

Statement Supplementary to Planning Application for Side Farm, Cotton Bank, Cotton, ST10 3DU

Myself, Megan Bottomley, and my husband, James Bottomley, would like to put forward a supplementary statement in relation to our planning application at our home of Side Farm, Cotton Bank, Cotton, ST10 3DU.

From a young age it has been a dream of both of ours to own our own home and land within the countryside, and that dream finally came a reality after purchasing Side Farm in December 2024. It has taken many years of hard work to get where we are, but it has definitely been worth it as we now feel so privileged to live in such a beautiful area of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

We felt this statement was necessary as we want to express how much we love the nature around here and the peace and quiet. Cotton Dell is such a wonderful nature reserve and we are here to help protect it. We live on the farm and are pouring all our hearts and hard-earned money into the farm to try get it back up to scratch.

Our son has settled in well at the local school down in Oakamoor, and we are conscious of buying all our milk and meat from local farms such as Daltons Dairy and Thorswood Farm Shop to name a couple. We want to be part of this beautiful place, our planning application is in no way intended to destroy what is here. It is more a case that we are so proud of living in such a beautiful place, that we would like to share it with others who also want to experience nature and the outdoors. We used to be the people that used to holiday out in the countryside, but now we are very lucky to live here that we want to give the opportunity to others.

This is how the idea of Glamping pods came about. Obviously location wise we are near to tourism attractions such as Alton Towers, Churnet Valley Railway, Peak Wildlife Park etc, but our main attraction is Cotton Dell. We have various walks situated right on our doorstep that countrysiders will just be able to come stay in the pods and walk all over with no use of a car. We plan to put walking guides inside each pod with maps so that people are encouraged to explore.

We are very cautious when it comes to using the single farm track access to our property, also known as Cotton Bank. We have only ever used small vehicles for deliveries, and this will be the exact same scenario when it comes to the development of the Glamping site. As such we have already spoken to the Glamping pod manufacturer and agreed that the pods can be split to be carefully delivered to site without causing any damage to the track, and then built on site. Again, just to re-iterate, we live here and hope to do so for many many years, so we do not want to cause any damage to the area.

We would like to highlight that we have done our research and understand that our area falls within the Churnet Valley Masterplan and meets the requirements:

Policy SS 11

Churnet Valley Strategy

The Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The Churnet Valley Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for development in the Churnet Valley and development should be in accordance with the Masterplan. 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.

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.

We also feel we meet the criteria below under 1C and also 2A & 2B:

Policy E 4

Tourism and Cultural Development

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.

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.

2. Developments in other locations may be supported where a rural location can be justified.

New accommodation, attractions and facilities should:

A) support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities; and

B) 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.

As mentioned earlier, we are also very keen to support local businesses and local farms – as per the strategy below:

Policy SS 10

Other Rural Areas Strategy

The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

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 Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

2. Sustain the rural economy by:

- Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified
- Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises
- Supporting the development of appropriate ICT and new means of communications to enable homeworking and small businesses reliant on e-technology;

Our plan is to have guests pre-order what milk, dairy products and meat etc they would like during their stay so that we can go buy this for them from local farms/butchers thus giving back to the local area. We also plan to recommend all the various places to visit nearby such as local pubs, cafes, restaurants – as well as the obvious larger tourism attractions I have already mentioned earlier.

We believe we also fall under the Tourism Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands 2022-2027 below:

“Action Area 4:

Accommodation

Aim – expand, improve and encourage the development of accommodation to attract visitors to stay overnight and keep their spending in the local area rather than losing it to neighbouring regions

Approach – unlock private sector investment with a clear policy environment that encourages suitable accommodation development and improvement in Staffordshire Moorlands

Actions:

Encourage accommodation development in the towns/villages, at existing sites (where services are already in place e.g. Alton Towers, Rudyard Hotel) and to support rural/farm diversification

Ensure planning within the Council is supportive and enabling with access to pre-app advice and clear policies that encourage economic growth

Improve the quality and facilities of existing accommodation including adding to the leisure offer at camping sites and expand the provision of alternative or glamping accommodation

Undertake a hotel and accommodation study to determine future supply needs which can inform planning policy”

I have highlighted above in yellow where our Glamping site would fall within this strategy.

The below is discussed on pages 45 & 46 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Study:

“There are some general principles which should be observed in the development of accommodation:

Specialisation can be a way of broadening the appeal to a wider audience by focusing on the particular requirements of different markets. VisitBritain outlines opportunities for becoming specialised through a number of schemes, for example:

o National Accessible Scheme (NAS)

o Welcome Pets

o Welcome Families

o Welcome Cyclists

o Welcome Walkers

There are a number of opportunities for new product development for camping and caravan sites in particular which relate to the trend of ‘glamping’ and the popularity of alternative camping accommodation such as yurts, pods and tipis.

These are often successfully combined with more traditional types of accommodation such as tented camping, caravanning, self-catering units or B&B.

This broadens the appeal to a range of tastes, generations and budgets and enhanced facilities such as this can help extend the season into autumn and winter.”

I have highlighted above in yellow the parts we believe are relevant to our proposed site. We will be a dog-friendly, family-friendly site aimed at those who love to enjoy the countryside like cyclists and walkers. As you are aware, Glamping is very popular as highlighted in your strategy, and we believe this will fit in well with the area.

It is also worthy of note that our farm is surrounded by Ancient Woodland and Nature Conservation, all which will help attract Countrysiders in line with your Tourism strategy.

As per our plans you will see we have opted for high quality pods, which will each have a large covered decking area so that people can holiday all year round – helping to extend the tourism season into autumn and winter.

Overall I hope you can see how passionate we are about the local area, and how we would like to share it with others – enhancing the tourism within Staffordshire Moorlands.