

AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED

DATE 4 Sept 2019

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# PLANNING STATEMENT

WITCHER WELL

MR J IBISON

 Rural Solutions

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## PLANNING STATEMENT

LOCATION  
WITCHER WELL FISHERY, DUNSOP BRIDGE

PROPOSAL  
SITING OF 4 GLAMPING PODS AND REDEVELOPMENT OF  
WATER TANK BUILDING TO MANAGERS ACCOMMODATION

APPLICANT  
MR J IBISON

ISSUE DATE  
AUGUST 2019

DRAFTED BY  
SHELLEY COFFEY BA(HONS) MCD MRTPI  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

REVIEWED BY  
JOANNE HALTON MPLAN MRTPI  
HEAD OF PLANNING

AUTHORISED BY  
JOANNE HALTON MPLAN MRTPI  
HEAD OF PLANNING

CANALSIDE HOUSE  
BREWERY LANE  
SKIPTON  
NORTH YORKSHIRE  
BD23 1DR

01756 797501  
INFO@RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK  
WWW.RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK  
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND NO. 6839914  
VAT REGISTRATION NO. 972 8082 90

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed development seeks the change of use of an existing agricultural field to camping use, the siting of four camping pods, and the redevelopment of a redundant building to a Managers House, as part of a tourism-based farm diversification initiative at the former Witcher Well Fish Hatchery.



### POLICY

Planning policy should support sustainable development, supporting sustainable development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay (paragraph 11 of the NPPF).

Decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (paragraph 83(c) and support the diversification of agricultural and land-based rural businesses (paragraph 83(b)).

Proposals which contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of the Ribble Valley will be encouraged (Key Statement EC2).



### MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The development provides a sustainable tourism use within the countryside and will support the rural economy of Ribble Valley in accordance with Development Plan policy.

Both local and national planning policy seek to support a strong rural economy.

There are no adverse impacts arising from the proposed development in terms of landscape, highways or environmental impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.



### BENEFITS

- Direct and indirect job creation including on-site employment and jobs created during construction
- The site will utilise local companies for goods and services
- Guests will contribute expenditure to local businesses and services
- Enhancements to the site's appearance through rationalisation of redundant buildings and continued maintenance of site
- Significant landscaping and ecological enhancement and management scheme, including net biodiversity gain
- An area from which guests can enjoy the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



### PLANNING BALANCE

The proposals are overall in line with the development plan. There are no adverse impacts with significantly outweigh the clear benefits of the proposed development, as such in line with paragraph 11 of the Framework the development should be approved without delay.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

- I.1: This planning statement has been produced to support a planning application for a tourism-based diversification initiative at the Witcher Well Fish Hatchery site north of Dunsop Bridge.
- I.2: The proposal seeks the change of use of an existing parcel of land (comprising 0.5 hectares) within the landholding (around 3.5 ha) to a camping use, including the siting of 4 glamping huts.
- I.3 To support the necessary operation of the venture given its remote location, it is also proposed to redevelop a series of outbuildings on the site to form a small managers house. The on-site presence will provide the safety and security of guests, plus allow the full potential of the environmental stewardship of the site to be reached.

### DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- I.4: The description of development is set out below:

"Change of use of agricultural field to form camp site with the siting of 4 glamping huts, redevelopment of outbuildings to managers accommodation, replacement of septic tank and marking out of associated parking for 5 cars"

### CONTEXT

- I.5: This planning statement:
- Describes the site and the surrounding area (Section 2);
  - Describes the proposed development (Section 3);
  - Provides an analysis of the proposed development against relevant development plan policy (Section 4);
  - Provides a summary of relevant national planning policy and guidance (Section 5);
  - Discussed other material considerations (Section 6);
  - Outlines key benefits of the proposed development (Section 7) and
  - Provides conclusions (Section 8).
- I.6: It should be read in conjunction with the following technical reports:
- Plans Package (Rural Solutions)
  - Summary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Rural Solutions)
  - Preliminary Ecological Assessment (Naturally Wild)
  - Flood Risk and Drainage Report (Flood Risk and Drainage Solutions)
  - Structural Survey (Noriker Civils)



## 2. THE SITE AND IT'S SURROUNDINGS

2.1: This section of the planning statement sets out details of the site location and its wider context, in addition to discussion of its history and events leading to the submission of this planning application.

### LOCATION

2.2: The site is a former Fish Hatchery located north of the village of Dunsop Bridge. Mr Ibison acquired the site 2 to 3 years ago following disposal by the Environment Agency.

2.3: The site is around 4.3 km (2.7 miles) north of the centre of Dunsop Bridge, and is located adjacent the River Dunsop, as identified in Figure 1 below.

