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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

**Devil's Elbow Outdoor Adventure Centre
Whalley Road, Read**

PLANNING STATEMENT

Ribble Valley Leisure Ltd

June 2012

De Pol Associates Ltd
44 Garstang Road, Preston PR1 1NA

Planning Statement

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Chapter 1

Introduction

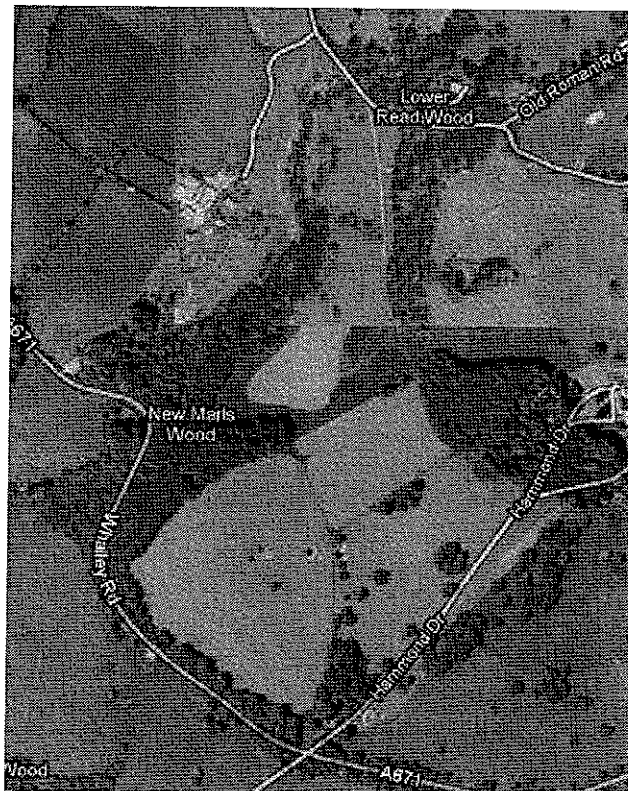
- 1.1. De Pol Associates Ltd is retained by Ribble Valley Leisure Ltd to progress a planning application for the development of an outdoor adventure centre on land located on the outskirts of the settlement of Read, which lies midway between Whalley and Padiham within the Ribble Valley.
- 1.2. This statement provides a description of the proposed development together with an appraisal of the planning merits of the scheme in the context of relevant planning policies / guidance and other material considerations. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying application documents and plans. These include:
- Application Form
 - Architectural / Drawn Information
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Ecological Impact Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - Landscape Proposals
 - Transport Statement and Travel Plan
 - Tree Survey, AIA and Method Statement
 - Utilities Statement
- 1.3. For reasons identified in this statement it is considered that based on planning policy and the material considerations identified in this statement, the application proposals represent appropriate development and that planning permission ought therefore to be granted.

Chapter 2

Site Description

Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The application site is approximately 7.5ha of woodland and rural meadow, located north of the A671 (Whalley Rd) which links Whalley to Padiham, with good motorway links via the A59 and the M65. It is located to the south east of Whalley, to the south west of Sabden, to the west of Simonstone / Padiham and to the north of Great Harwood and Clayton-le-Moors. Bounding the application site to the north is Old Roman Rd, Brocklehurst Wood and Lower Read Wood. To the east / south east of the application site is Hammond Dr, to the south and west is the A671, agricultural land and woodland.
- 2.2. Photograph 1 (below) is an aerial photograph of the site and surroundings.



Photograph 1 – showing the application site

Chapter 3

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Background & Application Proposals

- 3.1. In 2011 discussions began between the owner of a significant part of the former Read Hall Estate and a development company with particular experience and interest in the leisure market. This followed the identification of the site at Read as providing an ideal opportunity to provide a multi-facility outdoor adventure centre. The attraction of the natural woodland assets, including a deep natural ravine and the location within the southern part of the Ribble Valley, yet with very good transport connections and proximity to significant areas of population, gave the site considerable advantages over other alternatives.
- 3.2. Following detailed consideration of the opportunity by experienced leisure and tourism consultants, Ribble Valley Leisure Ltd was formed, specifically to bring forward the development of the site. The landowner has a share in the business and has nominated a Director and hence it is a joint venture with the development company.
- 3.3. The leisure consultant's report made references to a number of outdoor and associated activities which might provide realistic opportunities for development at the Read site. Much of this advice has been followed and forms the basis of the planning application. This includes the core outdoor activities and associated uses, with some of the more peripheral activities not being included in this planning application.
- 3.4. Accordingly the planning application proposes the development of an outdoor adventure centre to include (i) treetop aerial adventure course; (ii) Segway courses; (iii) barefoot trails; (iv) children's adventure play / trail; (v) education / interpretation trails as well as the erection of a multi-purpose facilities building and the construction of a new access and parking areas. The adventure centre will offer woodland activities for the local community, regional visitors, local schools and for those holidaying in the Ribble Valley area.
- 3.5. The application site comprises three distinct parts; (i) the open meadow land predominantly to the south of the site, which will accommodate the facilities building and the car parking areas; (ii) the woodland areas to the southern part of the site which, in ecological terms, can accommodate the various activities proposed; (iii) the woodland to the north of the site which is of higher ecological value and hence where access and uses will be very limited and strictly controlled. These three areas are shown clearly on the site layout plan 11/26 PL01.

