

Design and Access Statement :The Green Man, Bottomhouse, Leek Lodge for Site Manager to monitor the existing Green Man plus four new Holiday Lodges .

Introduction

This revised planning application is for the erection of a lodge accommodation for an onsite manager to continually monitor the site. A concurrent tandem planning application for four holiday lodges to complement and expand the existing holiday accommodation and tourist facility at 'The Green Man', former public house, at Bottomhouse Nr Leek (ST13 7QJ) has also been submitted.

An application for the holiday lodges was originally applied for in July 2022, refused in November 2023 (SMD/2022/0426) and for the manager's lodge in November 2022, refused November 2023 (SMD/2022/0631). This revised application is to address various concerns raised in the planning officer's report to committee.

The 'Green Man' converted pub with traditional charm is available for holiday accommodation for a large group of between 24 and 34 persons. The exclusive self catering accommodation has its original bar area in situ. Guests enjoy exclusive use of all the old pub areas including excellent private dining space, social areas, games room and enclosed lawned outdoor areas.

The holiday facility is a great location for the Peak District, the boundary of which is approximately half a mile away, and local tourist attractions such as Alton Towers, 6 miles away. The towns of Leek (5 miles) and Ashbourne (11 miles) are easily accessible by public transport (frequent bus services in both directions). The bus stop is a covered bus shelter immediately on the Green Man property boundary, and could be accessed by a pedestrian gate through what was one of the two original vehicle accesses to the 'Green Man' car park.

Site Manager's Lodge

The 2013 planning approval was for a manager's flat in an extension to the 'Green Man'. This was not implemented because there was insufficient continuous employment for a site based manager and supervisor. With the introduction of the four holiday lodges there will now be sufficient work in terms of monitoring, landscape management, 'meet and greet' reception and maintenance, to justify the permanent employment on site of a supervisor. One of the supervisor's roles will be to ensure that noise is contained from the existing and proposed development to avoid the historic disturbance to neighbouring properties.

In this application the manager's lodge has been relocated so that it sits between the 'Green Man' and the proposed new lodges. In the planning officer's report in November 2023 for the manager's lodge application (SMD/2022/0631) it was noted that the proposed lodge was some 50m away from the 'Green Man' building, and it was stated that it did not seem ideally located for its stated function of site supervision. The relocation in this application is some twenty metres closer and better suited to supervision of the lodges behind, the entrance to the lodge site, and The 'Green Man' itself, whilst deriving better screening from the existing trees on site.

The report also noted that the original two bed lodge fell short of the space standards for a two bed dwelling, and would only meet the standard for a one-bedroomed dwelling. The design has now been altered so that the manager's lodge is still the same size but only a single bed unit to achieve the space standard requested. The exterior treatment would be similar 'waney edged' timber boarding as the proposed holiday lodges.

In 7.22 of the same report Environmental Health's support was noted. However it was thought that an agreed set of ground rules would need to be provided around which the warden enforcement could take place. The owners of the 'Green Man' are happy to propose a methodology for site supervision by a warden and noise control for the 'Green Man' itself and these are attached as a 'Noise Management Proposal' with this application.

Consultations

As part of the consultation process there were the following supportive responses:

Severn Trent Water were consulted on the original larger scheme and stated that there was 'minimal impact on the sewer system therefore no objections and no requirement for a drainage condition.'

SMDC Waste were consulted and stated 'No issues regarding waste collection'

Environmental Health initially recommended refusal of the application due to insufficient information being provided to address/mitigate the potential noise impacts this development maybe likely to cause.

Following this a separate application for the site manager's lodge was submitted, and Environmental Health then stated that they had no objection subject to conditions. They responded:

The caravan under this application is to address ongoing noise concerns and those raised for a proposed holiday lodge development adjacent to the Green Man. This application does appear a positive move in noise control. The permanent presence of a warden while the Green Man is occupied by guests would assist in ensuring guests do not impact nearby residential properties.

The consultation for the original larger (refused) scheme from the SCC Highways Department responded: *There are no objections on Highway grounds to the proposed development subject to the following conditions being included on any approval: - The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the parking and turning areas have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The parking and turning areas shall thereafter be retained for the purposes of parking and turning for the life of the development.*

Personal Injury Records.....the overall volume of collisions does not suggest that there are any existing safety problems that would be exacerbated by the proposed development. Ashbourne Road is a primary route connecting Leek to Ashbourne. There is a bus service with bus stops directly outside the site providing public transport to Leek (approx 5 miles) and Ashbourne (approx 11 miles). There are numerous public rights of way surrounding the site and other local tourist attractions such as Alton Towers and Manifold Valley.