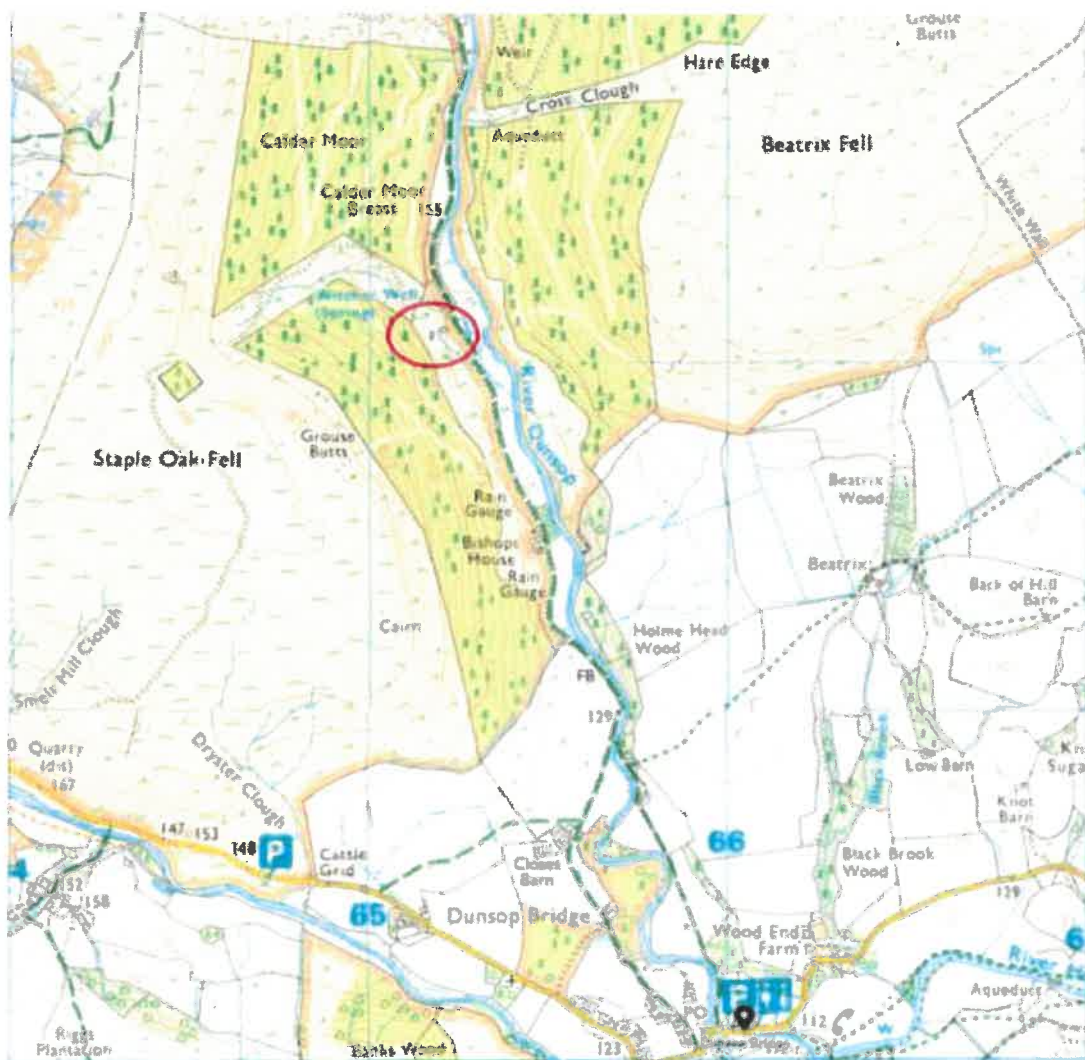


Figure 1: Witcher Well Hatchery Site location circled in red (Source: Bing Maps)

## CONTEXT

- 2.4: The landholding in total comprises approximately 3.5 hectares. The site identified for the proposed development is c.1ha and comprises a series of buildings previously connected with the Environment Agency use of the site as a Fish Hatchery and its curtilage, in addition to adjacent grazing land.
- 2.5: The potential development site is identified on the aerial photo at Figure 2. This includes a hatchery building, workshop and a well building.



Figure 2: Aerial photo with site location circled in red (Source: Bing Maps)

- 2.6: The site benefits from access to utilities (electricity, water).
- 2.7: The site is located within The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the site is located within close proximity to the River Dunsop (to the east of the site), though the site itself is on land that is classified as a low flood risk area (Flood Zone 1).

## ACCESSIBILITY

- 2.8: The site is approximately 3.2km (2 miles) north of the village of Dunsop Bridge.
- 2.9: The site is accessed from Whitendale Road, a private road off the main road through Dunsop Bridge. We understand Mr Ibison has full vehicular access rights over the private road. The road is also a public bridleway (No.8).

2.10: Dunsop Bridge is located within the Ribble Valley, approximately 14km (9 miles) north west of Clitheroe and 24 km (15 miles) south-east of Lancaster. The village is at the confluence of the River Dunsop and the River Hodder.

2.11: Dunsop Bridge is located within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The village is the starting part for many walkers, with a myriad of public footpaths crossing the area and leading up into the nearby fells. The village contains a popular café, Puddleducks Café, a popular stop off for walkers and visitors to the village, in addition to a public car park and wc facilities.

#### USE

2.12: It is understood that the 'Witcher Well' from which the site takes its name originally served to provide the water supply to the village of Dunsop Bridge.

2.13: Once no longer required to serve the village the presence of the spring water supply led to the subsequent creation of the fish hatchery site by the Environment Agency. It was used for the breeding of Salmon and Sea Trout to provide for restocking of local rivers including the adjacent River Dunsop. The site is believed to have been in operation from the 1920s/30s.

2.14: The site was closed by the Environment Agency in the late 1990s as practices changed and there was no longer had a need for the facility; and the site was subsequently identified for disposal by Defra.

2.15: The site was marketed for sale in 2016 including the hatchery building, still fully equipped, a number of outbuildings including covered water tanks, plus a small adjacent land holding of circa 3.5 hectares.

2.16: The buildings are not insubstantial and give the site a previously developed almost industrial character due to their appearance and materials.

2.17: The associated land holding of c.3.5 hectares has traditionally been let for sheep grazing to local farmers.

#### PLANNING HISTORY

2.18: A search of the Councils online planning application records shows a planning application made by the National Rivers Authority in 1990 for the extension of the Hatchery building. This was granted permission in August 1990. There are no further planning application records found on the online search relating to the site.

#### Pre-Application Engagement

2.19: Following acquisition of the site the applicant approached Rural Solutions to explore advancing proposals for a diversification use on the site.

2.20: The applicant's objective was to create a public use of the site from where the local wildlife and landscape character could be appreciated.

2.21: A pre-application enquiry was subsequently prepared and submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council in 2018. The enquiry sought feedback on the principle of the proposal to erect a small number of camping pods on the site and to



redevelop the smaller group of outbuildings to provide some managers accommodation including reception / office space for the glamping business.

2.22: A site meeting was held by the agent, applicant and pre-application officer Lee Greenwood, following which a written response was received on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The full response is contained within Appendix A of this planning statement.

2.23: To summarise, the response concludes that:

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.

2.24: Specifically, the response advised that:

- 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;
- It is considered 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 be anomalous in this respect (thereby not in conflict with DMG3);
- Whilst the pods 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 into 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/managers accommodation would be an appropriate re-use of a redundant structure.

2.25: Detailed plans for the redevelopment of the smaller buildings to supporting accommodation were not submitted as part of this initial pre-application enquiry. However, the council's response invited later submission of further details for comment if required.

2.26: An initial design exercise was therefore undertaken and a concept scheme submitted for comment. An extract of the elevations for the proposed conversion is shown below.

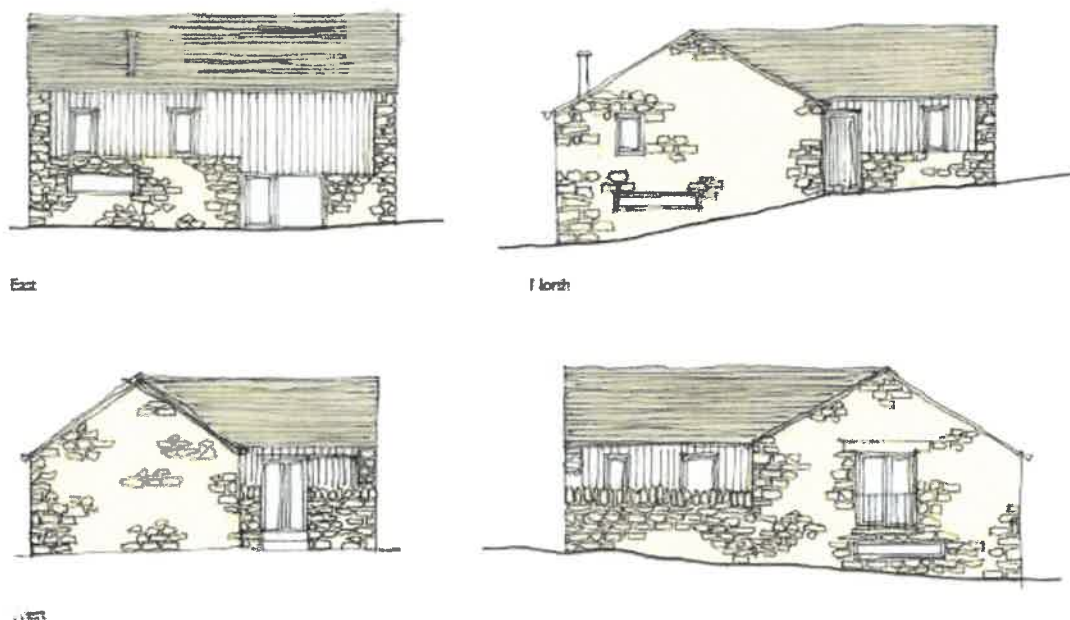


Figure 3: Pre-application sketch elevations of the proposed managers accommodation

2.27: Additional comments were subsequently received by email from the pre-application officer. These noted that

- The Design Pack submitted with your most recent email provides some indicative proposals and shows that the building would primarily be living space with a small portion afforded to the reception area.
- The scheme also proposes a relatively large increase in overall volume which on comparison to the existing would appear tantamount to a new build.