Built Development

- 3.6. The proposed built development will comprise of the facilities building, together with the car parking and associated access roads. All of this development will be located to the south west of the application site adjacent to Whalley Road (A671). This area of land represents the lowest part of the site and is screened by the topography of the surrounding land and the substantial screen of trees to Whalley Road.
- 3.7. The building is of traditional agricultural style and will provide café facilities, a ticket office and a customer service area (combined), a kitchen, WCs, a covered walkway, terrace and an ancillary sales area. The combined floor area is 653m² which includes the covered (but open sided) space which will be used as a walkway and picnic area. The floorspace of the actual enclosed parts of the building amount to 430m², as referenced within the accompanying Design and Access Statement, which also includes further details of the proposed built development.

Tree Top Activities

- 3.8. The central woodland area will be used to provide outdoor activities. The tree top activities will involve high wire walkways, zip-lines and other challenging / balance activities set within the canopy of the trees. Participants are provided with a full safety harness and will be briefed on how to progress along the course in a safe manner. Traditionally the facility will comprise of a number of 'stations', each with a protected entry area, which allows participants to climb from ground level up to the level of the activities. Participants will undertake a number of challenging movements from tree to tree following high wires and walkways before eventually returning to ground level, often via a zip line or other means. Drg no. 11.26 PL 01 gives an indicative layout of the area proposed for tree top activities but does not at this stage provided precise details of the extent and position of tree top activities, the trees to be used to host the activities and any other ancillary development, such as stockade fencing to ensure access control to the climbing areas. It is anticipated that this level of detailed information will be controlled by planning condition requiring further detailed submissions to Ribble Valley Borough Council prior to any works on this element.

Segway

- 3.9. The Segway is a two-wheeled self-balancing, battery-powered electric vehicle. Computers and motors in the base of the device keep the Segway upright when powered on with balancing enabled. A user commands the Segway to go forward by shifting their weight forward on the platform, and backward by shifting their weight backward. The Segway notices, as it balances, the change in its centre of mass, and first establishes and then maintains a corresponding speed, forward or backward. Gyroscopic sensors and fluid-based levelling sensors are used to detect the shift of weight. To turn, the user manipulates a control on the handlebar left or right. Segways generate no noise and create no pollution.

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- 3.10. Traditionally Segways have been driven on tarmac pavements or other level surfaces, however more recent improvements in the technology have enabled Segways to negotiate rougher terrain, thereby allowing them to be used as an exciting outdoor activity particularly in woodland areas. Course specifically designed for Segways set within woodland and rural environments enable users to enjoy the outdoors whilst partaking in an exciting and challenging activity.
- 3.11. The application proposes two Segway courses within the south / central woodland area, one of which will be a beginners / novice course and the other a more challenging course for more experienced riders. The accompanying Design and Access Statement provides further details. Drg no. 11.26 PL 01 gives an indicative position of the Segway courses.
- 3.12. As with the tree top activities it is anticipated that further detailed information will be provided to indicate the precise location and construction of the Segway courses and that this will be controlled by planning condition.

Barefoot Trails / Adventure Park / Trails

- 3.13. The barefoot trails located in the south woodland area will provide various textured surfaces along a path which participants will walk along barefoot. The barefoot walk promotes wellness and is also a fun outdoor activity which all members of the family as well as those with disabilities can participate. The design and access statement provides some further details. The adventure park / trail will comprise a themed trail within the woodland area and offering children and families the opportunity to explore and discover the natural beauty of the area through the use of carefully positioned facilities, e.g. rope swings, wooden bridges etc. which add interesting and fun challenges to the facility. Drg no. 11.26 PL 01 again provides an indicative position of the barefoot trail and adventure park / trail areas, however precise details of the facilities and their position within the site will be submitted at a later stage under the terms of an appropriate planning condition.

