

PLANNING STATEMENT

**LAND NORTH OF FAIR VIEW
BROWN EDGE**

SEPTEMBER 2026

Site Address:

Land north of Fair View, Ball Lane, Brown Edge, ST6 8SW

Applicant:

Mr. & Mrs. Eardley

Proposal:

Siting of shepherd's hut to provide holiday
accommodation (retrospective)

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 16th September 2026

Job Reference: RDP/2026/045

Report Prepared By:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy has been instructed by Mr. & Mrs. Eardley to seek full planning permission for the siting of a shepherd's hut on land to the north of Fair View, Ball Lane, Brown Edge, to provide holiday accommodation. The application is retrospective.

1.2 The application represents a resubmission following the refusal of application SMD/2026/0297 which had proposed the same development. That application was refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposal is to retain and consolidate inappropriate development in the Green Belt that fails to preserve openness and conflicts with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. There is harm to the Green Belt for these reasons and substantial weight is attributed to that harm. There are no considerations that amount to 'very special circumstances' and clearly outweigh that harm. There is conflict with policy SS10 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.
2. The proposed development that has been carried out and would be consolidated is harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area and the amenity of the countryside. The development forms a prominent intrusion in the countryside that is at odds with its agricultural setting. Furthermore there is no assessment of the potential impact of the development on nearby trees which are protected under TPO ref SM004 A002. There is conflict with policies SS10, NE2, DC1 and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

1.3 The shepherd's hut comprises a simple domed-type structure, with an area of composite decking located in front upon which guests can sit out. The

accommodation comprises of an open plan living area / bedroom with kitchenette and separate shower room.

- 1.4 The shepherd's hut is sited towards the north-easternmost end of the site, and sits behind an existing mature hedgerow to its immediate northeast. To its south and west is a more recently planted hedgerow. The building is orientated with its principal elevation and decking area facing to the west.
- 1.5 The shepherd's hut has a gross internal floor area of 14.9m² and stands to 2.6m in height. The structure is finished in timber with a curved, profiled 'tile effect' sheeting forming its roof. To its front lies an area of decking which currently occupies a footprint of 10.5m². This revised application nevertheless proposes to reduce that area of decking by 50% to reduce the impact of the development.
- 1.6 The extent of the red edge defining the application site has also been substantially reduced in response to the Local Authority's previous concerns, and is now more tightly drawn around the building, rather than encompassing the whole field.
- 1.7 Vehicular access to the site will continue to be taken direct off Fair View via an existing access mid-way along the site's frontage with Ball Lane, which also serves an adjacent agricultural storage building to the northeast. The access track has existed on site since at least 2017.
- 1.8 Parking for one vehicle is to be accommodated on the existing area of hardstanding to the northeast/east of the building where there is also turning space so that vehicles may exit the site in a forward gear.

2 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site is located within the rural area and is designated as part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The site is located on the northern side of Ball Lane a short distance west of its junction with Edgefield Lane (72m) and Willfield Lane (102m).
- 2.2 The landscape in this area slopes gently down from the east towards the west. The northern boundary of the site is enclosed by a band of mature trees that provide a strong degree of visual enclosure to the site. The carriageway of Ball Lane lies to the southeast of the site beyond a mature roadside hedgerow.
- 2.3 Immediately to the east / northeast of the shepherds hut there is a mature hedgerow, beyond which lies a yard area associated with an existing agricultural storage building. The rear gardens of properties along Wilfield Lane lie beyond that.
- 2.4 At its western end the site is enclosed by a pair of semi-detached cottages (Jasmine Cottage and Myrtle Cottage). Further residential development can be found to the south of the site, comprising of the applicant's property of Fair View, and its neighbouring property to the west, Cherry Orchard.
- 2.5 The site is located a short distance from the centre of Brown Edge village, and also benefits from close proximity to a number of local public footpaths that provide connectivity with Brown Edge, Stockton Brook and Endon.
- 2.6 The site is not within a Conservation Area nor are there are any statutorily listed building located in close proximity of the site. The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 (low-probability of flooding).