Access to the holiday lodges will be off Bottom Lane via an existing commercial access, which previously served the pub. There are no proposed modifications to the access and visibility is good.

The access served the pub car park and in continuous daily use it is considered that the trip generation would not increase as a result of the addition of the proposed lodges. It is noted there are no footways along Bottom Lane or Ashbourne Road, however pedestrian access to the bus stops will be via a footpath through the site.

Ecology and Trees

The existing trees, hedge line and landscaping within the site, screen the proposal for a Manager's Lodge. This provides a continuous tree belt to the south east boundary to screen the site from the primary roads adjacent. The site also cannot be seen from any nearby public footpaths nor from more distance views, such as the Peak Park boundary, since there are existing mature trees and hedgerows to the northern boundary of the property. The trees and hedgerows are in both deciduous and evergreen species so the site is still masked even in winter conditions. Photos are attached to show these views. The lodge would also be single storey no more than 3.5 metres high so that the roof does not appear above the tree line.

A full ecological survey of the site was carried out and the ecologist revisited the site in April 2024 to check the current situation and to update his initial report (which is attached as part of this planning application). The ecologist checked both the proposed site itself and for 50 metres beyond the site boundaries in each direction, within the bird nesting season. He concluded that the development would not have a negative impact on protected species, and that there was no evidence of current birds nesting during the survey. The site was scrutinised particularly carefully to take into account local landowner's comments during the first application.

He considered that there was not considered to be any ecological constraints to the development of the site but advised that works would best be carried out to avoid the nesting season of February to September.

The Small Sites Metric Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool was completed, and this showed that the Biodiversity Net Gain Target was met, achieving 12.9% Net Gain (the statutory requirement is for at least 10% to be achieved). Also the Trading Rules were satisfied in the metric (on Page 8 of the metric spreadsheet showing results).

To get the 12.9% Net gain more trees added to the site and a total of 9 new trees proposed, in addition to the existing 18 on the Manager's lodge site (ie a 50% uplift in tree numbers). Also an area of the existing grassland is proposed to be enhanced through wide flower seeding. The species of trees and incorporation of enhancement of grassland were advised by the Ecological consultant who prepared the Ecological Appraisal Report and carried out the walkover in April during the bird nesting season.

Design

The Manager's lodge is now much reduced in footprint and also height. The raised verandah is completely removed from the scheme which halves the footprint. The total footprint area of the new lodges is therefore reduced by almost half. Since the lodge is no longer to be raised onto a verandah then the overall height will be reduced from 4.1 metres to 3.5 metres, ie 85% of the original height in the first application.

The proposed external materials would be in timber claddings, in 'waney edge' natural edge tree planks, from Pinelog's 'Woodsman' range. These would weather naturally to a silvery grey, although a light grey stain can be applied to give them a 'starter' weathering until nature takes over.

Roof materials would be of simulated shingle tiles or standing seam metal roofs to reflect materials on agricultural buildings in the vicinity. It is proposed to select from Pinelog's 'Woodsman' lodge range. These lodges are constructed based on mobile home construction to British Standard 3632 for mobile homes. They are built off-site and transported in a completed state and installed on small piers or minipiles so that local drainage and tree roots are not affected as no permanent concrete base is required. The lodges can therefore be removed at some later stage intact, without leaving any permanent marks to the ground beneath.

Woodsman Lodges with waney edge board claddings

The lodges in the photograph are shown on raised verandahs but these would be omitted in this project for a Manager's Lodge which would be lowered by 600mm to be at ground level



Access, Highways and Public Transport

The proposed site would be accessed off the B5053, utilising the existing commercial access to the pub car park, which still exists. This access was designed for continuous access to the public house and the traffic movements generated by the proposed lodges and the Green Man accommodation combined is far less than the movements when the pub was in continuous daily use. The existing access has good visibility splays in both directions and requires no modification.

The Highways officer went on to advise that the existing internal gate in the site may cause conflict with other users, so this has now been completely removed in this revised scheme. Since the revised scheme is now smaller in size then the highways situation will be even better than before.

In addition, a shelter public transport bus stop is present on the front boundary of the public house and there are two Public Rights of Way close by, which allows good connectivity, other than by car, to the nearby Manifold Way and other Dales in the Peak Park. Cycling access into the Peak Park is only half a mile away to the boundary and is directly via the relatively quiet B5053.