Education / Interpretation Trails

- 3.14. The education and interpretation trails will be located within the northern woodland area which is of greater ecological value (semi natural ancient woodland and wetland). It is anticipated that access to these areas will be strictly controlled and will be limited so as to avoid any impact on the biodiversity of the area. Drg no 11.26 PL 01 shows an indicative location of the proposed education and interpretation trails, however full details will be provided under the terms of an appropriate planning condition.

Site Access / Car Parking

- 3.15. A new site access will be provided from the A671, together with car parking for up to 50 cars and 5 coach parking spaces. Full details of this element of the proposal is provided within the application submissions, including detailed drawn information, the design and access statement together with a transport statement which describes the access proposals, together with parking and associated details.

Employment

- 3.16. The business plan for the development envisages that initially there will be four full time staff with one site manager (a total of five full-time jobs), although additional casual and temporary staff will be used as necessary.

Hours of Operation

- 3.17. It is proposed that the facilities will operate from 0900 hours until dusk. No activities will take place outside of daylight hours as there will be no floodlighting or other lighting other than that required from a health and safety perspective.

Visitor Numbers

- 3.18. The business plan for the development assumes annual visitor levels when fully established as follows :-

<i>Children's adventure play / trail</i>	<i>70,000</i>
<i>Tree-top adventure</i>	<i>20,000</i>
<i>Segway courses</i>	<i>15,000</i>
<i>Barefoot trail</i>	<i>40,000</i>
 <i>Total number of visitors</i>	 <i>80,000</i>

A significant proportion of visitors will partake in more than one activity hence the total number of visitors does not equate to the aggregate of all the individual elements. Initially the numbers will be lower until there is a greater awareness and exposure of the site and until such time as all the facilities are constructed and operational.

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Chapter 4

Planning Policy Assessment

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This statement considers the application proposals against the relevant policies of the Ribble Valley District-wide Local Plan saved policies and the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at Section 3, paragraph 28 that :-

“Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.”

It also states that local and neighbourhood plans should,

“support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.”

- 4.3. At paragraph 32, in Section 4, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport' it states that plans and decisions should take accounts of whether :-

“the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people”

- 4.4. At paragraph 57, Section 7, 'Requiring Good Design' states that :-

“It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.” Decisions should aim to ensure that developments, ***“respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation,”*** and are, ***“visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”***

- 4.5. Section 11, 'Conserving the natural environment' states that :-
"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by; protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils; recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services and minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures."
- 4.6. The proposed outdoor adventure centre is considered to respond positively to the guidance in the NPPF and can draw a considerable degree of support from the document. In particular the proposals will create new rural employment and will greatly enhance the tourism facilities in the locality without jeopardising the visual appearance or biodiversity of the application site. It has been evidenced within the accompanying transport statement that there are potential pedestrian and cycle linkages and public transport services which ensure that the development is as accessible as practical given its rural location. The design of the proposed built development has been carefully and thoughtfully conceived and is entirely appropriate and sympathetic to its rural location. The accompanying Design and Access Statement, details the careful process which has taken place to ensure that the proposed building complements its countryside setting. As highlighted within the ecological impact assessment and tree survey, the proposed development seeks to protect and enhance the environment whilst minimising the negative impacts on biodiversity, given the application sites location within the County Biological Heritage Site (BHS).
- 4.7. The proposed development is therefore considered to comply fully with guidance contained within National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan

- 4.8. The application site is designated as open countryside (Policy ENV3), land outside main settlement / village boundaries (Policy G5) and part of the site is a County Biological Heritage Site (BHS) (Policy ENV9). Other relevant policies include Policy G1, Policy ENV13 and Policy RT1. Each of these policies are addressed below, beginning with the general development policies:-

Policy G1 'All Development'

- 4.9. Policy G1 states that, *"All development proposals will be expected to provide a high standard of building design and landscape quality. Development which does so will be*

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permitted, unless it adversely affects the amenities of the surrounding area. Each of the relevant criteria of Policy G1 which are used to determine planning applications are addressed below:-

