



CANALSIDE HOUSE, BREWERY LANE, SKIPTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE, BD23 1DR
TEL: 01756 797501 EMAIL: INFO@RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK WEB: WWW.RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND NO. 6839914 VAT REGISTRATION NO. 972 8082 90

28th January 2021

Ribble Valley BC

via email

APPLICATION NO: 3/2020/0667

ADDRESS: Witcher Well Fish Hatchery Whitendale Road Dunsop Bridge BB7 3BL

PROPOSAL: Change of use and conversion of former fish hatchery to three holiday let units and creation of associated car park for six vehicles

Having reviewed the public comments received to the planning application, we considered it would be helpful to respond with some points of clarification on some of the matters raised.

I hope the enclosed is helpful, but if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Shelley Coffey'.

Shelley Coffey

Associate Director - Planning

shelley.coffey@ruralsolutions.co.uk

01756 796199

Holiday Units

To confirm and for the avoidance of doubt, the proposed use is as short let holiday stay units only and not permanent residential units. The use of the units would be controlled as such by any planning permission and there is no precedent for a full residential use set by allowing holiday use.

In respect of visual impact, such uses do not come with the same domestic paraphernalia as full residential units. No 'garden' areas are proposed and there will be no outdoor furniture, barbeques areas etc proposed. the proposed change of use applies to the building and parking area etc only; the wider Witcher Well site and landholding will be retained as existing landscaped and managed positively for ecological and landscape benefits.

It is noted that many of the public objections, many from people who do not live locally but themselves visit the area for holidays, leisure and recreation, object to the proposed development for introducing additional visitors to the area and spoiling the tranquillity and natural beauty of the area. However, they note themselves to be visitors to the area and note that 'thousands of people visit the area for leisure and recreational purposes.

It is unfounded to suggest that people attracted to staying in the proposed holiday units would equally not be drawn by the ability to engage in this tranquillity and natural beauty of the area; and able to do so in a responsible fashion, in the way it is presumed the objectors themselves consider they do. The proposed accommodation will appeal to visitors wishing to stay in such a remarkable location; to bird watch, to star gaze and appreciate the dark skies of the AONB; to walk and cycle in the local area.

Several objectors note that there is not a 'need' for additional accommodation in the area; some cite competition to existing businesses as an objection. The latter point is not a material planning consideration.

In respect of the former, it is highlighted that the Ribble Valley Tourism Destination Management Plan from 2017 noted that there was currently high demand for accommodation in the district at peak times. It can only be expected that this will continue and indeed grow, as foreign travel is restricted under the pandemic restrictions. It is also a key objective of the AONB Management Plan to support sustainable tourism development in the AONB in order to retain tourism market share amongst competition from other countryside destinations. The applicant has engaged with the AONB Management Team in developing the proposals and in addition to the reuse of an existing building there are intentions to establish an on-going plan for the wider environmental management of the landholding associated with the former fish hatchery, to deliver environmental and biodiversity enhancements and benefits.

As evidenced in Appendix I of the Planning Statement, expert advice was sought on the viability of re-starting the fish hatchery use of the building, and it confirms this is considered unviable. As such a new viable use of the building needs to be found.

Highways

The application scheme has been developed after consideration of the highway authority views sought following the withdrawal of the previous application for glamping units on the site. The highway authority advised there was no objection in principle due to the small scale of the use. This current application further reduces the scale of development, now providing 3 accommodation units as opposed to the 5 glamping huts proposed previously.

There is an unrestricted legal access right to the site and a building lawfully able to be used in connection with a variety of agriculture uses. Such a use would give rise to associated traffic movements including potentially heavy vehicles which could have a greater impact on the road and conflicts with road users than a small number of domestic vehicles. This potential conflict would be removed by the change of use of the building.

The parking spaces provided relate to the number of bedrooms provided and are considered appropriate. The applicant will carefully manage guests to ensure vehicle and parking numbers are not exceeded. Guests will be provided with information regarding the multi-use nature of the lane and the need to drive responsibly. The matter of unauthorised vehicles using the road is a private matter not a planning matter, and not relevant to the planning merits of the proposed development. However, the applicant is willing to consider suitable management measures, for example, providing guests with 'permits' for their vehicles so that local residents can identify them as lawful users of the road.

It is also noted that objections note the recent displaying of improved signage which has been successful in managing traffic on the private road. This includes clear speed limit signage. This will continue to help manage traffic movements on the road.

Guests will be encouraged to leave their cars on arrival and access the surrounding countryside on bike and foot, with secure bike storage provided within the units to encourage such guests to stay.

Flood Risk

The site is within Flood Zone I, the area at lowest risk of flooding. The Environment Agency have commented with no objection to the proposed development.

The proposed development is a conversion of an existing building. There will be a reduction of built form on the site, with existing curtilage buildings being removed, and another reroofed with a green roof, which will reduce overall surface water run-off from the site. The car park areas will be surfaced with permeable gravel. There will be no increase in surface water run off as a result of the proposed development.

Despite suggestions, the applicant has not carried out work at the site already and any localised surface water witnessed on the road adjacent the site is presumed a natural occurrence as a result of the existing site conditions.

The package treatment plant has been deliberately sited within a part of the site already occupied by an existing tank, so as to not disturb new ground. Its siting will therefore not impact on any flora at the site. The matter of discharge consents for the package treatment plant is a separate matter outside of the planning application and not a reason to withhold planning permission.

Ecology

The Ecology Surveys and Reports have been undertaken by experienced and qualified ecologists. The survey considers in detail the habitats present and the potential for impacts on all potential protected species.

The original report has been updated further to respond to the comments received from Natural England in respect of potential impacts on the SPA. This additional assessment has confirmed that the proposed works at the application site are not expected to impact the conservation objectives of the SPA.

To confirm, the Monkey Puzzle trees witnessed on the site had been there for temporary storage purposes and are not proposed for use in the landscaping of the site. The landscape proposals submitted with the scheme clearly show the proposed use of appropriate native species including.

The amended plans submitted show a significant reduction in the number of rooflights and openings in response to planning officer requests, which will reduce any potential for impact on the AONB dark skies and protected species. In addition, the external lighting on site will actually be reduced, with existing large floodlights removed and replaced with low level and downward facing lighting, in line with the recommendations of the ecology report.

The land being open access land is not a planning consideration and does not stop the granting of planning permission for development by the LPA. Notwithstanding this, the application relates only to the building and immediate environs, which is a private building, and does not affect or prevent access to the wider surrounding land of the landholding.