCK COTTAGE
LEEK ROAD
WATERHOUSES

**CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE
HOLIDAY LET CABIN WITHIN
GARDEN CURTILAGE OF
STONEY ROCK COTTAGE.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development and sustainability
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the countryside about 1km to the south-east of Waterhouses and on the south side of the A523. It comprises a detached dwelling, clad in white render and timber boarding and with tiled roof and separate brick and stone garage block with tiled roof (a short distance to the north west of the dwelling) within a large plot. The access is off a narrow country lane ("Milkgate" but also shown as "Common Lane" on Google Maps – a "D" classified road) which runs along the south and west boundaries and joins Leek Road (A523) at the far north-west corner of the site. The dwelling and garage are next to the country lane with the large rear garden bordering Leek Road which runs along the north boundary of the site. To the east is Stoney Rock Farm where there is a listed farmhouse and which is served by a separate access of Leek Road to the north. The land rises from the road junction to the north west, towards the south-east so the farm is on higher ground than the application site. The surrounding land is mainly open fields although there is one other nearby dwelling, immediately to the north of the site on the other side of Leek Road where there is also lots of woodland.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a new timber clad 1-bed holiday let cabin which would be placed approx. 20m to the west of the site access and close to the south boundary alongside Common Lane, within part of the garden area to the house. It would have dimensions of 10.8 x 4.0m and a height of approx. 3.5m. It would have a low-pitch dual tiled roof with tiles to match the dwelling on site. A gravel parking and turning area would be formed in front of the cabin, between it and the existing access and parking area for the house. The existing trees and hedgerow between the cabin and the lane would be retained along with existing planting of "juvenile" trees to the north of the cabin.

A Design and Access Statement has been submitted which also states there will be new specimen planting within any gaps in hedgerow and also states the following:

Planning permission was previously granted, reference SMD/2022/0538, for the change of use of the first floor of an existing outbuilding to a holiday let. Since this work was completed and the space advertised as a holiday let, it has been occupied continuously throughout the spring, summer, and autumn of this year. Given its success, the applicants wish to provide further accommodation by constructing a new cabin in place of an existing greenhouse.

Amended site plans were received to show more additional planting/landscaping in the form of tree/hedge planting along the north edge of the proposed parking area, separating it from the existing garden to the house and also the installation of two bird boxes fitted to the existing group of juvenile trees. Further details of existing planting have been provided.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
E4 Tourism development
DC1 Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised December 2023)

Sections 6 (Economy) and 12 (Design).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2022/0538: Conversion of the first floor of a garage building from office and ancillary residential accommodation into a holiday let. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 20.2.24
Neighbour consultation period ends: 20.2.24
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Parish Council Comments

No objection.

Local Highways Authority

No objection subject to a condition to retain the proposed parking area.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions that would be applied to a holiday let in a Rural area. A condition to provide gas protection is recommended due to the site being adjacent to a former landfill site.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No issues regarding waste collections.

SMDC Trees and Landscaping Officer

I have no objection to this application. Specific tree protection conditions are not required in this instance.

The proposed holiday let cabin and associated vehicle parking area would be of relatively low-impact construction, based on the site of an existing greenhouse and hard paved area. There are various trees/understorey in the immediate vicinity, mainly younger trees which would in practice not be adversely affected by the proposal.

The only substantial trees of note and relevance to the application are a mature Larch adjacent to the existing drive/pedestrian access through wall, and a couple of mature Ash trees along the road frontage boundary – the larger of which is identified and denoted as T1 on the application plans.

Relocating one stone pier further from the Larch to widen access and providing a low-key permeable stone vehicle access point off the already block-paved drive as proposed is unlikely to have any substantially harmful impact on this tree.

The Design and Access Statement (November 2023) refers to T1 having been pollarded due to falling dead wood. This behaviour is consistent with its appearance in Google images dated June 2023 (seemingly prior to pollarding) where not only T1 but in fact both mature Ash trees show clear evidence of advanced decline due to Ash Dieback Disease. Whilst it might be appropriate in tree safety terms to retain one or both Ash in pollarded form (with or without development as proposed), sadly their continued decline until death would anyway be anticipated as a result of Ash Dieback – in the Staffordshire Moorlands context this is a particularly notable problem towards/around the Waterhouses area where Ash is very prevalent on the alkaline soils of the limestone landscape. On this basis, any potential impact on these Ash trees arising from the proposed development is somewhat academic.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Churnet Valley and Policy S11, the Churnet Valley strategy gives particular encouragement to tourist development including amenities such as

accommodation. However, in order to achieve sustainable tourist development, Policy E4 requires this to be in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, amongst other things, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. I consider the location of the site complies with this as it is just 1km from Waterhouses which has pubs/places to eat and a general store (and other shops) and access to public transport and the site is linked to the village by a lit public footway along the main road next to the site (there is a field access at the bottom of the garden onto the road junction allowing holiday let guests safe and easy access onto this) allowing easy access into the village via walking and cycling (the road is safe and lit and on fairly level ground with no steep hill climbs). The site can also be reached via public transport. Furthermore the site access is almost on the boundary of the Peak District and the start of the Manifold Way (a long and popular walking and cycling trail) is reached 150m from the proposed unit along the main road footway. There is also a cycle hire place at the start of the trail. Overall, I consider the site is in sustainable location for a new holiday let.

Policy E4 also allows tourist amenities which support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities. I consider this part of the policy is also complied with as a search on the internet revealed the only available accommodation that is well connected to Waterhouses village to be a pub with hotel rooms. There did not appear to be any other holiday let units in the village of similar size. A holiday let was approved in July 2022 about 200m along the main road to the west (SMD/2022/0204) but is a larger unit suitable for families. The only other unit of similar size is the one existing at the application property which the applicant claims has been largely booked out for three seasons of the year and therefore and this would appear to show demand for such units. The proposal would therefore offer suitable self-catering accommodation in an area where there appears to be a shortfall of such accommodation and support the tourist accommodation offer of the area to the benefit of the local economy and employment and which would also help support local village services.

Policy E4 also requires that all tourism related 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.

In this regard, this is a small 1-bed unit which would complement an existing unit at the property. The low-lying form and simple timber clad design is typical of holiday let cabins and would not be significantly larger than a static caravan. The scale and design is appropriate in this area. It would not lead to significant increases in vehicle movements from the site even cumulatively with the existing unit. It would be well screened by boundary hedges to the south and from the main road to the north and further new planting to the north of the cabin would also provide additional screening. The large mature larch tree a short distance to the east of the cabin and access from the existing parking area to the new surfaced parking area would not harm the tree which would be retained. The proposed development would therefore not lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.

There is no significant heritage interest in the area and the landscape would not be harmed by the proposal. I consider the impacts on the heritage and landscape values

of the area would be neutral. However, I consider there would be an overall enhancement to the heritage, landscape and biodiversity values of the area via the provision of further native planting and bird boxes, simple measures which still lead to a enhancement albeit slight. Nevertheless, Policy E4 has been fully complied with.

The proposal would not harm the residential amenities of the area due to the distance between the site and nearest dwellings outside of the property and Environmental Health are not concerned about local residents being affected by noise and disturbance.

Finally with regard to highway safety, the proposal even with the existing holiday let at the property would not generate a large increase in vehicle movements and the access is onto a narrow country lane with low vehicle speeds. There would be adequate parking and turning space for the holiday let occupants.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would amount to sustainable tourism development of a small scale and would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area, or highway safety and with the safeguard of conditions, would also secure an enhancement to the ecological value of the site. The proposal would therefore comply with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 20.3.24

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council