- 4.10. ***(a) Development should be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature.*** The proposed development makes effective use of an area of woodland, which is presently largely unused. Those smaller areas of meadow which are to be enclosed and used as part of the development can be readily separated from the remaining agricultural land, whilst ensuring that the undeveloped land can continue to be used for agriculture.
- 4.11. The nature of the uses being proposed is such that they can be accommodated within open land and woodland and without any irreversible impact or damage to the environment. The extent of built development and other developed parts of the site is relatively modest and has been carefully designed to be readily subsumed into the landscape setting. The proposed building has been carefully designed such that it reflects typical farm buildings, which are dominant within the landscape of this area; in terms of scale, mass and style the building will at distance resemble traditional pitched roof portal frame farm buildings, yet at close hand the quality and function of the building become apparent.
- 4.12. ***(b) The likely scale and type of traffic generation will be assessed in relationship to the highway infrastructure and the proposed and existing public transport network. This will include safety, operational efficiency, amenity and environmental considerations.*** The accompanying Transport Statement has confirmed that the existing transport network can accommodate the traffic generated from the proposed development in a safe and acceptable manner and that access to the site can be provided safely. Please refer to the Transport Statement for details of safety, operational efficiency, amenity and associated environmental considerations.
- 4.13. ***(c) Developments should make adequate arrangements for car parking (see Policy T7).*** The level of parking demand has been assessed within the transport statement and based on estimated visitor numbers and the parking provision has been fixed accordingly. To this end 50 no. car parking spaces, 5 no. bus / coach parking and bicycle / motorcycle parking has been provided within the proposed development. Of this number there is provision for 8 disabled spaces. Please see drg no. 11.26.PL 02 for the proposed car parking layout.
- 4.14. ***(d) A safe access should be provided which is suitable to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated.***

A new, safe access has been provided to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated from the proposed development. Please refer to drg no. 11.26 PL 02 and the Transport Statement.

- 4.15. ***(e) The density, layout and relationship between buildings is of major importance. Particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings as well as the effects of development on existing amenities.***

A single building is proposed and this is remote from other built development such that there is no interrelationship between buildings. For reasons set out previously and within the design and access statement, the design of the building will help to ensure that the development has minimal effect on its rural location and the visual appearance of the locality. The layout of the building is such that it can serve as a multi-function facility thereby avoiding the need for a multitude of other small buildings across the site

- 4.16. ***(f) Developments should provide adequate arrangements for servicing and public utilities.*** Please refer to the accompanying Utilities Statement, which confirms the availability of mains electricity. Water is likely to be provided from a private supply and drainage will be to a private facility.

- 4.17. ***(h) Materials used should be sympathetic to the character of the area.*** The materials chosen for the proposed building comprise a stone base with timber above, similar to an agricultural building, profile metal sheet roof with exposed steel work and with aluminium framed windows and doors. Such materials are considered to be entirely sympathetic to the vernacular and this is discussed in more detail within the design and access statement.

- 4.18. ***(j) Developments should not damage SSSI's, County Heritage Sites, Local Nature Reserves or other sites of nature conservation importance.*** The application site is located within a County Biological Heritage Site (BHS), however the proposed development seeks to enhance and preserve the BHS. Please refer to the Ecological Impact Assessment for details of the anticipated impact of the development on the BHS and biodiversity issues more generally.

- 4.19. ***(l) Developments should be economic in the use of land, water and aggregates and should not prejudice future development which would provide significant environmental and amenity improvements.*** The proposed development is conceived to work with the natural landscape features and the natural environment and will, so far as possible, be a sustainable development which minimises the use or loss of natural resources.

- 4.20. ***(m) Where it is the intention to rely upon a private water supply, developments should provide an adequate means of water supply, which will not derogate existing users.*** It is

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anticipated that an independent spring or borehole supply will be required. It is most unlikely that the level of abstraction will derogate existing users. Please see the Utilities Statement.

- 4.21. It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with relevant criteria of Policy G1 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan.

Policy G5 'Outside main settlements'

- 4.22. *Outside the main settlement boundaries and the village boundaries planning consent will only be granted for small-scale developments which are:*

- i) essential to the local economy or the social well being of the area; or*
- ii) needed for the purposes of agriculture or forestry; or*
- iii) sites developed for local needs housing (subject to Policy H20 of this plan);*
- iv) small scale tourism developments and small scale recreational developments appropriate to a rural area subject to Policy RT1; or*
- v) other small-scale uses appropriate to a rural area which conform to the policies of this plan.*

- 4.23. The proposed development is a small scale tourism / recreational development which, by virtue of the nature of its activities, requires a specific rural location. By their very nature the tree-top adventures and other associated activities require a reasonable area of woodland to operate. The natural attributes of the application site (wooded ravine) make it particularly well suited to the nature of the use, yet it is not in a remote and isolated location, being well related to the settlement of Read. It is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy G5, in particular criterion (iv) and qualifies as an exception to the normal policies of restraint in rural areas.

Policy ENV3 'Open Countryside'

- 4.24. *In the open countryside outside the AONB and areas immediately adjacent to it, development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape area and should reflect local vernacular, scale, style, features and building materials. Proposals to conserve, renew and enhance landscape features, will be permitted, providing regard has been given for the characteristic landscape features of the area.*

- 4.25. As previously discussed, and for the reasons expressed within the design and access statement it is considered that the proposed development will be of a scale and style appropriate to the locality.

