

Planning Statement for

Mr Gary Morgan

Smithy Cottage, Birks Brow, Thornley with Wheatley, Preston PR3 2TX

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PLANNING STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A NEW LOG CABIN HOLIDAY SITE

1.0 The Property & Site

Smithy Cottage occupies 4.5 acres of agricultural land. This would once have formed part of a larger agricultural unit, but has been fragmented over time and now remains unviable as an agricultural unit, given the limited size.

Smithy Cottage lies on the southern side of the Forest of Bowland AONB. The area is renowned for its walking, cycling and horse riding. There is also a growing market for artists, bird watchers and photography enthusiasts. These will form the main target groups for the business.

Smithy Cottage lies adjacent to land with a number of existing public footpaths that link to Higher Hill Top Farm and onto Longridge and the surrounding rural areas.

1.1 Current Activity

The applicant has obtained planning permission to extend the cottage; this involves the removing, raising and reinstating of the roof to form a new first floor accommodation (Application 3/2018/0724). Part of this application before you is aimed at providing temporary accommodation to allow for those works to be carried out, after which it will then become a holiday let

Part of the business plan is to utilize the land at the site to create income and employment for himself, his family and 1 or 2 others, that's in addition to keeping livestock on a small holding.

1.2 The Proposed Development

The proposal is to develop a small part of the agricultural land for a brand new Swift Toronto lodge see – (<https://www.swiftgroup.co.uk/holiday-homes/toronto-lodge/>) an award winning style and type of holiday accommodation; this of course would be after the Lodge had served its purpose as temporary accommodation during the alterations to the cottage

The twin unit lodge will be eased into the natural undulations of the land and can easily be laid out in a way that limits the environmental impact of tourism development. At the same time, the intention is to keep the farming element going with a 'Petting type arrangement'. At this moment in time, the plan is for just one unit, it is important to note however, that in the event that more than one unit, say two or three are required, in order to make this application fit for approval, this condition can and will be met.

The design of the site has been formulated to incorporate exacting environmental standards. These include the following :-

- No hard standing areas and a minimal internal access area
- Rainwater harvesting.
- Landscaping using native species and forming of hedgerows and screening
- Waste recycling
- Engaging a 'Sustainable tourism destination' business model.

This requires a specific requirement to focus on guests that wish to enjoy the landscape and outdoor access opportunities of the area. This will include a focus on walkers, cyclists, horse riders, fishermen and birdwatchers. The marketing effort and facilities are all designed to meet this demand.

Direct access to local footpaths and bridle routes can be achieved from the field. Local shops, pubs and restaurants are all a short walk into Longridge and surrounding villages and as a result, users will be encouraged to minimise their use of private vehicles.

2.0 Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7)

Many of the policies set out within PPS 7 have been replaced by PPS 4 but not all. The remaining guidance by PPS 7 relevant to the proposal are highlighted below.

Objectives:

The Government's objectives for rural areas that are relevant to this Planning Policy Statement (PPS) are:

iv) To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors where farming achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, and manages valued landscapes and biodiversity; contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity; is itself competitive and profitable; and provides high quality products that the public wants.

A clear demand has been provided for sustainable tourism facilities within the AONB (see AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy). This demand is also reflected within the applicant's business model.

The development has been designed around the identified needs of Sustainable Tourism Development within the Forest of Bowland AONB. These include the small scale nature of the site, use of existing and new natural landscaping and its targeting of sustainable tourism visitors.

The proposal meets the identified need for more overnight, sustainable forms of accommodation that fulfils the demands of the identified recreational users (Forest of Bowland AONB Strategy). The site design has been developed to minimise both the landscape and environmental impact on the site.

The proposal is located on the boundary of an AONB where landscape and wildlife are given a higher priority. This is why we have been in close discussions with the AONB officer Mr Elliot Lorimer who had a site visit on the 17.06.2019. The policy also requires consideration for *'suitably located and designed development' that supports the local economy and communities. The proposed site is on the southern fringe of the AONB so will not impact on the more centrally located SSSI areas of the fell.* It has been designed to have minimal landscape and environmental impact and will provide employment opportunities for this and the next generation of the family.

The new project will be based on the AONB's Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

There is no intention to erect toilet or shower/utility facilities, as they will be located within the cabin.

Smithy Cottage is not overlooked by any neighbouring properties and is at the head of the road known as Birks Brow. There are a few other houses located between it and the end of the lane, however they are located at a lower level, so there will be no impact on neighbours through traffic movement on or off the site. The lodge will be eased into the natural undulation of the land to minimise impact and mirror that created by the Greenbank Quarry development. Additional screen planting via hedgerow and trees will be placed along boundaries as recommended by the AONB Officer.