2.28: The response explained that within the qualifying criteria of DMH4 it states that the building to be converted must:

“be structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use without the need for extensive building or major alteration which would adversely affect the character or appearance of the building”

and;

“be of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for further extension which would harm the character and appearance of the building”

- 2.29: It was further suggested that policy DMH3 be engaged within the planning application and that the submission makes a case for why a dwelling for an essential worker to be located at the site is required.
- 2.30: This feedback was taken on board and a revised scheme prepared which sought to address concerns regarding the scale of additional volume being sought and to reduce the general level of intervention to the buildings form and character.
- 2.31: The resulting scheme forms the basis of this planning application and the design approach and justification is sets out in section 3 of this planning statement.

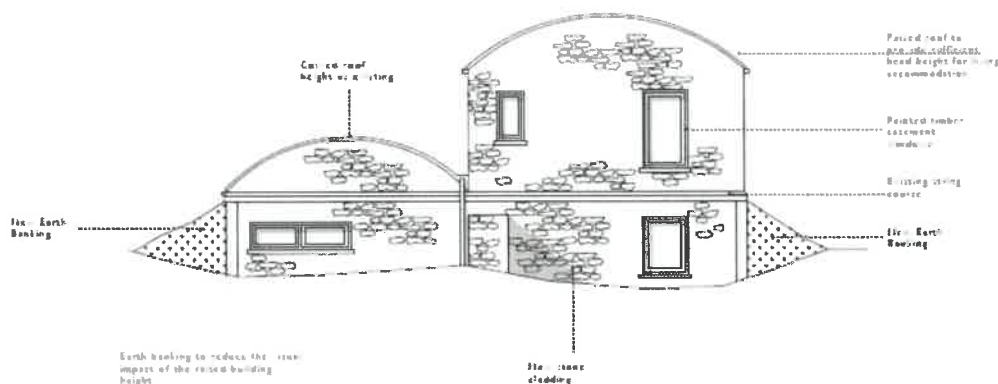


Figure 4: East Elevation of final scheme designs

- 2.32: Pre-application guidance was also sought from Elliot Lorimer of the AONB team at an early stage of the project to seek views on the principle of a development in this location, in the context of the scheme responding to AONB Management Plan objectives to encourage initiatives which support tourism and the rural economy.

- 2.33: The advised received was that

I would suggest that the siting of camping pods at this site will be very challenging in terms of addressing the landscape and visual impact on the AONB. The valley floor location is quite open (admittedly backed by forestry on the valley slopes) meaning any camping pods would be likely to be very

visible within this landscape and possibly in more distant views, particularly from an elevated position on the surrounding fell slopes.

- 2.34: Landscape and visual impact are addressed in full within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and the findings summarised within section 6 of this planning statement. The conclusions of this assessment have informed the bringing forward of this application.
- 2.35: A query was also raised about access rights along the estate road. This is discussed in section 3 of this statement.

### 3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1: This section of the planning statement describes the proposed development and effectively comprises a 'Design and Access' statement for the proposal setting out the scheme details, and design approach and justification.

#### CONTEXT

- 3.2: Mr Ibison's vision is to develop a small number of en-suite 'glamping pods' on the site, to form a retreat within the natural landscape. It is envisaged the pods would be attractive to walkers and bird watchers due to the quiet and scenic location.
- 3.3: Due to the remote location of the site, a manager's on-site presence is also required for the safety and security of guests and management of on-site activity. Furthermore, this presence will allow for the on-going ecological management of the wider site as part of a manager's responsibility, for the benefit of the site and wider area, including the potential reintroduction of the fish hatchery activity.

#### DESIGN

##### The Glamping Pods

- 3.4: The application includes the siting of four self-contained glamping pods to the north of the existing hatchery buildings.

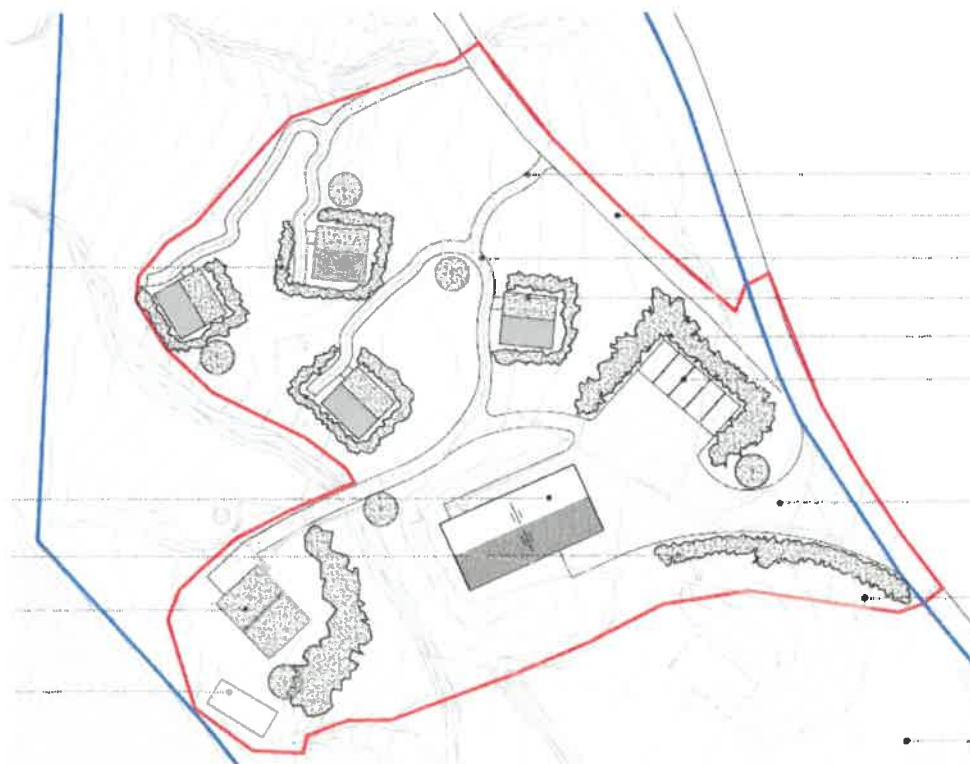


Figure 5: Extract of proposed site layout plan



- 3.5: The site topography increases roughly east to west and the site layout has sought to work with the existing contours and site the pods within the landscape, as illustrated by the plan below.
- 3.6: The pods would be of timber construction and external appearance with a green roof. The chosen materials would help visually assimilate the pods into the landscape particularly in distant views. The proposed pods are illustrated in the image below.
- 3.7: The pods will measure 7.8 metres in length by 3.9 metres in width, with a maximum height of 3.15 metres reducing to 1.15 metre at the rear of the curved roof.
- 3.8: The pods will be sited on permeable gravel bases. In line with recommendations in the flood risk and drainage report, the pods will be raised 300mm above existing ground levels to help manage pluvial flood risk on the site.
- 3.9: Each pod would have a small outdoor private seating area adjacent contained by low level planting to provide screening.