Policy ENV9 'County Biological Heritage Site'

- 4.26. *Development proposals within or adjacent to a County Biological Heritage Site or other site of local nature conservation importance identified on the proposals map will be permitted, provided the development would not significantly harm the features of interest which led to the identification of the site or other material factors outweigh the conservation interests of the site.*
- 4.27. As is evidenced within the Ecological Impact Assessment, the proposed development will not significantly harm the features of interest within the County Biological Heritage Site. The scheme is devised to avoid any development of the most ecologically sensitive areas of land, instead all of the built development and the activities are located on the land which is of low ecological value. Access to the more sensitive areas of the site will be limited and will be strictly controlled. Inclusion of parts of the BHS within the application site means that there is the opportunity to safeguard the BHS from any potential damage through agriculture or unauthorised access. It is considered that the scheme does not conflict with this policy.

Policy ENV13 'Landscape Protection'

- 4.28. *The Borough Council will refuse development proposals which harm important landscape features including traditional stone walls, ponds, characteristic herb rich meadows and pastures, woodlands, copses, hedgerows and individual trees other than in exceptional circumstances where satisfactory works of mitigation or enhancement would be achieved, including rebuilding, replanting and landscape management.*
- 4.29. The proposed development will not harm any important landscape features and where possible will result in improvements to traditional landscape features. As part of the development, two trees are to be removed close to the proposed site access, due to major defects of cavities and multiple branch failures. As part of the development a number of new trees will be planted in accordance with the landscape scheme which is submitted with the application. The intention is that the planting proposals will help to assimilate the building and the car parking areas into the landscape and indeed will help to create the feeling that the building lies within and is part of the woodland.

Policy RT1 'Tourism and Visitor Facilities'

- 4.30. *The Borough Council will approve development proposals which extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the Borough. This is subject to the following criteria being met:*
- (i) the proposal must not conflict with other policies of this plan;*
 - (ii) the proposal must be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village or to an existing group of buildings;*

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- (iii) the development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design;*
- (iv) the proposal should be well related to the existing highway network. It should not generate additional traffic movements of a scale and type likely to cause undue problems or disturbance. Where possible the proposals should be well related to the public transport network;*
- (v) the site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas.*

- 4.31. The proposed development is considered not to conflict with other policies of the plan. The application site is physically well related to the existing settlement of Read and is not an isolated and remote location. As has previously been outlined, the development is of an appropriate type and scale for the location and the building complement its rural / countryside location. The proposed development is well related to the existing highway network, including public transport networks, and will not generate significant additional traffic movements which are likely to cause undue problems or disturbance. The site is large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas. Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development can draw significant support from Policy RT1, which promotes and supports this type of rural tourist and visitor attraction.

Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 Consultation Draft

- 4.32. This recently published document has just undergone a public consultation exercise which ended in mid-June 2012. At this stage the document has only very limited weight, however there are a draft policies which offer support for the type of development proposed in the application, in particular :-

Key Statement EC3 : Visitor Economy - Proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged, including the creation of new accommodation and tourism facilities through the conversion of existing buildings or associated with existing attractions. Significant new attractions will be supported, in circumstances where they would deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to local communities and employment opportunities ...

Key Statement DMB3 : Recreation and Tourism Development – Planning Permission will be granted for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the Borough ...

- 4.33. Taking into account all of the above, it is clear that there is a significant degree of support provided by the development plan for this type of tourist / visitor attraction. Such a development

helps to strengthen the rural economy, provides local employment and will attract increased numbers of visitors to the Ribble Valley, who in turn will spend money locally on other services, including accommodation. The proposals have been properly and thoughtfully conceived to ensure that the development is also compliant with detailed development plan policy requirements and such that there are no issues which ought to preclude the grant of planning permission.

Community Consultation

- 4.34. A public consultation event was held on 29th March 2012 at the United Reform Church, East View, Read (3pm – 7pm). This event showcased the initial plans for the Outdoor Activity Centre and sought to alert members of the public to the proposed development and to seek their opinions and views. The public were able to talk about the proposals with the development team including the architect, planning consultant and other professionals involved in the scheme. Following this event, further questions from the Read Parish Council about the proposed development have been addressed. Please refer to the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement which highlights the methods of public consultation including correspondence with local ward councillors and local residents, formal public consultation at The United Reform Church, Read and correspondence with the Parish Council.

