

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0082
Valid 23/02/2024

**QUARRY WALK
CARAVAN PARK
COPPICE LANE
WINNOTHDALE**

**RETROSPECTIVE
APPLICATION FOR 11
GLAMPING PODS

(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Design appearance
- Sustainability of the location

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Woodland – operated as a mixed caravan, camping and lodging site progressively expanded. The original permission in 1993 reference SM93-0119 was for 40 touring pitches allowed on appeal.

The applicant's planning statement summarises the current establishment as follows:

Quarry Walk Park is an established existing holiday park located off Coppice Lane, Winnothdale, near Hollington. The original permission in 1994 was for a total of 40 caravan pitches, 34 of which were for touring caravans with the remaining patches used for static caravans. Subsequent permissions have resulted in the approval of 20 log cabins, followed by an application in 2008 for a further 20 cabins with an additional 16 log cabins approved in 2021. The total number of log cabins approved is 56.

The statement also describes the site as having two distinct parts separated by a cliff which cuts through the middle of the site. The lower part of the site comprises a long sloping shelf below the south facing quarry face. It is this lower part where the application site and log cabins are located.

The overall location is undoubtedly attractive – an intimate landscape of low ridges and steep narrow valleys with small woods, strong hedgerows, narrow embanked and tree lined roads and a network of public footpaths. A large sand and gravel quarry is located remarkably concealed in a valley c.1km to the NW.

PROPOSAL

From the accompanying planning statement for these 11 pods: (2.9) The pods are located in a cluster in the western corner of the site in close proximity to the site access on an area that has been previously underused. (2.10) All of the pods contain an open plan bedroom (double bed) living/dining, kitchen and ensuite. Pods 1,2,6,9 and 10 are smaller in size while pods 3,4,5,7,8 and 11 are larger with more space around the bed and have decks with canopy covers on the principal elevations.

The location and context within the site can be seen from the layout plan below which also serves to indicate the existing tree cover.



The pods are made of interlocking logs and have a felt roof (2.11). They are “of similar design to the larger log cabins and pods on the site” (2.12).

BNG

The application is exempt from the need to meet the new 2024 biodiversity net gain requirements as its submission was accepted as valid 23rd February 2024 and BNG only became mandatory for minor sites 2nd April 2024.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
- E1 New Employment Development
- E4 Tourism and cultural development
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Checkley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan

EMP2	Rural business diversity and growth
DES1	Design
DES3	Landscape and rural character

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places and beautiful places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Pending with this application are SMD/2023/0660, a lawful Development Certificate for the erection of 10 glamping pods for holiday accommodation and a biomass boiler – already in situ; and SMD/2023/0658, an application for a biomass boiler building – again, already in situ.

SMD/2020/0385 – erection of 16 log cabins (re-submission of SMD/2017/0391) – approved

SMD/2017/0391 – erection of 17 log cabins – refused

08/00973/FUL_MJ – Replacement of 20 touring caravan pitches with 20 log cabins – approved. See drawing 6100 (29th May 2008).

05/01449/FUL – erection of 6 log cabins – approved

05/00892/ FUL_MJ – Replacement of 14 touring caravan pitches with log cabins – refused – ALLOWED on appeal for 8, six having by then been approved under 05/01449 (above)

04/00187/FUL Replacement of six static caravans with six log cabins and extension to form managers accommodation – approved

- this related to six caravans permitted under SM96/0522

00/00434/FUL – reception lodge – approved

1996 /0552 – six static caravans – approved – “replacing six touring pitches”

1996 /0067 – six static caravans – refused

1995 /0938 – six statics (in addition to the 40 touring) – refused
1995 /0337 – enlarged reception building – approved (commenced but not completed)
1993 /0119 – 40 touring pitches – refused – ALLOWED on appeal

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 06.05.2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: 25.03.2024
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Checkley Parish Council – Checkley Parish council acknowledge that the Applicant is now seeking Retrospective Planning Permission for Development of 11 glamping pods. The proposal appears to be sound provided it is in keeping with neighbouring property and there are no local objections and it conforms with planning policies as defined in the Checkley Parish Council Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Core Strategy [sic] and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Environmental Health

Recommends a plant and machinery noise condition is placed on this permission to ensure any generators etc. are suitably attenuated so as not to adversely impact noise levels in the surrounding area. Noise from residents should be controlled through good on-site management but we would recommend a condition is placed on the permission requiring control on noise from onsite music/radio etc.