*Figure 6: Visualisation of camping pod accommodation*

- 3.10: Each pod is self-contained and there is therefore no requirement for a facilities buildings etc on site.
- 3.11: The pods and bases are all temporary and entirely reversible/removable should the operation of the glamping site cease.

- 3.12: Surface water drainage will be to watercourse via an onsite 'rain garden' to manage flow rates, in accordance with the outline drainage strategy submitted alongside this application. Foul drainage will be to a new waste package treatment plant.

#### The Manager's Accommodation

- 3.13: Due to the requirements of managing the site particularly considering its isolated location, it would be necessary to provide some managers accommodation at the site.
- 3.14: It is proposed this would be provided through conversion of the largest of the unused buildings on the site to provide modest two-bedroom accommodation allowing a couple to reside at the site. The accommodation offer would be part of the package available to a manager recruited into a post whose responsibilities would include being available 24 hours a day for on-site guest security or safety matters, in addition to land management activities in implementing the objectives of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan proposed for the site.
- 3.15: Due to the small size constraints of the existing building, some extension is proposed to the building by way of raising the height of one of the two curved bays to include a second level of accommodation, in order to provide viable levels of accommodation.
- 3.16: This arrangement echoes the current site appearance which includes two curved roof buildings of different heights set within the landscape.



*Figure 7: View of Site showing existing water tank in foreground, with additional outbuildings for conversion / removal*

- 3.17: To offset the creation of this upper floor, the remaining disused buildings on site would be removed as part of the scheme. This includes the second curved roof tank to the south of this building, as well as the workshop building to the west.
- 3.18: The main fisheries building will remain and provide for a reception and office space within the existing site office, for the glamping visitors.
- 3.19: Overall, the proposed scheme would include an increase of approximately 60 m<sup>3</sup> to the building for conversion, compared to removal of approximately 95m<sup>3</sup> of volume by removal of the other buildings and tank, resulting in a net reduction of built volume on site.

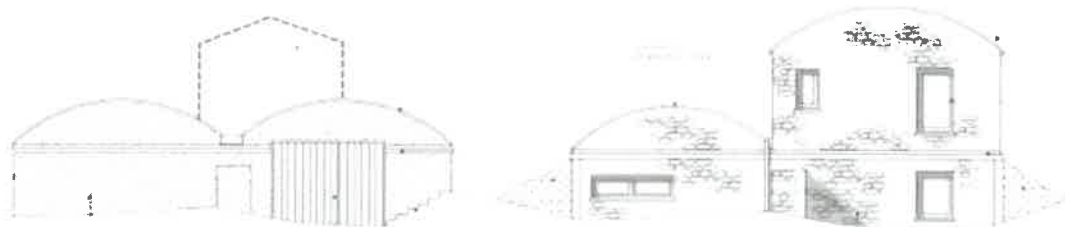


Figure 8: comparison existing and proposed east elevations showing outline of building for removal (dashed line)

## ACCESS

- 3.20: A small car parking area would be laid on to the front of the existing hatchery building accessed via the existing site entrance. Visitor cars would not travel to the pods themselves. Visitors would access the pods via foot or small buggy via new pathways spurred off the existing forestry track through the site. At least one of the pods is proposed to offer disabled access.
- 3.21: To encourage customers to travel by sustainable travel modes, electric car charging points will be available at the site for customers use.
- 3.22: However, it is envisaged the pod site would be attractive to walkers and visitors who may arrive on foot or bike via the public bridleway which leads directly past the site.

## Precedent Cases

- 3.23: Whilst the building proposed for conversion is not typical of a traditional rural conversion, there are precedent examples of successful conversions of such properties in the local area.
- 3.24: In the neighbouring authority of Wyre, planning permission<sup>1</sup> was granted in 2011 for the conversion of a large water tank building of similar design, to a large

<sup>1</sup> Application Reference Number 11/00467/FUL Wyre Borough Council

residential property, on the edge of the AONB. The scheme was designed by multi-awarding winning architect Ian Simpson.

3.25: In commenting on the scheme, the Design Review Panel 'Places Matter' commented that

This is a very exciting and challenging project which takes a creative approach to giving a redundant industrial structure a new use for a new generation. We applaud (your) intention of retaining the tank and commitment to good architecture. We are very supportive of the repetition of the barrel vaulted roof form as it re-interprets the surrounding landscape as a green roof, whilst still having a distinct architectural expression. We would like to see this project move forward. An empty site such as this becomes a target for vandalism and deterioration. We wish the project well and would like this to be an exemplar of how to bring new life to remnants of the industrial past with considered, and good design.

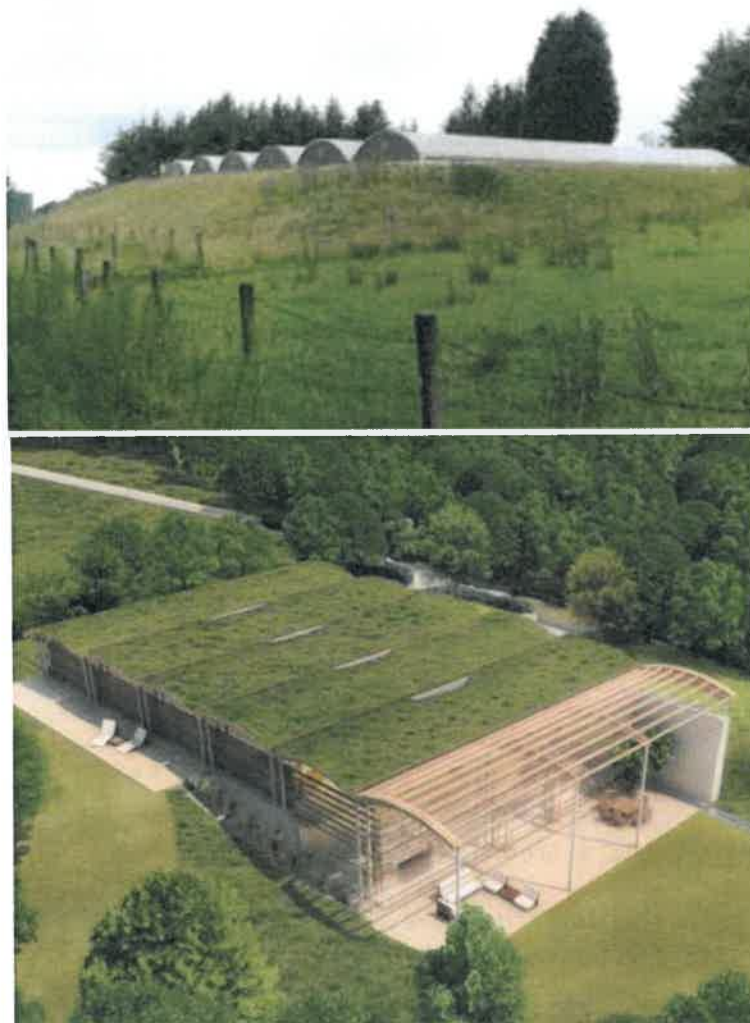


Figure 9: Existing photo and proposed image



3.26: In Craven District Council planning permission was recently granted for the conversion of former Yorkshire Water reservoir into a new dwelling<sup>2</sup>. The application was approved at planning committee following officer recommendation for approval. The officer report summarised that

The proposal would result in the creation of a man-made grass mound, and an increase in existing land levels. However, the mound would not be out of place in the local undulating landscape, and the incorporation of the existing dry stone wall into the east elevation would help to root the development into the rural landscape. The proposed dwelling is considered to be a good quality design, that is sympathetic to its surroundings, and have a limited visual impact in its rural location.



