

DATE: 10th February 2014

Dear Mr Embrey

Support for Higher Overton Farm Log Cabin Development

Cheshire East is well positioned to access markets from other parts of Cheshire and surrounding areas, with the highest proportion of visitors being day visitors. Whilst Day visitors are welcome, overnight visitors spend more per head, putting more money into the local economy. They also create more job opportunities in the area, meaning Cheshire East Council's aim is to get our visitors to stay longer. It means giving reasons for day visitors to dwell longer or stay on into the evening and overnight, and encouraging conference delegates to stay longer or to return to enjoy Cheshire at their leisure.

Working with Marketing Cheshire, the sub-regional place marketing board, Cheshire East is promoting the region as a short breaks destination as well as a location for business tourism. This will be promoted through a series of thematic brands including Cheshire Market Towns and Cheshire's Peak District. This means attracting more high-spending 'Cosmopolitans', and to meet their high standards and expectations, we need to improve the quality and choice of accommodation, including the 4 and 5 star accommodation offer; one of which is the proposed Alchemy Homes Log Cabins.

Within Cheshire East Council's Visitor Economy Strategy, there is a strong focus on quality accommodation through supporting the development of tourism infrastructure, an improved environment and a focus on customer service to ensure a quality visitor experience. Also through encouraging and facilitating business sector development in areas such as accommodation, skills training and visitor welcome. There is a requirement to increase jobs directly related to the visitor economy and a key priority set out within the Cheshire East Council Visitor Economy Strategy is to 'Encourage investment in quality tourism product and services in Cheshire East to the benefit of jobs and economic growth'

The applicant is looking to develop the accommodation in line with the stated objectives of Cheshire East's visitor Economy Strategy. The accommodation is proposed to be of a high standard and the log cabins will be very attractive to visitors from outside of the area. There is also potential for local traders in and around the development to benefit directly and in-directly. Finally it is a stated aim of turning day visitors into overnight visitors; this will increase the value of the visitor economy of Cheshire East.

Congleton is based within the Cheshire East Visitor Economy brand of 'Cheshire's Peak District'. This means the area is actively promoted as a visitor destination in its own right. This brand promotes an area of Cheshire's peaks and plains, including part of the Peak District National Park, from the moorlands of Biddulph in the South to Lyme Park and Disley in the North. It promotes it as an area with historic houses, gardens, cultural attractions, world-class events and market towns. With regard to accommodation it seeks to highlight a range of accommodation types on offer, their quality and their style.

In the context of Marketing Cheshire's strategic vision for the sub-region there are a number of relevant points to note including:

- Identification of the need to improve the quality of the destination product offering in terms of accommodation and experiences.
- The key target markets in terms of profile, behavior and spend for rural Cheshire include 'independent' market segments – especially traditionalists and cosmopolitans.
- Be fully established as a quality, short-break destination.

Relevant Cheshire East Tourism Statistics

- Cheshire East STEAM figures for 2012 (latest figures available) show that the proportion of staying visitors is increasing; highlighting a strong case for additional high quality accommodation.
- Marketing Cheshire records show known bed stock in Cheshire East is almost 11,000 beds less than in Cheshire West.
- Of all recorded accommodation within Cheshire East, less than 1% is rated at 5 Star and only 21% is rated at 4 Star.
- The annual STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) analysis of the area's visitor economy shows that in 2012 Cheshire East's tourism industry grew by 9% by comparison with the previous year and is now worth £689 million.
- Last year, visitors to Cheshire East spent over £69 million on accommodation, over £24 million on things to see and do, £206 million on shopping, and £112 million on food and drink with the self-catering sector in rural areas also showing significant growth.
- The tourism industry in Cheshire East now employs 9849 (FTE) people directly and indirectly, up 10.5% on the previous year,
- The area attracted well over 13 million visitors in 2012, a 9.4% increase on 2011.

Holiday lets are perceived to be positive in attracting direct tourist spending to an area for a longer period of the year. Clearly the longer someone spends in the area will contribute more to local businesses and helping to sustain local services such as Post Offices

There is also a section in the Destination Management Plan for Marketing Cheshire that states that one of their actions will be to 'Assess the potential to develop the self-catering offer in Cheshire & Warrington, the most rapidly expanding form of visitor accommodation across the UK'.

Yours sincerely

Richard Milkins
Visitor Economy Development Manager
Cheshire East Council