Other Development Management Issues

- 4.35. **Ecology** : The Ecological Impact Assessment concluded that overall, providing mitigation and habitat compensation proposals are implemented as recommended, there will be no residual negative ecological impact resulting from proposals to develop the site in question.
- 4.36. **Tree Survey and AIA** : The tree survey provides recommendations regarding the health and safety of trees, the impact the proposed development will have on the trees and recommends tree protection measures during construction (method statement).
- 4.37. **Transport Statement** : The transport statement suggests that the proposal accords with local and national policy. The proposed site access accords with good practice and the network has no capacity issues. As such it is considered that the proposed outdoor adventure centre will have little or no impact on the local network.
- 4.38. **Flood Risk Assessment** : Given the lack of apparent risk the assessment concludes that it is not necessary to provide any flood risk avoidance measures.
- 4.39. **Utilities Statement** : The utilities statement provides information regarding water, public sewers and electricity. The statement suggests an independent borehole or spring supply may be required, as well as a septic tank or biodisc, but that electricity supply is available to the site.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

- 5.1. The application proposes the development of an outdoor adventure centre, comprising of a variety of outdoor activities, ranging from simple nature trails through to tree-top extreme activities, which can be enjoyed by families and other groups including school groups. The development is able to take full advantage of the natural resources which the application site provides, including woodland areas and wooded ravine, woodland edge and meadow grassland, all set within an area whose topography protects from distant views.
- 5.2. The proposed development will take advantage of the good quality road access, access to the motorway network and proximity to significant population centres. It will also be accessible to local residents given its position on a bus route and within walking and cycling distance of a number of villages. The creation of the adventure centre will be a significant benefit to the local economy, generating new employment opportunities and more particularly encouraging new visitors to the area, who in turn will spend money with other local shops and businesses.
- 5.3. The facility is not presently replicated by any similar facility within this part of the region and the benefit of the multi-activity centre is that it can offer activities for all members of the community including families, groups as well as disabled and elderly. It will promote healthy outdoor activities and it is hoped will prove to be an asset to the local area.
- 5.4. The scheme has been shown to be in general compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the current Development Plan for Ribble Valley Borough Council and the emerging Core Strategy. Moreover the supporting documentation demonstrates that the proposed outdoor adventure centre can be created without harm to any interests of acknowledged importance. In particular the scheme will maintain and enhance those parts of the site which fall within the County Biological Heritage Site and there will be no residual impact on protected species or biodiversity generally. Access to and from the site can be provided in a safe and convenient manner and the junction arrangements and levels of parking are considered to be entirely appropriate to the scale of development proposed.
- 5.5. Accordingly the application proposals represent appropriate development for which planning permission ought to be granted and the application is therefore commended to the Council.

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Sagar Heys Outdoor Activity Centre, Read

Pre-Planning Consultation Summary

In order to start the public consultation we initially approached the local ward councillors and residents directly located around the site. We showed preliminary site layouts and an over view of our ideas.

Once we had progressed the scheme to the one submitted in this application we then did a more formal consultation. 1,000 leaflets were distributed to the houses in Read and some were also left in local shops. The initial pre-planning consultation took place on the 29th March at The United Reform Church, Read.

Residents were able to come to the consultation between 3pm-7pm and approximately 85 people attended. Available to view were images of the proposed scheme along with site plans and a list of the core activities planned. In attendance from the development team were the architect, planning consultant, site owners and support staff.

The overriding feedback from consultation we have done has been extremely positive. Only 2 people who arrived on the day of the consultation said they were wholly opposed to the scheme. Some concern has been shown as to the impact on traffic volumes and traffic safety on the main road, although we have not received any specific objections directly because of this.

The positive feedback we received from the vast majority of the people who attended the consultation included comments such as;

- It will be good to generate some employment in the area
- The cafe will be a good facility for people to use
- It will be a great place for families to use
- The view will be minimal from the road
- Some people felt that it would actually slow traffic on the road