*Figure 10: Recently approved reservoir tank conversion in Craven*

3.27: These precedent examples illustrate how the conversion of such types of buildings have been judged to be acceptable in rural areas, and not only this but represent good design and an efficient use of redundant sites.

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<sup>2</sup> Planning Application reference 22/2016/17241 Craven District Council

## 4. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

4.1: Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explain that the starting point for the determination of planning applications is the development plan and the determination of an application must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2. The adopted Local Plan in Ribble Valley borough consists of:

- Core Strategy (2014).

### THE ECONOMY

4.3: The Strategic Objectives of the Core Strategy include 'co-ordinate, innovate and diversify sustainable tourism, building on our strengths and developing new initiatives' (Paragraph 3.17).

4.4: Chapter 7 of the Core Strategy on 'The Economy' states that the strength of the tourism economy in Ribble Valley reflects the attractive countryside, historic towns and villages and a range of visitor attractions including the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, it adds that there is a need to encourage new investment within certain areas of the tourism economy including in self-catering accommodation.

4.5: This support is articulated in policy 'Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy' which states that:

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.

4.6: Development Control Policy DMB3 provides greater detail in relation to the determination of planning applications. It states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that provide for tourism facilities subject to detailed criteria being met, including additional criteria for developments within the AONB. These criteria are considered below in respect of the proposed development:

1. *The proposal must not conflict with other policies of this plan;*

It is considered the proposed development would comply with relevant policies of the plan.

2. *The proposal must be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village; Or to an existing group of buildings, except where the proposed facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available;*

The site is accessed from Dunsop Bridge, a popular village with visitors to the area. Whilst located some distance from the centre of the village it is within practical walking or cycling distance for people involved in such activities in the area.

The previously developed nature of the site has led to the proposal to introduce a new use for the site; the scheme will reuse some of the existing buildings and the proposed camping pods will be seen within the context of the existing buildings. It is considered the proposals therefore comply with the overarching thrust of this criterion, and this position was agreed with in the council's pre-application response.

- 3. The development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design;*

The scheme has been developed to be deliberately low key in scale of development and sympathetic in design and use of natural materials. It will not have a detrimental impact on the character or visual amenity of the area.

- 4. The proposals 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;*

The site can be accessed via an existing private road and requires no new road infrastructure to access it. The scale of visitors would result in low levels of traffic generation. There are no regular bus routes to the area, but connections are available in nearby larger settlements which could encourage use of public transport for part of the journey. Equally the site can be accessed via foot or cycle for people involved in such activities in the area and on an existing bridleway route.

- 5. The site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas;*

Visitor parking would be providing within the site adjacent the existing site access in the location of an existing informal hard standing. The area will be resurfaced and landscaping introduced around the site to visually and physically contain site activity.

- 6. The proposal must take into account any nature conservation impacts using suitable survey information and where possible seek to incorporate any important existing associations within the development. Failing this then adequate mitigation will be sought;*

A preliminary ecological assessment has been carried out and concluded that there is no harm to biodiversity as a result of the proposed

development, in fact, the proposed scheme would result in a net increase in biodiversity. This is discussed in more detail within sections 6 and 7 of this statement.

7. *The proposal should display a high standard of design appropriate to the area; and*

Whilst the proposed camping pods are not vernacular in their style, they are appropriate for their proposed use, and of low impact due to their scale and the use of natural external facing materials (timber). It is considered the provision of timber camping pods adjacent a forest and forestry track is suitable in its context. They are also not permanent buildings and could be removed should the operation cease, therefore any perceived impact is ultimately reversible.

8. *The site should not introduce built development into an area largely devoid of structures (other than those directly related to agriculture or forestry uses);*

The site has existing buildings, some of which would be reused as part of this development. As a diversification of this existing land use, and of the small scale proposed, the proposal is considered acceptable in this location.

4.7: Overall it is considered that the proposed development consistent with the objectives of policy DMB3. The development would provide a low key tourist and visitor facility within the Forest of Bowland AONB and encourage appropriate visitor interaction with the landscape and wildlife of the AONB in this unique location whilst maintaining the qualities and character which make the area special.

4.8: Development control policy DMB4 relates to the assessment of schemes for the conversion of rural buildings to dwellings. Whilst it is managers accommodation rather than an unrestricted dwelling which is sought as part of the application, the policy is considered here for completeness. The policy sets out a range of criteria which proposals must comply with, which are considered below:

1. *The building is not isolated in the landscape i.e. it is within a defined settlement or forms part of an already group of buildings*

The building proposed for conversion is sited within a group of existing buildings. Whilst some of the smaller structures will be retained, the main hatchery building will be retained and remain the most prominent building on the site.

2. *There need be no unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure*

There will be no required public infrastructure. No public highway works are required. The site already benefits from a private water supply and electricity supply. Private drainage facilities will be provided.



3. *There would be no materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area or harm to nature conservation interests*

The scheme has been designed to minimise any impacts on the landscape character and quality of the area. The scheme itself would have no direct adverse impacts on ecology and instead will be accompanied by a scheme for the improvement and management of the site providing a net gain in biodiversity and securing long time management as a result of the development.

4. *There would be no detrimental effect on the rural economy*

The scheme would result in direct and indirect employment as well as encourage visitor stays in the area and associated local spend with existing businesses.

The buildings for conversion are currently redundant from active use but by diversifying the site and giving it a viable use, this will provide an opportunity for agricultural activities including potentially the fish hatchery activities to be reinstated, providing further economic benefits.

5. *The proposals are consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area*

As discussed above, the proposed scheme will conserve the natural and landscape beauty of the area. The development is anchored around an existing developed site and will enable the maintenance and management of that site, thus protecting visual amenities. The proposed interventions are capable of being accommodated at site with no negative landscape impact. The on-going management of the landholding, in association with introducing a viable use onto the site, will help secure the on-going conservation of the landscape.

6. *That any existing nature conservation aspects of the existing structure are properly surveyed and where judged to be significant preserved or, if this is not possible, then any loss adequately mitigated.*

A full ecological appraisal of the site has been undertaken and has informed the preparation of the scheme and the associated proposed ecological enhancements and management objectives.

*The building to be converted must:*

7. *Be structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use without the need for extensive building or major alteration, which would adversely affect the character or appearance of the building. The council will require a structural survey to be submitted with all applications of this nature. This should include plans of any rebuilding that is proposed;*

A structural survey has been undertaken and qualifies that the building proposed for conversion is structurally sound and capable for conversion.

8. *Be of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for further extensions which would harm the character or appearance of the building*

The building itself would not be able to provide a viable level of living accommodation without extension. However, it is proposed to remove other buildings and structures from the site to ensure there is no material net gain in building volume on the site. This is therefore consistent with the spirit of the policy to preserve the character of the countryside.