A site layout is attached to the planning application, showing both this access and the potential for four generously spaced residential holiday lodges. The site layout demonstrates adoptable road widths, turning facilities for refuse and emergency vehicles, and parking for the park homes (two spaces per unit, plus additional visitor spaces in the generous existing main pub car park). One of the lodges will have ramped access and full facilities for disabilities.

Proposals for Holiday Lodges

Besides the Manager's Lodge, a tandem application for holiday lodges has been made running concurrently. The proposed holiday lodges are an expansion in offering to the existing holiday accommodation business at the 'Green Man', and provide a type of individual, personal, self-contained holiday accommodation which is much needed by certain groups, but unavailable in the nearby Peak Park. This is because the Peak Park authority do not allow holiday lodges within the Peak Park boundary, under The Peak District Core Strategy clause RT3, which is very clear and unambiguous in its statements:

RT3: Caravans and camping

Proposals for caravan and camping sites must conform to the following principles:

A. Small touring camping and caravan sites and backpack camping sites will be permitted, particularly in areas where there are few existing sites, provided that they are well screened, have appropriate access to the road network, and do not adversely affect living conditions.

B. Static caravans, chalets or lodges will not be permitted

This strategy does not favour disabled persons and the elderly and even compact family groups who may not wish or be able to camp or stop in a mobile touring caravan or backpacking tent. The proposal at the Green Man for lodges would seek to re-address this, since the site is just outside but almost on the Peak Park boundary, and therefore makes the park available to other users.

There is also demand from corporate groups for conferences and meetings but the large bedrooms within the 'Green Man' building accommodate more than one person whereas corporate groups require single bedrooms for participants, which limits numbers and scope. Also, when used for corporate events the clients want a bedroom and bathroom per person. Purpose designed individual lodges with each bedroom with an ensuite would make a big difference to this.

The land to the rear (south-west) of the Green Man is derelict and overgrown but was formerly used as a caravan site, and many electrical hook-up points and water points are still visible, and a concrete base. No formal planning approval exists and it appears that the small scale development was carried out for many years under permitted development in conjunction with the former public house. A series of air photos is publicly available showing several touring caravans over various years in the early 2000s and these are referenced in the planning officer's reports.

To extend the existing tourist offering at the converted public house, the holiday operators (Peak Venues Ltd) wish to provide the four holiday lodge units (two x 2 bed, two x 3 bed) to cater for smaller groups of between 2 to 6, and bring the overgrown and disused land out of dereliction. The lodges could be used independently or

in conjunction with the larger scale facilities within the former Green Man public house.

An approach has been made to Pinelog Ltd, at Bakewell in Derbyshire, to design a suitable scheme and submit a detailed planning application. Pinelog Ltd is a long standing manufacturer of sustainable timber lodges, and the Pinelog Group have detailed knowledge of operating successful lodge parks as they own Darwin Forest Country Park near Matlock, and Sandybrook Country Park near Ashbourne. Darwin Forest has recently been awarded the current Hoseasons award for being the best lodge park in England, and the similar 'Visit England' award. Lodges are rarely full for holiday use....two bed lodges on average are used by three people, and three bed lodges by four people, so if the four holiday lodges are all in use the likely average occupancy is fourteen holidaymakers. For corporate gatherings, usually one bedroom would contain one person, ie ten persons if all the lodges are fully occupied.

Policy Documents

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan supports the application proposals.

The policy starting point here is SS10 and notes:

SS10 (2) is to “Sustain the rural economy by: (inter alia) Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified” This policy seeks to enhance tourist opportunities by:

1. Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS12 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD. and
2. Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E4).

The application proposal is for a limited expansion of the existing small-scale tourism business at The 'Green Man' which is in a necessary rural location allowing access to the wider Peak Park and the nearby local footpaths. It therefore conforms to the above policies. The limited expansion is for a maximum of twenty bed spaces in the proposed holiday lodges, over the 34 maximum bed spaces in the existing 'Green Man' building. However, in practice not every bed space would be normally in use and an average of 14 bed spaces in the holiday lodges would be the norm.

SS10 (3) is to “Enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by : Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape; Limiting uses which generate a substantial number of regular trips in areas that are not well served by public transport.

The application proposal will enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by clearing up an untidy and derelict site, providing a high quality of new landscaping in native species to be found giving distinctive qualities in the surrounding landscape. The use is extremely well served by public transport having public bus stops immediately on the verge outside the property, accessing the major towns of Leek and Ashbourne just minutes away. The Peak Park boundary is well within walking or cycling distance from the proposal, and there are close public footpaths. This accessibility by public transport is confirmed in the Staffordshire County Council's Highway Officer's consultation response.