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2 The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of the application:

3.3 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce

- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment
- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations
- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

3.4 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that 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. This will be achieved via a number of actions, including enhancing tourist opportunities by allowing for small-scale tourism developments. The policy also confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.5 Policy E4 of the Local Plan relates to 'Tourism and Cultural Development' and states 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 SS5 to SS10. In addition it states that:

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.
- 3.6 Policy E4 goes on to state that new accommodation, attractions and facilities should support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities, and that 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
- 3.7 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst other requirements):
 - be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area

- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use

3.8 Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
3. Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds;

4. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;
5. Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.

3.9 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by (amongst other requirements):

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
3. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the green belt, boosting the rural economy, securing high quality design, and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Tourism Strategy (2022-2027)

- 4.2 The adopted Tourism Strategy places an emphasis on raising the profile of the Staffordshire Moorlands so that it becomes a stronger destination as a place for both day visits and longer holidays, improving the current offer and unlocking the District's potential and boosting the local economy. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is referenced within the Planning Assessment.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

- 5.1 The application seeks consent for the retention of a shepherd's hut that has been sited upon the land, and which is to be used to provide holiday accommodation. The site is located within the Green Belt wherein Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as defined by government policy.
- 5.2 Paragraph GB7 of the NPPF confirms that development is to be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt unless it falls within one of a limited number of exceptions. One of those exceptions is the material change of use of land provided that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes (paragraph GB7(f)(iii) refers). This is a materially different test to that which otherwise applied at the time when the previous application was determined (paragraph 154 of the previous version of the NPPF).
- 5.3 The siting of the shepherd's hut upon the land amounts to a material change of use of the land, as the building is not permanently affixed to the ground, rather it is freestanding structure sited upon it (akin to that of a caravan).
- 5.4 The site also benefits from a strong degree of natural screening afforded by the existing roadside hedgerow, the band of mature trees that enclose the site along its northwestern boundary, and the screen of trees to its northeast. There is also enclosure by existing built development in the form of an agricultural building and residential properties to its northeast, and residential properties to its southwest and on the opposite side of the road to its south.

5.5 We contend that the diminutive size of the shepherds hut, which stands to just 2.6m in height, its limited footprint, coupled with the enclosure of the site by built development and its strong degree of natural screening, means the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised and that no significant conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt would therefore arise. The development is also fully reversible such that the landscape can be returned to its former condition when the shepherd's hut is no longer required.

5.6 In determining the previous application on the site the Local Authority concluded the following in respect of impact on openness:

*"The hut, however, appears within the site context of increasing encroachment from **unauthorised development and infrastructure (close boarded fence, laurel hedge, driveways, and hardstanding) on which it relies upon to provide screening, access and parking.** The hut adds to and compounds that encroachment and impact on the openness of the land. Contrary to the applicant's suggestion that the site benefits from a sense of natural enclosure, **site enclosure is actually contrived and manufactured which, on its own, adversely impacts openness and causes encroachment. (our emphasis)***

5.7 The Local Authority is alleging here that the site context arises from unauthorised development, but the facts of the situation are as follows:

- The close boarded fence stands below 2m in height and does not lie adjacent to a highway. It therefore amounts to permitted development and is not unauthorised.

- The planting of a laurel hedge does not amount to development for which planning permission is required. It is therefore not unauthorised.
- The driveway and hardstanding serving the site have existed on site since at least 2017 (see aerial photograph in Figure 1 below) and are associated with the agricultural building to the north that was approved under application SMD/2010/0932. The works to form the driveway and hardstanding have not involved the change of use of the land, and as engineering operations they are long immune from enforcement action, as they would have been subject to the 4 year rule (as was). These works can therefore not be considered to be unauthorised since they are now lawful.