Caravan/Camping Licensing – There would be a requirement that the use would be subject to the Local Authority's licence requirements . The use should be specifically restricted to that hereby permitted. Tents and other mobile residential units should be clearly prohibited. There should be a close-down break when no use should be allowed (approx. 2 months) and permanent residential stays should be prohibited. If permission is granted then there will be a requirement that the use would be subject to the Local Authority's licence requirements and conditions. The developer should contact Environmental Health if permission is granted and the site should not be used until a licence is approved.

Six conditions are recommended covering:

- construction hours
- plant / machinery noise

- amplified noise
- unexpected contamination encountered during the development
- imported soil or fill material
- artificial lighting

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommend acceptance and note:

- Application is to provide 11 Glamping pods on an existing larger camp/caravan park.
- Access will be through the existing access which is in current and regular use.
- Coppice Lane is generally single track with informal passing bays. The proposal will intensify use of the access and approach road, but the proposal is part of a much larger existing site.
- Current records show that there were no Personal Injury Collisions on Coppice Lane within 215m either side of the property access in the previous five years.

SMDC waste collection services

No issues raised.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS10

The relevant strategic spatial policy is SS10 for the Other Rural Areas beyond development boundaries: "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 application shares its access with that serving all the previous developments at this location but is otherwise outside of land to which any previous approval has been applied. It can be accepted as in principle being 'essential' at this proposed location on the grounds the development would not be relevant unless it were carried out here.

SS10(2) is to sustain the rural economy by [first point]: Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified. Again, the location can be justified because it is here that the existing business is located. There is however a consideration to be given to the scale of the proposal and whether it should be regarded as 'limited expansion' given the cumulative expansion that has occurred since the original 1993 consent.

Also relevant is SS10(5) which is to enhance tourist opportunities by allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas [meaning areas outside the Churnet Valley Masterplan area]. Such proposals in order to be acceptable would need to be in accordance with policy E 4.

Policy E4

Policy E4 is concerned with “new tourism and cultural development” and supports development that “complements the distinctive character and quality of the District” having regard to the area strategies – SS10 in this case (as summarised above).

Under E4(1) new visitor accommodation 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.

As already noted, Quarry Park cannot qualify under (C) and is not in or close to a settlement so cannot qualify under (B).

Due to the relative remoteness and isolation of this site, typically approached along un-lit narrow and in places hilly single track roads, often with steep banks to the side without pavements or easy pedestrian refuge, the location is not conducive to cycling and walking and will not encourage sustainable travel. Visitors will be highly car reliant. The site thus cannot be considered compliant with clause (A) either.

If nonetheless a rural location can be justified, there is a second option under policy E4 to support tourism development where it cannot comply with E4(1) A, B or C.

Under the second option E4(2) there is support (A) for “expansion” of a tourist facility where “needs are not being met by existing facilities”. The development proposed is then required also (B) to 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”.

Whether this development can be supported in principle hangs therefore on whether there is a case that the tourism accommodation ‘needs’ are not met by existing facilities – and on consideration of the points set out under E4(2)(B).

The fact the development has already been implemented with all the investment that will have entailed offers some proof in itself that there must be a customer ‘demand’.

Addressing the other part of the requirement under E4(2), that the proposal must be appropriate and compatible on landscape, environmental and neighbour amenity grounds etc., Quarry Park has significant factors in its favour. Perhaps first and foremost is that the proposed 11 cabins would be in a location within the site which is close amongst previously consented development that has been found acceptable in terms of landscape, biodiversity and neighbour amenity. This further site area is

similarly well secluded from the wider landscape and at appreciable distance from any neighbouring residents. There will inevitably be a 'trade-off' for biodiversity in that the development will encroach on semi-natural woodland that has re-colonised the former quarry site. Also, the greater density of the development compared with that first approved under the original appeal decision will inevitably create a further greater adverse pressure through direct reduction in habitat and through disturbance.