SS10 (5) is to “Enhance tourist opportunities by: Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS 11 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD; Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E 4); Establishing strong linkages between recreational and tourist resources; Recognising and developing the close linkages to the Peak District National Park.

The application proposal conforms to SS10 (5) in that it is a sustainable small-scale tourist development of just four holiday lodges expanding on the existing offering at The Green Man. The proposed lodges are built using all sustainable materials by constructors who are members of 'The Green Register'. The proposal establishes strong linkages between local recreation and the tourist resources proposed, especially links to the nearby Peak District National Park which has no opportunity for self catering lodges within the boundary itself due to Peak

Park planning policy RT3.

Policy SSI I is 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. Complementary and sensitive highway improvements to access routes and/or measures to support other alternative means of access will be required to serve any developments which generate significant additional demand for travel.”

The development proposed is small scale, limited in height, and of a very high standard of design utilising award-winning sustainable lodges. The proposed landscaping enhances the landscape and further planting species can be chosen in a landscaping scheme to improve bio-diversity. The proposed site will be both restored and enhanced. No improvement to the existing adequate highway access is necessary, as confirmed by SCC Highways and there will not be a significant additional demand for travel caused by just four lodges, again confirmed by SCC Highways.

The proposed site lies on the boundary of the central area and the peak district fringe as identified in the Masterplan. The underlying tenets of the masterplan are to focus tourism development such as accommodation provision to identified locations and avoid a general or random dispersal of new development. The proposed development is an enhancement and improvement of an existing tourist facility at The Green Man and addresses weaknesses in the current offering for accommodation at the site.

The Masterplan does not override the Local Plan policy E4 for Tourism and Cultural development which is 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 SS 5 to SS 10 and Churnet Valley Strategy Policy SS 11.”

The proposed four lodges, being constructed out of natural materials and agricultural type roofs, complement the existing character and quality of the district and the existing tourist accommodation on the site.

The application site lies within the Churnet Valley Masterplan area and therefore the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD is applicable, as well as policy SSI I. Both seek to promote sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. One type of development that is supported by policy SSI I is those that provide short stay and long stay visitor accommodation. The masterplan states at paragraph 6.2.1 that 'development is to be focused in key locations which can best accommodate change and bring maximum social, economic and environmental benefits. Only minimal change is to be allowed in other parts to protect sensitive areas'.

The proposed site is already part of a residential holiday tourist facility, and with its existing extensive car parking and access, and screening landscaping, it can accommodate the small changes proposed whilst maximising local employment in management, maintenance, landscaping and cleaning staff. The proposed new planting and site reclamation will maximise environmental benefits.

The 4 no. new build holiday lodges are a 'minimal development' to the existing accommodation. The site is relatively level and is naturally screened by existing trees from both close and longer views, particularly from the surrounding higher ground such as the Peak District National Park. A 40% uplift in the number of trees on site is proposed to enhance biodiversity and provide even more natural screening.

In addition, light pollution can be negated when the buildings and access road are lit at night through the use of downlit bollard lighting to accessways and PIR controlled external downlighters to the lodges, from companies specialising in 'Dark Skies' lighting.

Policy E4 covers tourism and cultural development and supports the provision of new tourism development as proposed.

It requires new tourist and visitor accommodation to be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering either:

- (1a) good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling; or
- (1b) in locations in or close to settlements where services, facilities and public transport are available; or
- (1c) in areas specifically identified for tourism development in the Churnet Valley Masterplan or other relevant documents.

The proposal satisfies (1a) in that it has remarkably excellent public transport links through the main route bus stops immediately outside (including bus shelter) and public footpaths within a few metres of the site and cycling opportunities into the Peak Park which is just a half mile away. This is confirmed by Staffs CC Highways.

The policy goes on to state at (3) that new accommodation should:

- (a) support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not currently met by existing facilities; and
- (b) all development should be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect residential amenity, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.

The new proposed lodge accommodation exactly supports the expansion of the existing residential tourist facility at The Green Man but provides the needs not currently met by the existing residential facilities (ie self contained individual family accommodation), and also conforms to paragraph (b).

Summary of Application for Manager's Lodge

This proposal is a modest and much needed Management Enhancement to an existing holiday tourist facility in an area screened by existing planting. It will improve biodiversity with selected new planting, and be able to utilise existing excellent public transport links to the major local towns and also connect to local footpaths. It will provide a source of noise control of the Green Man facility and management of the employment for local people in terms of security, maintenance, landscaping and cleaning. Consultations for the previous refused applications indicated support and no objections from the Highways Department, Environmental Health, Waste Services, And Severn Trent Water.