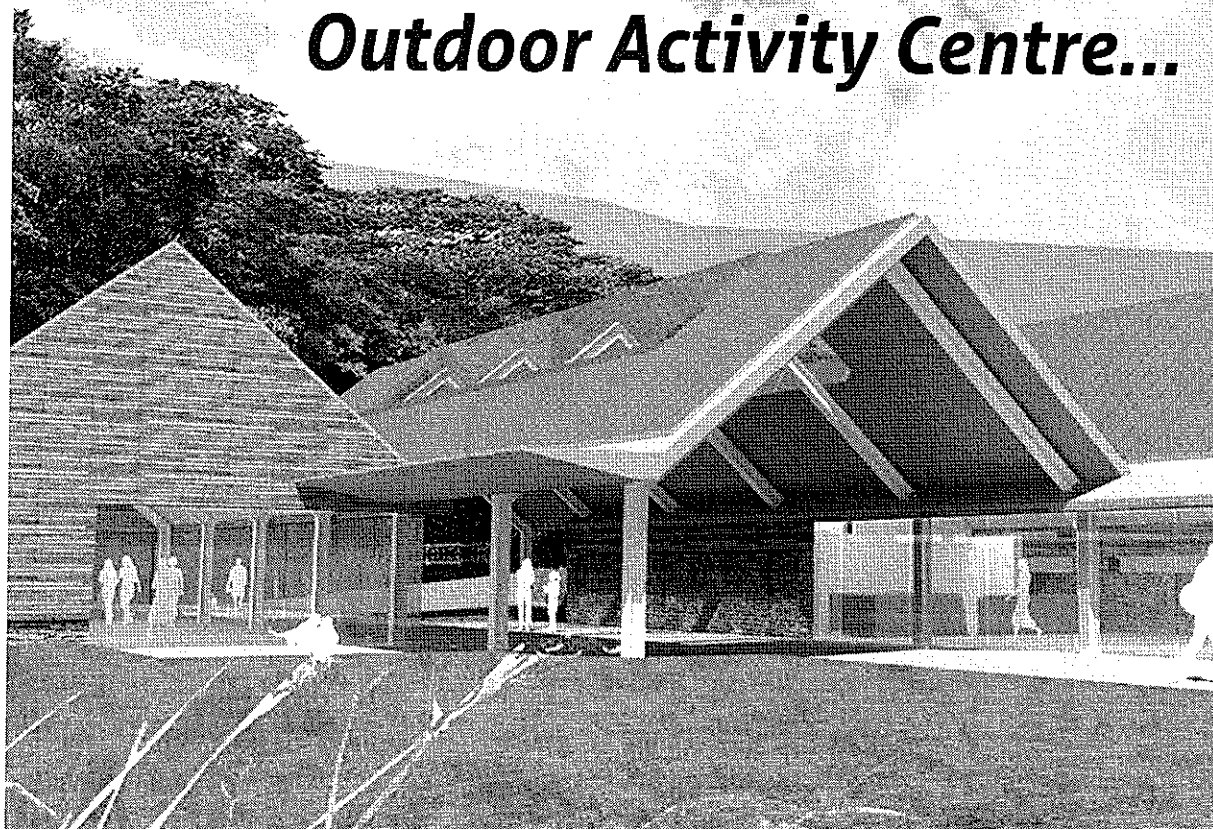
In addition, we received a number of questions from the Parish Council. These are listed in the attached document along with the responses given.

Morgan Rothwell MSc MCIM
Director

M: 07973 373 035 E: m.rothwell@dandmcreative.com

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Outdoor Activity Centre...



Sagar Heys Outdoor Activity Centre, Read.

We would like to invite you to a public consultation on the 29th March at The United Reform Church, East View, Read, BB12 7PS. Door will be open from 3pm until 7pm. Refreshments will be provided.

At the consultation you will be able to see initial plans that we have developed for the Sagar Heys Outdoor Activity Centre off Whalley Road in Read.

The centre will provide treetop activities, Segway and a number of other family leisure pursuits for people of all ages, that harness the natural environment of the site. Please join us to view the exciting plans for the site, which will form the basis of a planning application to be submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council in Spring 2012.

We appreciate your opinion and welcome your views on the day. Attending will be the Architect, Planning Consultant and other professionals working on the scheme.

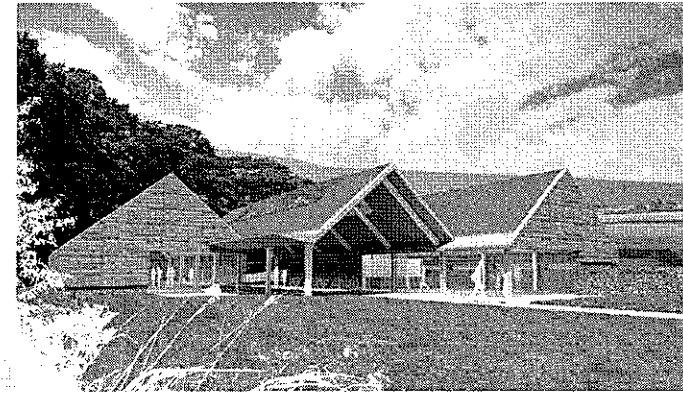
Public Consultation

29th March at The United Reform Church, Read.

3pm - 7pm

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Outdoor Activity Centre...



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Sagar Heys Outdoor Activity Centre, Read

Response to Questions Raised by Samantha Bruce – Read Parish Council and Local Resident.