The design approach to the conversion scheme is considered to preserve and celebrate the character and appearance of the buildings and maintain reference to the sites historic use. This includes for example through retention and replication of the curved roofs of the water tanks. In this respect it is considered that the scheme is consistent with the objective of the policy.

9. *The character of the building and its materials are appropriate to its surroundings and the building and its materials are worthy of retention because of its intrinsic interest or potential or its contribution to its setting, and*

It is considered that the building is worthy of retention due to its part in the historic use of the site. Its retention will allow the history of the site to be understood by guests of the glamping business. It will also allow a unique building to be developed in keeping with the site and best practice in the creation of green and sustainable architecture.

10. *The building has a genuine history of use for agricultural or another rural enterprise.*

The building has a clear history of use as a fish hatchery by the Environment Agency. It has been disposed of by Defra as surplus to operational requirements. The Government has encouraged the repurposing of such brownfield assets.

- 4.9: To conclude, it is considered that overall the proposed conversion is in line with the objectives and intentions of policy DMH4. The building is unusual in its character which requires a pragmatic approach to applying the criteria in relation to alteration to the building. However it is considered that the overall approach is honest to the history of the site and the character of the building and provides an opportunity for a unique building to be reused as part of a wider diversification project. The scheme has the potential to become an exemplar low key, sustainable diversification project with ecological and conservation objectives at its heart.

- 4.10: The council's pre-application response also considered that Policy DMH3 could be relevant in respect of it supporting the creation of dwellings which are essential for the purposes of agricultural or another appropriate rural use.
- 4.11: As the dwelling is proposed to be created via a conversion rather than a new building dwelling, it is not considered that policy DMH3 is necessarily required to justify the development.
- 4.12: Notwithstanding this, it is stressed that the proposal is driven by a genuine belief that on-site managers accommodation is necessary for the satisfactory operation of the business. The location of the site means that without an on-site presence the safety and security of guests could not be provided for. Furthermore, the behaviour of guests on the site could not be managed in a suitable way to ensure the preservation of the special qualities of the site and wider area.
- 4.13: There is no other accommodation available within a practical distance from the site to meet this operational need.
- 4.14: Furthermore, the applicant believes that in order to attract someone to the role of managing the site with 24 hour management responsibilities, it will be necessary to be able to make an offer of suitable accommodation on the site.
- 4.15: In respect of the financial viability of the proposals, the applicant has drawn up a business plan for the glamping business which it is considered creates a viable enterprise capable of paying a fair and reasonable level of remuneration commensurate with the role.
- 4.16: We are happy for the resulting accommodation to be intrinsically linked to the operation of a business on the site by way of a condition or legal agreement.

#### THE AONB

- 4.17: The Core Strategy recognises that over 75% of the district is designated as AONB (Paragraph 5.3). In order to support tourism in the rural areas, opportunities to provide appropriate tourism accommodation and attractions within the AONB should therefore be encouraged.
- 4.18: In order to provide the necessary protection within the AONB, policy 'Key Statement EN2: Landscape' sets out controls over development. It states that 'any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area' and that

As a principle the council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.

- 4.19: Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations adds further detail in regard to determination of planning applications. It confirms that the most important

consideration in the assessment of development proposals in the AONB will be the 'protection, enhancement and character of the area'.

- 4.20: It states that where possible new development should be accommodated through the reuse of existing buildings, and that more generally development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and 'acknowledge the special qualities of the AONB by virtue of its size, design, use of material, landscaping and siting.
- 4.21: In order to inform the scheme a detailed LVIA has been undertaken.
- 4.22: The LVIA concludes that the proposed development is relatively well screened from contextual views from within the study area due to the existing landform and the presence of large coniferous plantations.
- 4.23: In respect of landscape effects, the proposed development is considered to have a moderate significance of effect during construction and at year 1 on the Site, with effects at year 10 and beyond considered slight due to the small scale nature of the Proposed Development and the presence of existing structures located within the wider Study Area, in particular the river corridor.
- 4.24: In respect of visual effects, these are limited to certain viewpoints, those in close proximity to the site, as may be expected. Here effects are considered to be moderate in significance.
- 4.25: The LVIA concludes that overall there are no overriding landscape or visual reasons, to suggest that the proposed development would cause important levels of harm to either the landscape and visual integrity of the national or local landscape character areas or the area of landscape covered by the AONB, which should result in a refusal during the planning permission process.
- 4.26: A scheme of mitigation and enhancement measures are recommended as follows:
- Inclusion of well-considered native planting proposals to help reduce the exposure of built form and parked cars to help integrate the development with the surrounding development;
  - Planting proposals should be accompanied by a landscape maintenance and management plan;
  - Enhance the ecological value of the site by providing a wider variety of habitats that are likely to support a range of wildlife species;
  - Promote the restoration of dwarf shrub communities and bog-mosses (Sphagna);
  - Consider the removal of timber post and wire fencing to improve visual character and allow better wildlife connectivity. Any requirement for

enclosure or part enclosure should be considered using more traditional methods such as drystone walls and or timber post and rail fencing;

- Maintain upland springs through appropriate management and ensure that they are not affected by new structures;
- The use of gritstone for surfacing and turf / green roof systems to shelters in preference to other materials;
- Excess spoil from any excavations could be retained on-site and combined with partially buried rubble, obtained from any demolitions works to promote a valuable reptile habitat by way of low mounds contoured into the site also providing additional screening;
- Control the enhancement of outdoor spaces by users of the lodges to avoid unsightly clutter being visible.

4.27: It is considered that the scheme would support the functions of the AONB, encourage visitor interaction in a low key and sustainable way, whilst conserving and enhancing the landscape character of this area of the AONB. It is thus considered the proposed development would comply with the conditions of Policy DMG2.

4.28: Policy DMG2 adds that the AONB Management Plan should be considered and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. This is discussed in section 6 of this Planning Statement.

#### THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

4.29: Policy DME3: (Sites and Species Protection and Conservation) seeks to protect designated wildlife areas from adverse impact. The policy also adds that all developers are encouraged to consider incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity where appropriate.

4.30: A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out in support of the proposed development.

4.31: The appraisal has concluded that the buildings on site were considered to have either low or negligible bat roost potential, with no bats observed emerging during the activity survey and are therefore considered to be likely absent from the site.

4.32: The appraisal also concluded that there is some suitable habitat for reptiles and for common amphibians in their terrestrial phase. As such the report recommends Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are adopted during any site clearance to minimise any potential impact, and such works timed to be carried out during the winter months when amphibians and reptiles are unlikely to be active above ground.

