



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Our Ref:	RV/2018/ENQ/00087			Clitheroe	
Site Location:	Whitcher Wells Fish Hatchery, Three Lane Ends, Dunsop Bridge			Lancashire BB7 2RA	
Proposal:	Erection of glamping pods and conversion of existing buildings			Tel: 01200 425111	Fax: 01200 414487
Date:	12 th November 2018				

Pre-Application Enquiry Response

Dear Shelley,

I write further to your submission of a request for pre-application advice at the former Whitcher Well Fish Hatchery site on behalf of Mr Ibison.

The enquiry seeks the Council's views on a provisional scheme for the erection of 4 'glamping' pods with associated infrastructure and the conversion/extension of an existing workshop building to provide a site reception and manager's accommodation.

The site comprises a small cluster of buildings with a land holding of circa 8 acres, originally used by the Environment Agency as a fish hatchery to populate the adjacent river. This use ceased and the site was subsequently purchased by Mr Ibison. Access is taken via a surfaced track leading roughly 2 miles from the centre of Dunsop Bridge.

The site is located within the Forest of Bowland AONB and adjacent to a SSSI. The land is also adjacent to (but not within) an area defined as falling within Flood Zones 2/3, due to the proximity to the River Dunsop. The primary access track which passes the site is a designated Bridleway (no.8).

Relevant Core Strategy Policies:

- EN2 – Landscape
- EN4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- EC3 – Visitor Economy
- DMG1 – General Considerations
- DMG2 – Strategic Considerations
- DMG3 – Transport and Mobility
- DME1 – Protecting Trees and Woodlands
- DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection
- DME3 – Site and Species Protection and Conservation
- DMB3 – Recreation and Tourism Development
- DMB5 – Footpaths and Bridleways

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Principle of Development:

The site lies within the AONB, with the proposed lodges to be located immediately to the north of the existing hatchery buildings.

Policy DMG1 requires new development to be of a high standard and sympathetic to the landscape character. In accordance with Key Statement EN2 of the Core Strategy development will be expected to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials and will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. Furthermore, within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) government guidance states:

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues” (Para. 172).

Policy DMG2 states that development outside of defined settlement areas should meet one of a number of defined exceptions. Of relevance to this submission is the following:

“4. The development is for small scale tourism and recreational developments appropriate to a rural area”

Subject to the consideration of more detailed topographical details, design and layout proposals, I am of the view that the development as described would, in principle, be considered small scale for the purposes of DMG2.

Core Strategy Key Statement EC3 relates specifically to the visitor economy stating that proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged. Policy DMB3 further advises that proposals which extend the range of tourist/visitor facilities within the Borough should not conflict with other policies within the Core Strategy; be physically well related to a main settlement, village or to an existing group of buildings; should not undermine the quality or visual amenities of the area; be well related to the highway network and not generate movements of a scale which would cause undue problems; should, where possible, be well related to public transport networks; be large enough to accommodate all necessary infrastructure; consider any nature conservation impacts/mitigation; should display a high standard of design and should not introduce built development in to an area largely devoid of structures. These considerations will be discussed in more detail throughout this response.

The site is not well related to the Dunsop Bridge settlement, however the existing buildings on site are of a permanent and robust nature and the area along the access road cannot be said to be wholly devoid of structures, with a number of dwellings and other buildings visible along its length.

In this regard, I would not consider that a small, appropriate form of secondary built development would be deemed to be physically isolated in the landscape. Whilst assessing the site during our meeting, it was apparent that there is a partial sense of enclosure from the wider landscape, primarily due to the ‘valley’ nature of the immediate area and especially when viewed in the context of the steeply rising land and mature woodland to the west. This does transition slightly to a more open landscape to the east and north, which would enable longer distance views of the site.

The only defined footpath in the immediate locality appears to be the surfaced bridleway which passes the site. The lines of other paths on higher land are noted on OS based maps, however these do not appear to be definitive and as such I am unsure of their status.

Accounting for the presence of potential vantage points from views in close range and from distance I would recommend that some form of landscape visual impact assessment is provided with any future application. This need only be proportionate to the scale of the development proposed and would strengthen the applicant's position should it be formally demonstrated that the landscape has the capacity to accommodate the development without any undue visual harm. This would also help to establish what, if any, supplementary planning and landscaping could be incorporated in the finalised proposals.

I note that you are also seeking advice directly from the AONB Team (Elliot Lorimer) with regard to the scheme. I would be happy to discuss any feedback you receive in the context of this reply.

The wording of Policy DMB3 is explicit with its aim to be to prevent prominent, visually isolated development in rural locations which would undoubtedly result in harm to the landscape. In light of my findings above, I consider in this case that the proposed development would not be seen in isolation from other built form but instead would be seen in the context of the existing hatchery buildings. This sporadic clustering is typical of the development pattern in the area and therefore the scheme would not be anomalous in this respect.

In terms of wider benefits, the site has the potential to generate employment, patronage for services and facilities within the village and other attractions further afield. I would recommend that the potential associated economic aspects are considered as part of any supporting statement.