The proposal specifically targets users groups who wish to access the AONB including walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

This is a small scale development that has minimum visual and environmental impact, especially when compared to recently approved applications on neighbouring properties, such as Brows Farm, Longridge Golf Course and the Radio Signal station just along the road from this site. This plan has been developed on the basis of the AONB Sustainable Development Strategy.

Within the AONBs Sustainable Tourism Strategy the lack of suitable overnight accommodation has been recognised as an area for suitable development. The proposal is of such a small scale that there will be no detrimental harm to either the landscape or wider environment.

All direction to the site will advise guests accessing the site from the motorway to exit at J32 and use the A6, turning right at Broughton roundabout through Longridge and onto Higher Road.

2.4 Other Relevant Policies

Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2010-2015:

Aim 3: Develop and promote products that encourage the quiet, accessible and quality enjoyment of the Forest of Bowland.

Aim 4: Support the areas tourism businesses to develop high quality and sustainable practices and to maintain a network of sustainable businesses.

Action 4.2: Where appropriate, encourage the development of campsites and 'green camping' and serviced overnight accommodation, especially on promoted routes.

Action 4.6: Encourage businesses to promote car free activities, packages and other incentives.

The project is directly linked to the objectives of the AONB strategy. It will create a new site in an area where there is poor provision of touring sites. It specifically targets users of the local access network. The site itself will be constructed to the highest possible environmental standards.

3.0 Conclusions:

The determining issues and conclusions of the planning policy statements are provided below it is considered that the determining issues and conclusions in the case of this application are:-

- a) The application meets the criteria for development in the countryside in that it is a suitable farm diversification and tourism proposal and in scale and keeping with the location.
- b) The development will be constructed to the highest standards using materials in keeping with the local area.
- c) The visual and environmental impact of the proposal on the AONB will meet the Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- d) The impact on the local highway network will be minimal.

On this basis we hope that the application will be favourably judged against the relevant planning policy issues and other recently approved applications in the immediate area.

ANNEX 1 Market Research and Marketing Strategy National Trends:

In 2009, UK residents took 17m camping and caravanning trips, spending £2.3bn during their trips (source: UKTS). Of the 17m trips, 44% were spent in static caravans, 30% camping and 26% in touring caravans or motor homes. In 2009, some 72m bed nights were spent in caravans, tents and motorhomes (Source:

UKTS). Mintel indicated that one in five people has taken a camping or caravanning holiday in the last three years. In 2009, camping and caravanning trips by UK residents grew by 20%, ahead of overall domestic holiday growth of 17% (source : UKTS). Meanwhile, holiday trips abroad by UK residents fell by 15% from 46m in 2008 to 38m in 2009 - the largest annual decline in overseas holidays for more than 25 years.

According to Visit Britain research in 2010, 90% of "staycationers" expect to take at least one England break in 2010 - the 2009 experience has improved opinions of holidaying at home for many, and left them keen to discover more. This development has been reinforced by registrations of new touring caravans rising by 14% in the first quarter of 2010 (source : European Caravan Federation). There are signs that a more permanent shift in attitudes is occurring, with almost half the population (and 70% of staycationers) expecting that beyond 2010 they will take more holidays in the UK than they have in the past (source: Visit England)

Taking shorter breaks rather than a longer holiday is an additional development that has boosted camping as less forward planning is required and costs are less than the more traditional, single high cost holiday. Again caravanning fits this model. Camping and caravanning is also moving upmarket, with the AB category growing from the smallest customer segment to the second largest between 2006 and 2009 (source: UKTS). As a result the market requirements are changing to smaller scale high quality sites rather than the more traditional holiday camp site.

There is also a greater willingness to book online. According to Visit England, some 23% of domestic holidaymakers booked their last camping or caravanning holiday online in 2009, versus 16% in 2006. Of firm advance bookings, 50% are made online (by value). Based on the national trends there is clearly a growing demand for high quality caravan and camping sites that meet the trend for smaller higher quality sites.

The proposed development will meet this demand and provide exceptional facilities that meet the high end, AB customer profile.

North West and Lancashire Market

Based on LBTB STEAM data the tourism industry is worth £3billion to the Lancashire economy. The non serviced accommodation sector which includes camp sites accounts for £400million of this expenditure. Over 60 million visitors came to the county in 2008 and the sector employs 56,000 people. Within the district there were 3.5 million visitors in 2008 of which 405,000 stayed in non serviced accommodation.