- 4.33: In addition, the appraisal advises that the semi-improved grassland offers some suitability for ground nesting birds and foraging bats. Again, timings are recommended for demolition and site clearance works to avoid bird nesting seasons.
- 4.34: In addition to the above mitigation measures, the scheme has also looked to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, as a result of the development. Measures adopted include:
- All converted or newly constructed buildings will have green roofs installed;
  - There will be tree and shrub planting with native species suited to the upland climate and landscape character;
  - The existing areas of semi-improved grassland will be enhanced through sowing with an additional seed mix to improve floral diversity;
  - The proposed 'rain garden' will incorporate a suitable species mixture, that will tolerate periods of inundation;
  - The dense area of bracken will be cleared and managed to create additional areas of semi-improved grassland and dwarf shrub communities; and
  - Sections of the flush will be managed, through clearance of encroaching terrestrial vegetation, to promote the restoration of bog mosses.
- 4.35: The ecological appraisal has undertaken a calculation to assess the resulting impact of the development and concluded that the scheme will deliver a net gain in biodiversity.
- 4.36: Further potential enhancement measures have also been identified including opportunities for creating suitable habitats for invertebrate and reptiles as part of the landscaping works, and the installation of bat and bird boxes.
- 4.37: Providing the recommendations of this report are implemented in full, the appraisal concludes that there will not be a significant impact to protected species or habitats as a result of the proposed works.
- 4.38: The proposed development would therefore comply with the provisions of policy DME3.
- 4.39: It is proposed that further details on the compensation and enhancement measures, and an appropriate management scheme to ensure the establishment and longevity of the habitats to be enhanced and created, would be detailed within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, which could be secured by condition.
-



- 4.40: Policy DME6: Water Management advises that development will not be permitted where the proposal would be at an unacceptable risk of flooding or would exacerbate flooding elsewhere.
- 4.41: A Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment has been undertaken in support of the development.
- 4.42: The site lies within flood zone I as denoted by the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning however there are narrow areas of flood risk to the immediate east associated with the River Dunsop.
- 4.43: The FRA advises that two small natural channels/watercourses flow through the site, one through the north extent flowing in an easterly direction. The other is formed by three channels that merge into one flowing in a southerly direction out of the south east boundary. Another channel/watercourse is located approximately 10m east of the site where it flows parallel along the west of the River Dunsop in a southerly direction, ultimately discharging into the River Dunsop approximately 300m south of the site.
- 4.44: The primary flood risk is therefore assessed to come from the surface water flows through the site.
- 4.45: The FRA however concludes that due to the steep nature of the site topography, flows will remain low during any flood events. Furthermore, the proposed camping pods are located within the topographical high points of the site, so remain outside of the areas affected by the surface water flows. The FRA concludes that providing that the timber lodges are elevated a minimum of 300mm above existing ground levels the risk of pluvial flooding can be suitably managed.
- 4.46: In respect of managing surface water from the development, the camping pods will incorporate green roofs, which will mimic greenfield runoff rates. However, in order to provide an extra element of source control the preliminary drainage strategy has directed downpipes from the new timber cabins into a rain garden, within an overflow to a watercourse/channel. The rain garden will help to slow down the time of concentration of surface water entering into the watercourse/channel.
- 4.47: The buildings which are currently onsite will not be included within the proposed drainage strategy, as only the fish hatchery and tank will be retained, both of which will incorporate green roofs.
- 4.48: The access road and car parking areas will be covered by gravel/ permeable coverings and will therefore not require any positive drainage infrastructure.
- 4.49: The development is therefore considered to comply with the requirements of Policy DME6.
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- 4.50: Due to the lack of available public sewers in the vicinity of the application site, foul flows from the site will be managed by a Package Treatment Plant, which would be ideally positioned within the car park area to the south east of the site.

#### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.51: Policy DMGI: General Considerations sets out a range of general criteria for all developments. These cover matters such as design, access, amenity, environment and infrastructure.
- 4.52: Diversifying activity on this landholding, including reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure, to provide support to the tourist industry in the Forest of Bowland, is in line with the strategic key objectives of the Core Strategy. The proposed level of development has been kept minimal to reduce impact and retain the tranquillity of the site which would attract a particular visitor to stay in this location.
- 4.53: Due to the low number of proposed pods on site, visitor numbers at any one time will be low, and therefore there will be no detrimental impact in respect of highways or neighbouring amenities (the nearest residential property is approximately 600 metres down the private road).
- 4.54: Whilst the proposed camping pods are not vernacular in their style, they are appropriate for their proposed use, and of low impact through scale and use of natural external facing materials (timber clad walls and grassed roof). It is considered the provision of timber camping pods adjacent to a forest and forestry track are suitable in its context.
- 4.55: It is considered that with an appropriate scheme in respect of siting of buildings and infrastructure, materials, finishes and landscaping, the principle of the proposed use would be consistent with the requirements of the Core Strategy.

#### LOCAL PLAN SUMMARY

- 4.56: With regards to all of the above, the proposed glamping development is considered to be in line with the policies and objectives of the local plan. This position is consistent with the council's advice at the pre-application stage.
- 4.57: The building for conversion requires a pragmatic assessment against the objective behind the local plan policy conditions and weighing against the benefits of seeing this diversification scheme come forward. Overall it is considered the scheme meets with overall strategic objectives of the plan and should be supported.

## 5. THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING GUIDANCE

- 5.1: The National Planning Policy Framework (2018) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are to be applied. The Framework is



confirmed as being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

- 5.2: The most relevant policies of the NPPF to the determination of this application are outlined below.
- 5.3: At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 10).
- 5.4: Paragraph 8 sets out the government's three overarching objectives through which sustainable development can be achieved. These objectives (economic, social and environmental) are interdependent and must be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 5.5: Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that local authorities should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
- 5.6: Section 6 of the Framework states 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.
- 5.7: This includes supporting sustainable rural tourism developments that respects the character of the countryside (Paragraph 83).
- 5.8: This approach was previously set out in the government's Rural Productivity Plan (RPP) which was published on 20th August 2015 and corroborated further in the revised NPPF, which makes clear that a prosperous economy should be supported in both rural and urban areas.
- 5.9: The RPP identifies the economic role that rural areas already have and highlights the economic value of enabling existing and new businesses to grow and the economic potential of rural areas. The RPP further recognises and highlights that tourism is an increasingly important component of rural economies.
- 5.10: Paragraph 83(c) of the NPPF specifically provides support for rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. This is entirely applicable to this application where the introduction of the camping use will provide tourist accommodation to visitors who want to access and enjoy the local area surrounding the site.
- 5.11: The site is well placed to support and enhance the local visitor economy located within the Forest of Bowland AONB, a popular visitor destination.
- 5.12: The Framework sets out how great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Paragraph 172).

- 5.13: It has however moved away from a wholesale protection of the countryside for its own sake, as promoted through previous national planning policy guidance and statements. The Framework states that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas 'should be limited' (Paragraph 172) but does not say there should be no development at all.
- 5.14: The partly previously developed nature of the site means it is well placed to deliver a positive impact on the local visitor accommodation offer within this heavily constrained area covered by a national landscape designation, where development on virgin greenfield sites would likely result in unacceptable impacts on those protected landscapes.
- 5.15: Paragraph 117 states that planning should promote an effective use of land while safeguarding the environment. This includes supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings (117 d) and encouraging multiple benefits from both urban and rural land including through mixed use schemes, and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains, such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside (117a). The scheme would deliver a net gain in biodiversity as assessed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- 5.16: It is considered that with a sensitive and appropriate landscaping scheme, the visual effects of the proposed scheme can be successfully mitigated against. Therefore, the scheme can be brought forward whilst still conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, thereby complying with Paragraph 172 of the Framework.
- 5.17: Paragraph 11 of the Framework advises that development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. Earlier paragraphs of this planning statement clearly demonstrate compliance with the strategic objectives of the adopted development plan.
- 5.18: Whilst the proposed development may result in some localised visual impact and landscape change, subject to suitable landscape mitigation, it is not considered that the scheme would give rise to significant adverse impacts which would outweigh the key benefits as discussed further in this letter.
- 5.19: Paragraph 80 of the Framework is clear that significant weight should be given to supporting economic growth.
- 5.20: With reference therefore to the overall objectives of the Framework, the proposed scheme should be supported.