Therefore subject to an assessment of site specific constraints and compliance with other relevant policies, I am of the view that a scheme here could be justified as being in accordance with the overall aims of the Core Strategy.

Design, Layout & Landscape:

The draft scheme proposes 4 detached pods/lodges, access tracks, a visitor parking bay and the creation of a reception/manager's office within the detached building to the rear of the site.

During our site meeting we discussed the need to ensure that any built form is respectful of its setting and works with the landscape. The use of minimal infrastructure will assist in creating a low impact development. Options such as the green roofs to the pods, short lengths of new access paths, neutral wall colours, sensitive lighting and the suitable siting of vehicles and other such paraphernalia will help to prevent the suburbanisation of the site. An indication of proposed management approaches may also help to further detail procedures which the applicant can incorporate to ensure the overall character of the landscape is not harmed.

Whilst the pods (utilising either design that we discussed) would not necessarily be reflective of local vernacular, through the use of appropriate materials and the siting of the structures to avoid prominence, I believe the scheme can be designed to blend in to its surroundings without causing significant harm.

In principle, the conversion/extension of the smaller building to the rear of the site for a site reception would be an appropriate re-use of a redundant structure, subject to the provisions within Policy DMB2.

I would be happy to discuss any proposals further once a more detailed and definitive scheme has been drawn up.

Access & Highways:

The site is some distance from the village and as such it is highly likely that the majority of users will access the site directly by private vehicle. Policy DMB3 seeks to ensure that tourism development is *"well related to the highway network and not generate additional traffic movements of a scale which would cause undue problems or disturbance"* and *"where possible the proposals should be well related to the public transport network"*.

As I'm sure you are aware, LCC Highways operate a separate, chargeable pre-application advice service and as such detailed advice cannot be provided as part of my response. However following my visit to the site I found an access which was fully surfaced along its length with passing opportunities at various intervals.

The site offers space to create parking within its confines and as referred to in the landscape comments above it would be preferential to group and screen the parking in a single location. This will avoid the need to park/leave cars adjacent to the pods and create additional visual clutter in the AONB.

Public transport opportunities are limited in the area, however the Framework (para.84) acknowledges that in supporting a prosperous rural economy, sites beyond existing settlements or those not well served by public transport may be required.

Trees/Ecology:

Any forthcoming application should be supported by the necessary ecological assessments and surveys. A bat survey will be necessary for the conversion and extension of the proposed reception building and a walkover survey should be undertaken for the remainder of the site.

The potential for ecological enhancement was discussed during our site meet and any such proposals should form part of any submitted scheme.

There do not appear to be any mature trees within the vicinity of the proposed development site, therefore an arboricultural assessment is unlikely to be required.

Other Matters:

As you may be aware, due to recent changes in planning legislation the Council must now seek the formal agreement of the applicant (or their agent) to impose pre-commencement conditions, should it be minded to grant planning permission.

Therefore, you may wish to consider providing a greater level of information at the outset for the Council to assess, in order to avoid the need for such conditions. A provisional validation checklist is provided below, however I'm sure you appreciate that requests for further technical information may be made by third party consultees during the application which cannot necessarily be anticipated at this stage.

I would also suggest that some indication of the proposed drainage strategy is provided accounting for the proximity to the river and adjacent flood zones.

Conclusion:

Key Statement DS2 requires the Council to reflect the presumption in favour of development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

In terms of its economic benefit to the rural area, the proposals are likely to generate employment, some additional revenue for the nearest services as visitors would spend some time in the local area. In terms of its impact on the social dimension of sustainability, the proposals would expand the range of visitor accommodation in the Borough, supporting the intentions of Core Strategy Key Statement EC1 and EC3.

Thus, the aforementioned economic and public benefits that would arise from the proposed development must be weighed against the environmental impacts of the proposals. As discussed above, it is considered that a suitably designed development would not, in principle, result in an unacceptable level of harm to the appearance and special character of the surrounding landscape.

Therefore, subject to the provision of the necessary supporting information and consideration of final design & layout proposals, a scheme of the general nature proposed could be considered to be in accordance with the aims of the Core Strategy.

Submission Requirements:

Should you proceed to submission of a formal application, based on the nature of the proposal/site constraints identified above, it is my opinion that the Local Planning Authority would require the following information to accompany such an application:

- Application forms
- Location plan
- Site plan (existing and proposed with topo/level details)
- Elevations
- Structural information (relating to the proposed conversions works)
- Planning/Supporting Statement
- Ecology/Biodiversity Surveys
- LVIA and proposed landscaping proposals
- Samples (materials and surfacing)
- Lighting details (mindful of the potential for spill/pollution in the AONB)

- Any other information which you may wish to be considered to address matters which would otherwise be controlled by pre-commencement condition

Please note this aforementioned required information may not be exhaustive and is provided on the basis of the level of information submitted. Failure to provide required information is likely to result in an application being made invalid until such information is received or potentially refused on the basis of insufficient information.

The above observations have been provided on the basis of the level of information submitted and the comments contained within this response represent officer opinion only, at the time of writing, without prejudice to the final determination of any application submitted. Should you wish to discuss any of these matters further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Lee Greenwood
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