The Research undertaken by Arkenford in 2008 on visitors to the North West showed that rural break characteristics are as follows :-

- Couples or tour groups
- Independent minded person
- Older age profile (45+)
- Longer durations than other destinations in the Northwest (week or longer)

- Driven by the scenery or specific accommodation
- More likely to be staying in self catering or camping
- Undertaking activities in the great outdoors (walking, cycling, nature watching) but also visiting heritage attractions
- Most likely origins: South East, Greater London, the North East and Eastern regions.

The figure below shows NW '*rural*' staying visitors indexed against all NW staying visitors. Of the visitors surveyed it shows the high incidence of those visiting caravan sites while on rural breaks in the region.

Of those visiting rural tourism destination the activities undertaken as a proportion of total North West staying visitors is shown below.

Not surprisingly cycling, bird watching, walking and photography were the most common activities.

Forest of Bowland AONB

The 2009 visitor survey of the AONB showed that the area has a growing visitor identity. For staying visitors 48% of those surveyed said they were on their first visit to the area with 11% staying overnight following a previous day visit. Only 22% of overnight visitors described themselves as regular visitors.

Comparing the survey results from 2004 showed the following trends

- 8+ night visits – 5%
- 5-7 night visits – 24%
- 2-4 night visits – 66%
- 1 night visits – 5%

This shows that the area is developing as a destination for short breaks which suits the caravan and camping market. The profile of visitors to the AONB mirrored those for the regions rural visitors:

- Average group size of 2.5 suggesting it is dominated by couples rather than families.
- 45+ age group which increased to 55+ for staying visitors.

Of those surveyed the areas satisfaction rating was particularly high for food (79%), visitor information (71%) and way marked paths and trails (74%).

Value to the Rural Economy

The total value of North West visitors spending, based on an estimate of 17m trips per year is just over £3.8bn. (Average days spend of £16.88 per day, when they go out, and £20.51 for accommodation per night). This level of spend varies significantly across the region. In general rural destinations provide more income for the region than the coastal destinations due to the longer durations of rural holidays compared to coastal breaks.

For Lancashire the average visitor spends is provided below. For rural visitors this is £13.82 per day. Of note is the lower duration of visits to the Forest of Bowland AONB (1.7 days) compared to the rest of Rural Lancashire (6.5 days). This is not surprising as it is recognised within AONB strategy that there is a distinct lack of overnight accommodation within the AONB.

Local Competition

Within the Longridge area a survey was undertaken of local caravan sites. The study has employed a number of research techniques including :-

- Internet searches
- Yellow pages
- OS maps
- Previous studies
- Personal communication

Touring sites in the Longridge and Forest of Bowland Area

Green Man, Inglewhite (5 pitches)

Visitors will be able to access the local footpath and bridle route network directly from the site. Of the main sites within the AONB most are closed sites linked to Caravan Club Membership. The Smithy will be an open site which will accept both caravans and tents from non affiliated visitors, and in addition the pods and cabins will be available. Of the surveyed sites average pitch prices ranged from £5 to £20 per night with an average of £12.

In summary the national market for caravanning and camping is rapidly expanding. This is partly due to changing perceptions of UK holidays and partly due to the renewed interest in caravanning holidays. Within The North West rural holidays is a growing sector which is heavily reliant interest in outdoor activities. This trend is reflected in the user groups choosing to visit the Forest of Bowland AONB.

The AONB has a lack of touring facilities targeting the general caravan and camping market. Local competition is dominated by small CCL sites or much larger sites, there is therefore a local niche for this scale of site.

Marketing Plan

Based on the research undertaken by the applicant the site will target those customers that meet the 'rural break' characteristics. This included the following customer profile:

- Couples or tour groups
- Independent minded person
- Older age profile (45+)
- Longer durations than other destinations in the Northwest (week or longer)

- Driven by the scenery or specific accommodation
- More likely to be staying in self catering or camping
- Undertaking activities in the great outdoors (walking, cycling, nature watching) but also visiting heritage attractions
- Most likely origins: South East, Greater London, the North East and Eastern regions.