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site 2017



- 5.8 We also wish to highlight that the comment by the Local Authority that the *“site enclosure is actually contrived and manufactured which, on its own, adversely impacts openness and causes encroachment”* relates to the **existing** site characteristics, rather than to any impact arising from the proposed development. The development itself is limited to the siting of the shepherd’s hut and the provision of decking. It is therefore unreasonable to treat those existing features as amounting to harm arising from the proposed development.
- 5.9 The Local Authority expressed concerns in its determination of the previous application that the decking almost doubles the footprint of the development and that the inclusion of the whole field within the red edge of the application site would lead to further encroachment and harm to openness with the introduction of car parking and what they term residential and recreational impedimenta.
- 5.10 In recognition of those concerns this revised application proposes to significantly reduce the extent of decking to the front of the shepherds hut (50%), and has also substantially reduced the red edge of the application site so as to minimise the potential for any harm to openness to arise. Car parking is to be accommodated, as before, on the existing area of hardstanding to the northeast of the site. The proposed reduction in the size of the decking can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 5.11 The revisions to the proposed development, coupled with the diminutive height of the shepherds hut, its limited footprint, and the enclosure of the site by existing vegetation and surrounding built development, leads us to conclude that the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised and that no significant conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt would therefore arise. The proposal consequently amounts to an

appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with policy GB7(f)(iii) of the National Planning Policy Framework, and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

- 5.12 The above notwithstanding, the proposal is also concluded to amount to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt having regard to the provisions for development on so-called 'grey belt' land.
- 5.13 Paragraph GB7(g) of the NPPF makes provision for development which would utilise grey-belt land where it would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan, and provided that there is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed, and that the development would be in a sustainable location.
- 5.14 The land upon which the shepherd's hut has been sited constitutes grey-belt land. Grey Belt land is defined by the glossary to the NPPF as comprising land which is previously developed and / or any other land that does not strongly contribute to the following purposes of the Green Belt as set out in policy GB2(1) of the NPPF:
- Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (GB2(1)(a) refers)
 - Preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another (GB7(1)(b) refers)
 - Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns (GB7(1)(d) refers)

- 5.15 This site does not comprise of previously developed land, but nevertheless still qualifies as grey belt land on account of the land not making a strong contribution to the above purposes of the Green Belt.
- 5.16 In terms of purpose (a), the site comprises a small parcel of land on the northern side of Ball Lane, adjacent to existing built development including Fair View, Keepers Cottage, The Gables and other residential properties. The site is physically constrained by existing development and by the existing roadside hedgerow to its southeast, and mature trees along the northwestern site boundary. It does form part of a wider open countryside landscape. Consequently, the site makes only a limited contribution to preventing unrestricted sprawl.
- 5.17 In terms of purpose (b), the site does not lie within a strategic gap between settlements and its development would have no material effect on the separation of neighbouring towns or large built-up areas. The site therefore makes no meaningful contribution to this purpose.
- 5.18 In terms of purpose (d), the site is not associated with the setting of a historic town, and thus makes no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.
- 5.19 The site consequently qualifies as 'grey belt' land, and owing to the diminutive size of the development, and its enclosure on three sides by built development, will not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the requirements of paragraph GB7(g)(i) of the NPPF. It is noted that in determining the previous application on the site, the Local Authority did not raise any disagreement with this conclusion.
- 5.20 There is furthermore considered to be a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development being proposed. The Local Authority's adopted Tourism

Strategy (2022-2027) provides strong evidence of an unmet need for additional visitor accommodation within Staffordshire Moorlands, with increasing overnight stays being a strategic objective of the District Council.

5.21 The Strategy identifies tourism as a key sector within the District, attracting approximately 5.6 million visitors annually and generating around £335 million in visitor expenditure. Despite this significant visitor economy, the Strategy concludes that the District is underperforming in terms of overnight stays and accommodation provision.

5.22 The Strategy highlights that approximately 90% of visits to Staffordshire Moorlands are day visits, with staying visitors accounting for only around 10% of all visits. However, overnight visitors generate approximately 42% of total visitor expenditure, demonstrating that staying visitors contribute disproportionately to the local economy. The Strategy therefore identifies increasing overnight stays as a key opportunity for economic growth, citing the following as one of its strategic growth priorities (pp.20 refers):

“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”

5.23 The Strategy also identifies a shortage of investment in visitor accommodation as one of the District’s key weaknesses that is constraining tourism growth (pp.7 refers), and that there is a need to provide more variety and choice in visitor accommodation (pp.5 refers). There is consequently considered to be an unmet need for the type of development being proposed.