- Q1** *There is already an outdoor elements outdoor activity centre in Simonstone. What evidence do you have that people want another one; how would it be different.*
- A1** The proposed facilities are based on a detailed assessment by an experienced leisure consultant. The proposed outdoor activity centre at Sagar Heys will cater for a different market from that provided for by the outdoor elements site. The Sagar Heys site is squarely aimed at the tourist market and primarily families, whereas the other facility caters largely for the corporate market. The expectation is that the Sagar Heys facility will attract visitors from a regional catchment and those holidaying within the Ribble Valley. It will be open daily and booking will not be essential. Each facility offers elements intended to cater more directly for their target market and it is our belief that both facilities can co-exist comfortably without duplication. The Sagar Heys facility will strive to involve the local community in its proposals and to ensure that it operates as a good neighbour.
- Q2** *What facilities would the centre offer, times; who are you catering for; how many would this cater for*
- A2** The facilities that will be proposed as part of the application are : tree-top activities (aerial extreme or similar); Segway (electric powered self-balancing vehicle) courses for beginner and more advanced; bare-foot trails (family orientated open air activities); adventure trails for children; central facilities building providing: ticketing / changing and toilet facilities / cafeteria / ancillary sales / covered seating areas. The expectation is that the facility would be open during daylight hours only. The facility is intended to cater for day-trippers from the wider region; tourists holidaying in the Ribble Valley and other local residents from the more immediate area. Local schools will be encouraged to make use of the adventure / nature trails and interpretation facilities. It is envisaged that approximately 200 – 250 visitors per day could visit the site when fully operational.
- Q3** *This road is very dangerous – residents find it very difficult to get out into the road because of speeding traffic. What could you do to make the entrance and exit safe, both for visitors and nearby walkers who cross from Hammond Drive to Read Garden Centre.*
- A3** From our discussions with the highway authority it is understood that there have been a number of assessments of the safety issues along this road corridor and that works have been undertaken to improve the road geometry and to reduce speeds, particularly at the Devil's Elbow. Currently whilst the road is busy and there are some drivers who will exceed the speed limits, the average speeds along the road are below the limits and the recent safety record in the vicinity of the application site is good. We have had extensive discussions with the highway authority, who consider our scheme to provide an acceptable means of access and one which is unlikely to present any road safety concerns. Indeed it is considered that the introduction of the new access point, with appropriate signage, will encourage drivers to slow down when passing the site and hopefully then when proceeding along through the village of Read. In terms of the additional traffic generated by the development, this will be extremely small compared to the vehicles currently using the A671 and will be almost imperceptible. In addition the peak hours for traffic using Whalley Road will be largely outside the peak hours for arrivals at the site.

- Q4 Would you be open to talking to the community to see if it could also provide a community space for other activities? Read Parish Council is currently surveying the village to see what facilities people would like to see, if any. Would you be willing to talk to us if your complex could meet needs identified by local people, e.g. social functions, young people's meeting place, training facility?*
- A4* Yes of course the owners and operators would be extremely keen to work with the Parish Council to see in what way the building could be made available to community based organisations. Provided that this would not jeopardise the main function of the building, the facilities can almost certainly be made available for use by the community and local schools and indeed this would increase the awareness of the facility whilst providing a valuable resource to the community.
- Q5 Who is funding the complex - are they locally based? How is the land available? What is the time scale for development : when would it start and when do you propose it opening? What support have you got so far, from whom?*
- A5* The project is being commercially funded and will be operated as a joint venture between the landowners and a partner company who have experience of operating leisure and tourism facilities. The land is owned by a local farmer who has made this available to the joint venture company – Ribble Valley Leisure Ltd. Subject to a grant of planning permission it is hoped that the development could be operational in 2013. The construction phase is not expected to be lengthy as the main development involves the construction of the facilities building and the roads and car parking, with the activities involving only relatively limited operations. The application has been the subject of pre-application discussions with Ribble Valley Council, who have expressed their general support for the proposed development as being compliant with development plan policy and that, subject to detailed submissions, it is the type of proposal that they would be looking to support. Initial contact has also been made with immediate residential neighbours, as well as local Councillors who have expressed no significant concerns.
- Q6 What do you want to learn from people today?*
- A6* The intention of the consultation was to alert people to the intended planning application in order that they were better informed of the proposal and hence to hopefully allay any concerns as to the nature and impacts of the proposals. It was also an opportunity for the applicants to gain a better understanding of the views of local people and to see what opportunity there could be to respond to any concerns raised.
- Q7 What other opportunities will there be for people to learn about your proposal and tell you what they think?*
- A7* We remain happy to provide copies of our pre-application information to any person who gets in contact. This will provide a summary of the proposed development. We can also respond to any reasonable questions raised regarding the proposed development. People can use the contact details below to get in touch.
- Q8 Where can people find out further information – contact phone number / email address?*
- A8* All enquiries should be directed to our public relations partner, D&M Creative m.rothwell@dandmcreative.com and responses will be provided as necessary.