The project has a number of unique selling points which will be key to marketing the business. These include:

- Small site in a tranquil rural location targeting the AD customer profile.
- Home produce
- Green credentials
- Modern onboard clean facilities including showers, toilets, laundry.
- Immediate access to the forest of Bowland access network
- Easy access to nearby facilities such as local shops, restaurants and pubs
- High environmental standards

The main marketing tools will include the following:

- Dedicated website
- Links through established caravan and tourist related sites.
- Targeted caravan and camping magazines
- Entry into tourism related awards. Success will generate increased profile as well as new press interest.

The web site will be created to highlights the main selling points of the site as previously outlined. Links will also be created to other local business.

Conservation and Environmental Management:

- Working with the AONB to manage facilities, grounds and buildings to encourage wildlife and a sustainable local environment.
- Using products and services which have minimal environmental impact such as conserving energy and water, developing renewable energy sources and recycling waste.
- Providing opportunities for visitors to participate, for example, in waste management by reduce/reuse/recycle practices and volunteering time or financial resources to support local conservation projects
- Encouraging visitors to minimise their use of private cars and use group or public transport where possible.

Local Economy:

- Build links with other local businesses to foster inter-trading and referral of visitors to neighbouring tourism operators.
- Favours and promoting local products and explaining to customers their connections with the area.
- Highlighting local events and services to the visitor.

Marketing and Information:

- Implementing and participating in AONB initiatives, such as Sense of Place
- Promote visits in off-season and shoulder periods.
- Provide a comprehensive range of local visitor information including AONB materials highlighting the objectives of the protected area.
- Encourage visitors to visit less popular sites to improve dispersal.
- Promote walking, cycling, horse-riding opportunities for visitors to explore the area.

Once established the business will also look to enter the Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS). The GTBS is the national sustainable tourism certification scheme for the UK. It is now the only certification scheme validated by Visit Britain, through the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT).

Businesses opting to join Green Tourism are assessed by a qualified grading advisor against a rigorous set of criteria, covering a range of areas, like energy and water efficiency, waste management, biodiversity and more. Those businesses that meet the required standard, receive a Bronze, Silver, or Gold award based on their level of achievement. The current network of members is comprised of a wide range of business types, including accommodation providers, visitor attractions, corporate offices and others.

Within the Forest of Bowland there are twelve businesses that have achieved the Gold award. None of these are caravan sites. If The Smithy can achieve this standard it will provide additional marketing opportunities through the Visit Britain.

The business will also aim to achieve a four star rating through the Visit Britain Parks Quality Standard. The site will fall within the Touring and Camping designation. The grades are detailed below.

Grades

5 Star 91% - 100% Exceptional
4 Star 81% - 90% Excellent
3 Star 71% - 80% Very Good
2 Star 61% - 70% Good
1 Star 51% - 60% Acceptable
No Grade 0% - 50% Disqualified

For Touring Facilities in addition to the general requirements for all parks there is specific grading of the following items.

- Quality of water and drainage points
- Quality of Electric hook ups
- Mains service pitch facilities
- chemical disposal facilities
- Washing up areas
- Cleanliness of the park
- Park Layout
- Landscaping

- Ground maintenance
- Building style and maintenance
- Initial impression of the park
- Touring pitch layout and spacing

The detailed design of the new site has been developed to meet the standards of the grading system. The Visit Britain scheme is a nationally recognised accreditation. This will provide access to the Visit Britain and LBTB web site marketing.

Finally, the business will also join both the Ribble Valley Tourism Association which will provide additional marketing and networking opportunities.

Relevant Core Policies

POLICY DMB3: RECREATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

10.25 Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the borough. This is subject to the following criteria being met:

1. The proposal must not conflict with other policies of this 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;
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;
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;
5. The site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas; and
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, adequate mitigation will be sought.

In the Forest of Bowland area of outstanding natural beauty the following criteria will also apply:

1. The proposal should display a high standard of design appropriate to the area.
2. The site should not introduce built development into an area largely devoid of structures (other than those directly related to agriculture or forestry uses).

In the AONB it is important that development is not of a large scale. In the AONB and immediately adjacent areas proposals should contribute to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. Within the open countryside proposals will be required to be in keeping with the character of

the landscape area and should reflect the local vernacular, scale, style, features and building materials.

Recreation and tourism development are often well suited to rural areas and there is a need to have in place effective measures to ensure that facilities and infrastructure can be enhanced in a sustainable way.

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

7.14 Tourism and Visitor Economy

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of Ribble Valley. The strength of the tourism economy in Ribble Valley reflects the attractive countryside, historic towns and villages and a range of visitor attractions such as Clitheroe Castle, Whalley Abbey and the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The strategy for tourists capitalises on such assets and promotes tourism development that complements them