5.24 The proposed shepherd's hut would directly support the objectives of the Staffordshire Moorlands Tourism Strategy by providing additional small-scale visitor accommodation, and in turn increasing the capacity for overnight visitors and contributing to rural tourism growth. The proposal is therefore held to accord with the requirements of policy GB7(g)(ii) of the NPPF.

5.25 In determining the previous application the Local Authority disagreed with this conclusion, commented in its delegated report that:

"...a strategy or policy objective does not, in itself, demonstrate unmet need for the type of development proposed. The objective establishes that additional tourism activity is considered beneficial to the local economy and desirable in those respects. There is an important distinction to be made between the two positions. The strategy does not provide evidence that existing provision of accommodation is insufficient to meet identified demand. In those regards, there is no substantive evidence demonstrating a quantitative or qualitative shortfall in visitor accommodation, or specifically in glamping pod accommodation, within the area"

5.26 We submit that the delegated report places undue weight on the absence of a quantified assessment demonstrating a numerical shortfall in visitor accommodation, and in doing so gives insufficient weight to the evidence and objectives contained within the SMDC Tourism Strategy.

5.27 The Strategy should not be interpreted merely as establishing that additional tourism activity is beneficial to the local economy. Its identification of the need to support and develop tourism, including the visitor accommodation offer, is evidence of an identified strategic requirement for tourism-related development.

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- 5.28 The absence of a quantified market assessment does not mean that no unmet need exists; rather the Strategy expresses that need in strategic and qualitative terms. We consequently maintain that there is an evidenced unmet need for new tourism accommodation within the Moorlands, and that the proposal is therefore consistent with the requirements of policy GB7(g)(ii) of the NPPF.
- 5.29 The site also occupies a sustainable location that is within easy reach of the surrounding countryside. The Tourism Strategy identifies the district's landscape as one of its principal tourism assets and recognises that visitors are drawn to the area because of its countryside, outdoor recreation opportunities and natural environment.
- 5.30 The importance of the landscape is a recurring theme throughout the Strategy, with the Vision for Tourism stating that "Green and active experiences in an outstanding landscape are evident" (pp.9 refers). The document furthermore highlights walking, hiking and cycling as major visitor activities, noting that after visiting attractions, walking and hiking are the second most common reasons for visiting the district (pp.11 refers).
- 5.31 The Strategy specifically identifies "Landscape and gentle activity (cycling and walking)" as one of Staffordshire Moorlands' principal tourism strengths (pp.7 refers), and that the district has "fantastic natural landscapes for both 'doing' and simply 'being'" (pp.12 refers). The Council's adopted tourism strategy therefore recognises that the landscape itself is a key tourism attraction rather than merely a setting for other attractions.
- 5.32 The Tourism Strategy also acknowledges the reality of travel patterns within the Moorlands, acknowledging that "public transport links are weak". Elsewhere, the Strategy identifies "Public transport – hard to get to and get around" as a significant weakness affecting the visitor economy.
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- 5.33 The Strategy therefore recognises that, whilst improvements to public transport would be desirable, visitors currently access the district predominantly via the road network. This is unsurprising given the rural nature of the area and the dispersed pattern of attractions, villages, countryside destinations and walking and cycling routes.
- 5.34 Given the acknowledged weakness of public transport across the district, the likelihood that many visitors will travel by car is part of the established pattern of tourism within the Moorlands, rather than representing an unusual or site-specific concern.
- 5.35 The key planning consideration should therefore be whether the development provides good access to the District's tourism offer, including its landscape and outdoor experiences, rather than whether visitors can realistically access every attraction by public transport.
- 5.36 The application site sits within the rural landscape and benefits from close proximity to an extensive range of public footpath connections which provide good connectivity with both the surrounding landscape, as well as to the nearby villages of Brown Edge and Stockton Brook. These are shown on the extract of the Definitive Public Footpath Map shown in Figure 3 on pp.26 below.
- 5.37 There is a public house, chip shop and convenience store located in Brown Edge, with two restaurants in Stockton Brook (Ego & Greenway Hall Golf Club). Those facilities are accessible on foot via the public footpath network, and by cycling. Even if such journeys were to be made by car, the close proximity of the site to those facilities means the journeys made would be very short in duration.