Checkley Neighbourhood Plan

EMP2 is that: Development proposals that will result in a growth of rural enterprise and tourism will be supported where:

- there is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties or landscape character;
- they demonstrate consideration of any opportunities for sustainable travel; and
- the scale of development is appropriate in accordance with Local Plan policies

Under the interpretation section for EMP2 the plan says: "This is an enabling policy, to encourage expansion of visitor accommodation and facilities. In considering impacts on the amenities of nearby residents, additional vehicle movements should be considered. The potential for noise to travel along the valley should be taken into account in applying the policy."

DES3: Development should minimise impact on, and where possible enhance wildlife habitats, ecology, local landscape character, and landscape features (see Plans Checkley Parish Green Infrastructure, Distribution of Known Priority Habitats and Landscape Setting), including: [relevant to this site] Trees, hedgerows, semi-natural broad woodland, ancient woodland and other woodland.

Design

The proposed cabins are very similar designs to those already at the site though generally of a lesser scale. As timber cabins on a site for this purpose they are unobjectionable in appearance. Most importantly, as with the existing site there are few if any locations from which they can be viewed externally from the site. It can be accepted that they would generally assimilate into the wooded setting as a back drop at least. The backdrop trees – particularly on the southern slope edges and above to the north have the greater significance in terms of the outward or external landscape impacts.

Amenity

Due to the topography of Quarry Park and its wooded character the existing development is concealed and there is little likelihood of the proposed additions being noticeable in daytime. Lighting may be visible at night and more especially in winter time. The proposed external lighting to the cabins is of a similar level of lighting on the existing log cabins. It is said that there is no existing floodlighting at Quarry Park and none is proposed as part of this application.

There is a residential neighbour at some 300m to the west. The EH recommended noise conditions should be attached.

The cabins are not of a scale that would meet NDSS and therefore would not provide the level of amenity suitable for permanent residence as any one person's main home. This should be a matter subject to condition in the event of approval.

As a retrospective application not all the EH suggested conditions are relevant or necessary for example not the construction noise condition and not the soil or fill importation tests.

Highway Safety

In light of the SCC consultation response there are no issues requiring to be addressed.

Other matters

Ecology and woodland

As a retrospective application only a more limited consideration can be given to ecology. The site is not under any statutory or other protection as a biodiversity site. The effect of the development will be to reduce and to some extent prevent the natural ecological succession of the site vegetation. It will also introduce a degree of year round human disturbance which is likely to impact adversely on bird nesting.

As a proportion of the overall woodland in this ownership this specific proposal is relatively modest but it is the latest in a long succession of incremental expansion of development at Quarry Walk. There is a risk that with each further expansion the balance between nature and adverse human impacts will at some point become unacceptably adverse and begin to affect the wider woodland area in the ownership.

Drainage

It is understood that the foul drainage will be managed privately. With regard to clean water run-off the LPA can be satisfied that the highly permeable gravel / sandstone nature of the site will mean that drainage can be managed sustainably by maximising local drainage of clean water run-off through soak-away drainage within the site / ownership and a condition to require plans to this effect should be attached.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Whether in principle this proposal may gain policy support under the Local Plan (2020) has been carefully analysed in the above report. The LPA must be satisfied that (i) the tourism accommodation 'needs' which are to be provided for in this proposal are not met by existing facilities; and (ii) that the scheme is acceptable

environmentally as set out under E4(2)(B) and in similar terms under the Checkley Neighbourhood Plan.

The visual impacts of the development will not be significantly noticeable (if at all) from public locations outside the land ownership. Risks of adverse amenity impacts for un-associated neighbours are not anticipated to arise but are possible and the relevant EH recommended conditions should be attached.

As the development is already up and running it can be accepted that the 'need' is to some extent proven. Given the seclusions of the site as discussed in the report and the ability to attach conditions to control certain other matters the scheme on balance can be found acceptable.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to conditions

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 22.10.2024

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council