## 6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### THE FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 6.1: The site lies within the Forest of Bowland AONB. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

- 6.2: As confirmed in the previous section of this report, the LVIA concludes that the proposed development would not result in any important levels of harm to the AONB. The scheme is therefore consistent with the purposes of the AONB.
- 6.3: The Forest of Bowland AONB website goes on to describe how:
- In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.
- 6.4: Promoting public enjoyment of the AONB has been a key objective of the board. In 2005 and 2010 the AONB was awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
- 6.5: The 2014 to 2019 Management Plan 'vision' identifies an issue for the AONB as 'Increasing competition with other countryside destinations and need to retain high percentage of tourism market share' (page 46).
- 6.6: Over recent times, the AONB has promoted the concept of 'sustainable tourism' i.e. 'tourism that is dependent upon the area's environment, and which seeks to conserve and enhance that environment, not detract from it'.
- 6.7: The site is well placed to deliver a product to serve this market and help deliver against the strategic objectives of the management body.

#### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- 6.8: A recent report on behalf of the UK Caravan and Camping Alliance<sup>3</sup> highlights the economic benefits of such developments to the UK economy.
- 6.9: It concludes that the UK holiday park and campsite sector makes a substantial contribution to the UK tourism economy, generating £9.3bn in visitor expenditure, equivalent to £5.3bn GVA and supporting 171,448 FTE jobs.
- 6.10: With specific regard to 'glamping' style accommodation, the report states that such accommodation generated £37.5m in visitor spend, generated 704 jobs, and added £22m GVA to the UK economy. Specifically, off-site expenditure was highlighted at 9.1m in England alone.
- 6.11: It states that visitors to UK holiday parks and campsites stayed up to 74% longer and spent up to 60% more than the national tourism average. Visitors and their party who stayed in rented or touring accommodation spent, on average, £557 per visit (£101 per day), spending, on average.

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<sup>3</sup> 2019 Economic Benefits Report: Holiday Parks and Campsites UK

6.12: The Framework is clear that the planning system should give 'significant weight' to supporting economic growth.

## 7. BENEFITS

7.1: As discussed throughout the earlier sections of this statement, there are clear and measurable benefits of the proposed development. These are summarised below.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

7.2: There are numerous environmental benefits associated with the proposed development including the reuse of buildings on the site and the overall management of the site in conjunction with the development:

- Reuse and investment into a collection of existing buildings;
- Use of sustainable construction and energy measures in accommodation;
- Provision of electric car charging points for guests to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes;
- Reuse of a partially developed site minimising demand for the development of virgin green field sites elsewhere in the AONB;
- Investment in landscape and ecological management on the site including:
  - All converted or newly constructed buildings will have green roofs installed;
  - There will be tree and shrub planting with native species suited to the upland climate and landscape character;
  - Creation of a wider variety of habitats that are likely to support a range of wildlife species;
  - Creation of valuable reptile habitat through reuse of spoil and rubble to create low mounds contoured into the site.
  - The existing areas of semi-improved grassland will be enhanced through sowing with an additional seed mix to improve floral diversity;
  - Promote the restoration of dwarf shrub communities and bog-mosses (*Sphagna*);
  - The dense area of bracken will be cleared and managed to create additional areas of semi-improved grassland and dwarf shrub communities;
  - Sections of the flush will be managed, through clearance of encroaching terrestrial vegetation, to promote the restoration of bog mosses;
  - Maintain upland springs through appropriate management;

- o The proposed 'rain garden' will incorporate a suitable species mixture, that will tolerate periods of inundation;
- o The removal of timber post and wire fencing to improve visual character and allow better wildlife connectivity; and
- o Reinstatement of traditional methods such as drystone walls and or timber post and rail fencing;

## SOCIAL

7.3: The proposed development of tourist accommodation on the site would lead to clear social benefits:

- Increased opportunity for visitor enjoyment of high-quality landscapes;
- Increase diversity of accommodation offer within AONB;
- Encourage access to informal recreation activities including public rights of way and bridleways;
- Health and wellbeing are improved with visitors reporting doing more exercise and feeling more relaxed when staying on a holiday park or campsite; and
- Job creation.

## ECONOMIC

7.4: The scheme would also give rise to a range of direct and indirect economic benefits by way of:

- Potential for increase visitors' numbers to support local businesses, including retail and hospitality businesses in the nearby villages of Dunsop Bridge, Whitewell and Slaidburn; off-site expenditure from glamping customers in England totalled £9.1m<sup>4</sup> in 2018.
- Visitors and their parties who stay in rented or touring accommodation spend, on average, £557 per visit (£101 per day)<sup>5</sup>;
- New permanent employment for site manager;
- Economic generating use on the site to potentially support reinstatement of agricultural use on the site;
- Estimated £100,000 construction spend for managers accommodation;

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<sup>4</sup> 2019 Economic Benefits Report: Holiday Parks and Campsites UK

<sup>5</sup> 2019 Economic Benefits Report: Holiday Parks and Campsites UK

- Estimated £100,000 in the supply chain (manufacturing of camping pod, landscaping, advertising costs etc); and
  - Council tax and business rates payable to Ribble Valley Borough Council.
- 7.5\* It is clear from the economic, social and environmental benefits that the planning balance tilts in favour of the development.



## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND PLANNING BALANCE

- 8.1: The contribution to the local tourist accommodation offer provided by the proposed scheme would benefit the local economy by increasing the attraction and range of the accommodation offer in the local area, thereby increasing opportunities for visitors and increasing spend in local businesses and tourist economy. There is a risk to the tourist economy of the AONB if accommodation demands cannot be met that the destination loses visitors to other areas, a threat identified by the AONB Management Plan.
- 8.2: The site is a part developed site with redundant buildings. The scheme presents an opportunity to bring the site into a new use which would support the local tourism economy in a low impact way.
- 8.3: This application has demonstrated that the scheme is capable of being delivered with no levels of significant harm to the AONB landscape.
- 8.4: There is significant potential for ecological and biodiversity enhancement associated with the scheme through a holistic management plan for the site.
- 8.5: The scheme has the opportunity to deliver a low key and environmentally sensitive development which delivers clear economic, environmental and social benefits to the area.
- 8.6: There are no other material considerations or disbenefits to local amenities that would suggest planning permission should be withheld.

## PLANNING BALANCE



### POINTS AGAINST

- Requirement for building to be enlarged and altered as part of conversion to managers accommodation in partial conflict with residential conversion policies of local plan.

### POINTS FOR

- Direct and indirect job creation including on-site employment and jobs created during construction
- The site will utilise local companies for goods and services
- Guests will contribute expenditure to local businesses and services
- Enhancements to the site's appearance through rationalisation of redundant buildings and continued maintenance of site.
- Significant landscaping and ecological enhancement and management scheme, including net biodiversity gain.
- An area from which guests can enjoy the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

With reference to planning policy and other material considerations, there are no significant and demonstrable adverse impacts that would arise from the proposed development. The 'planning balance' is therefore weighed positively in weight of the proposal with reference to the benefits summarised above and set out within this statement, and planning permission should therefore be granted.

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