5.38 We also note in this regard that in determining the previous application on the site, the Local Authority did not raise any concerns that the site amounted to an unsustainable location. The site is consequently concluded to occupy a sustainable location in accordance with policy GB7(g)(iii) of the NPPF.

5.39 The so-called 'Golden Rules' are not applicable as this is not a major development, and thus no conflict with policy GB7(g)(iv) of the NPPF will ensue.

5.40 The proposed development is therefore concluded to amount to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with policy GB7(g) of the National Planning Policy Framework, and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

Design & Layout

5.41 The second reason for refusal of the previous application raised concerns that the development that has been carried out is harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area and the amenity of the countryside. It adds that the development forms a prominent intrusion in the countryside that is at odds with its agricultural setting, and that there has been no assessment about the potential impact of the development upon nearby protected trees.

5.42 The delegated report commented that:

"The introduction of the hut, itself, and the prospect of the residential and recreational use of the agricultural land, further compounds the creeping domestication of the land and its change in character from a small roadside field, available for grazing or a small amount of haylage, to something more akin to a suburban or residential garden. The introduction of a sweeping driveway,

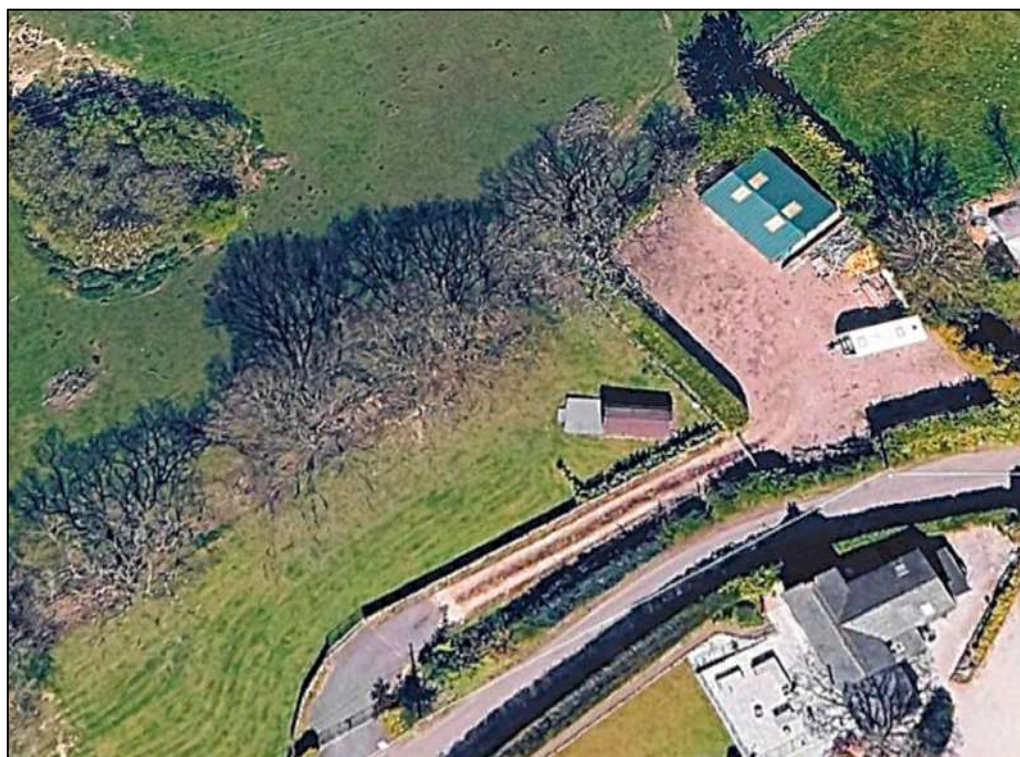
close boarded fencing, and laurel planting – a precursor to, and facilitating, the proposed development has had adverse effects on the rural agrarian character and appearance of the land. The field itself is now, apparently, mowed and maintained as lawn”

- 5.43 As discussed within preceding paragraphs, the Local Authority is unreasonably attributing and treating the effects of the existing site features as constituting harm arising from the development proposal. Neither the driveway, which has existed on site since 2017, nor the close board fencing or the laurel hedge form part of the submitted proposal. It is consequently unreasonable to attribute the alleged impact of such features to the development itself.
- 5.44 The proposed shepherd’s hut is a small, diminutive structure, standing to just 2.6 metres in height. It is also finished in a muted palette of materials that assimilates positively with the roadside hedgerow and the band of mature trees along the northwest site boundary.
- 5.45 The design and appearance of the development is typical of this type of product, and owing to its siting and the presence of the existing roadside hedgerow, it is afforded a strong degree of natural screening such that it does not have any significant material adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.
- 5.46 Furthermore, as discussed in preceding paragraphs, the applicant has also substantially reduced the extent of the application site as defined by the red edge, and also proposes to reduce the proposed decking by 50%. In doing so the impacts identified by the Local Authority in their determination of the previous application will be significantly reduced.
- 5.47 In terms of the impact of the development on existing trees we wish to highlight that the shepherds hut is placed upon the land, and has not

necessitated the undertaking of any excavations within close proximity of the existing trees.

- 5.48 The aerial photograph in Figure 2 below demonstrates that the building sits a considerable distance away from those existing trees, and even if there were incursion into the root protection area, the placing of the shepherds hut upon the land will not have caused any harm to their root system as not excavations have been required.

Figure 2 – Aerial Photograph of Site



- 5.49 The proposed development is consequently held to be of an appropriate design and layout that does not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area or give rise to harm to existing trees. The proposal is therefore in accordance with policies SS1, SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Tourism Benefits

5.50 The application site forms part of the rural area, wherein policies SS10 and E4 of the Local Plan give support to small-scale tourism developments, with the latter policy stating that new tourist and visitor accommodation should be developed in locations that offer *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.

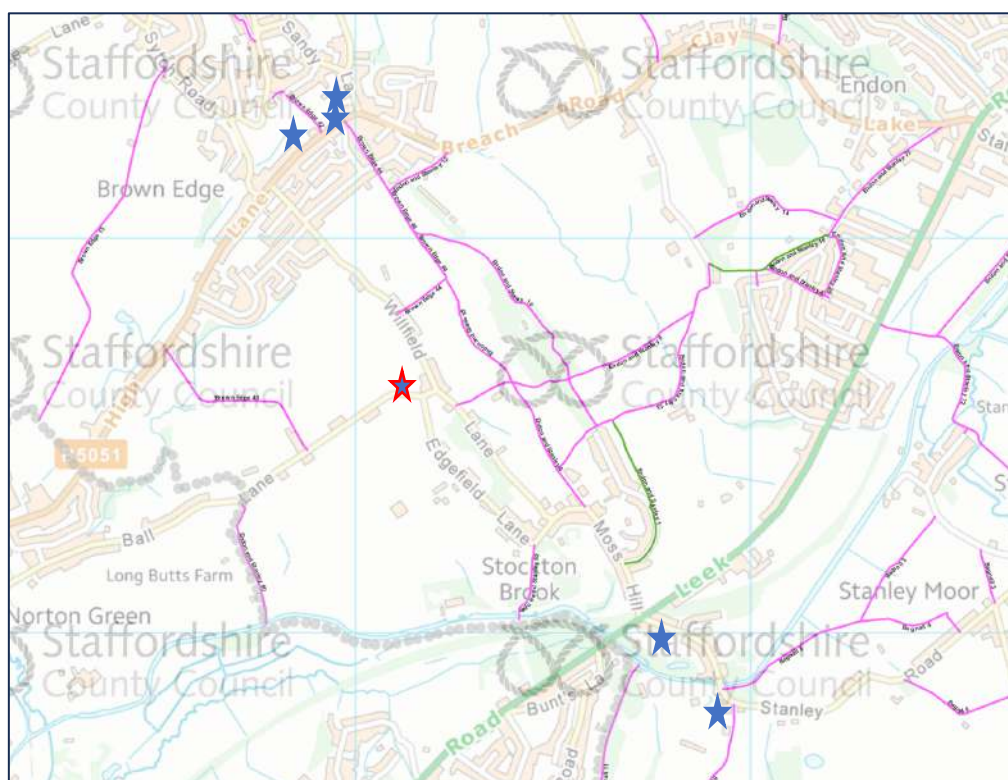
5.51 As discussed in the preceding section, the site benefits from close proximity to one of the main attractions of the Staffordshire Moorlands, that being its rural landscape. The site lies in close proximity to an extensive range of public footpath connections which are shown in pink on the extract of the Definitive Public Footpath Map shown in Figure 3 overleaf. The location of the site is denoted by the red star, with the nearby pubs / restaurants with blue stars.

5.52 The provisions of the Local Authority's adopted Tourism Strategy are of direct relevance to this proposal. As discussed with the preceding section, facilitating more overnight stays is a stated key objective of the Tourism Strategy, which identifies a lack of accommodation investment and a dominance of day visitors as being a weaknesses of the tourism economy in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

5.53 The Tourism Strategy goes on to set out a series of aims and objectives aimed at growing the tourism economy, including the following:

- Get visitors to stay longer in the area by developing itineraries that combine Alton Towers with other experiences especially 'Activities' and 'Attractions', moving from a day visit to an overnight, or a 1 night to a 2 night visit.
- Encourage accommodation development – small scale, quality, catered & self-catered that keeps visitors in the local area.
- 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.

Figure 3 – Public Footpath / Bridleway Map (Source: Staffs County Council)



5.54 The submitted proposal firmly accords with these aims and objectives, and will provide one small-scale unit of self-catered accommodation that will facilitate

additional overnight stays within the District. In doing so the development will make a positive contribution to boosting the local tourism economy within the Moorlands, in accordance with the objectives of the Tourism Strategy.

- 5.55 The provisions of policy E4 of the National Planning Policy Framework also weigh in favour of planning permission being granted. It states that the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas should be supported, including facilities to support rural leisure and tourism.
- 5.56 The proposal will provide a sustainable form of tourism accommodation that is located within the rural landscape, which in itself constitutes one of the main attractions of the Moorlands, and which has access to the extensive public footpath network and local facilities as discussed above.
- 5.57 The applicant is furthermore agreeable to providing space within the site for the secure storage of bicycles so as encourage exploration of the surrounding area by such means. The provisions of policy E4 therefore weigh in favour of planning permission being granted.
- 5.58 Having regard to the above considerations it is submitted that the proposed development is in accordance with the requirements of policies SS10 and E4 of the Local Plan as well as meeting the objectives of policy E4 of the NPPF and the provisions of the adopted Tourism Strategy.

Highway Safety

- 5.59 The site benefits from an existing means of vehicular access off Ball Lane which also serves the adjacent agricultural building and yard area to its northeast. The access affords reasonably good visibility in both directions on egress, with scope existing to improve this further if so required.

- 5.60 Within the site space is provided on the existing area of hardstanding to the northeast for vehicles to park, with turning space also available such that cars may leave the site in a forward gear. The development will therefore not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety within the locality, and meets the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in that it entails the change of use of land that will does not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- The proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in that entails a suitable type of development on grey-belt site land.
- The revised proposal does not derive any material adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- The proposal constitutes an appropriate form of tourism development that will help to facilitate more overnight stays within the District.
- The proposal does not result in any severe residual impacts to highway safety and provides sufficient off street parking.
- The proposal will deliver a net gain to biodiversity despite being exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

6.2 The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, E4, DC1, and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. It also accords with the objectives of the adopted Tourism Strategy.