

From: [REDACTED]
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Planning Application 3/2025/0683

Response from Bowland with Leagram Parish Council

In preparing this response, the Parish Council has read the application and the supporting documents, specifically the Planning Statement, the Operational and Highways Management Statement and Plan and the Transport Statement Addendum. We have also had the benefit of visiting the site and more recently, hearing from representatives from the Wild Boar Park of their vision for the future. This has already begun with a rebranding of the park as a country park. Whilst not directly relevant to the current planning application, the meeting did provide some context. Eight parishioners attended our most recent Parish Council meeting and conversations have been had with residents in Greystoneley, Higher Greystoneley, Fair Oak, Dinckling Green, Lower Lees and Loud Mytham. It would be fair to say that those not affected by either noise or traffic are ambivalent about the venue operating as a wedding venue but those who live proximate to the site have shared their concerns.

The Parish Council opposed the initial planning application and supported Ribble Valley Borough Council's decision to refuse planning permission. Notwithstanding the refusal and subsequent enforcement proceedings, trading has continued making a reality of the Parish Council's expressed fear set out in their response dated November 2024 that the tipis would become a permanent fixture 'by the back door'. Despite the requirements of the 28 day rule, permitting any piece of land to be used for alternative temporary purposes for up to 28 days in any calendar year, this has been interpreted as to allow 28 separate events over a 7 month period. The tipis have never been taken down and have remained in situ since 2023 as recognised in the new planning application para 4.1.5). This has led to frustration amongst Parishioners and councillors alike.

The concerns of the Parish Council in relation to the first application were expressed as follows:

- Operating as a wedding venue was not tourism or a recreational activity.
- The tipis did not blend into their surroundings.
- The peace and tranquillity referred to in the lodge applications would be lost.
- Noise levels would increase.
- The standard of design was not of a high enough quality for the area.
- A built development would be introduced into an area largely devoid of structure.
- The proposal was not small scale suitable for a rural area.
- There would be no obvious contribution to the protection, conservation and natural beauty of the area.
- A large volume of traffic would be brought to the area over concentrated periods of time.
- No additional employment would be created.

The RVBC refusal also made reference to the fact that the venture was not essential to the social welfare of the area nor to the local economy and did not comply with relevant policies and key statements.

This response relates solely to the application to leave the tipis, the toilet unit, the external catering unit, storage unit and hard standing in place for a further three years until 1st November 2028 thereby formalising the intention to keep the tipis in situ until 2028 and does not relate to the plans for the site beyond November 2028.

We will consider each of our original objections in turn to determine whether they have been addressed.

1. Operating as a wedding venue was not tourism or a recreational activity.

We now understand that a wedding venue can be considered as tourism. The application talks of the new model for the tipis to be as an accommodation led event model meaning that all weddings and events are conditional upon the full booking of on site accommodation. Whilst it is hoped that this will limit movement on and off the site, such movement cannot be enforced and it is unknown and not quantifiable as to how much time will be spent in activities linked to the local economy. It cannot be said, however that the venue is essential to the local economy.

2. The tipis do not blend into their surroundings

Whilst this remains the case, having been to see the site, it is clear that they are well hidden from the road and of themselves are attractive. This would not be an objection we would seek to pursue.

3. The peace and tranquillity referred to in earlier lodge applications will be lost and noise levels will increase

We accept that steps have been taken to deal with the concerns raised by the Parish Council and local residents. We note that a new sound system has been installed which has an in built sound limiter. We also note that Environment Health were satisfied that noise levels were, when tested, within acceptable limits. It should, however, be remembered that people live in and visit this area with its added designation as a National Landscape with an expectation as to noise levels and type. All residents present at our recent meeting had heard noise from the park since the limiter was installed. It is accepted that no formal complaints were made although calls were made to the Wild Boar Park. The music did stop at 11pm.

4. Standard of design not to a sufficiently high quality

This was certainly the case when the initial application was submitted. The planning department will now assess whether design quality has reached the appropriate standard.

5. A built development would be introduced into an area largely devoid of structures

This remains the case.

6. The development is not small scale suitable for a rural area.

This determination was reached by Ribble Valley Planning Department when the first application was refused. There has been no change.

7. There would be no obvious contribution to the protection, conservation and natural beauty of the area.

This remains the case.

8. A large volume of traffic would be brought to the area over concentrated periods of time.

It is accepted that a considerable amount of work has gone into trying to improve the issue of increased traffic on the roads and traffic movement which was flagged by both the County Council Highways Authority and Ribble Valley Planning Department as a road safety issue. Potential improvements can be listed as follows:

- a. All weddings and events will be conditional upon the full booking of on site accommodation which when fully functional will accommodate 146 guests, 50 guests less than in the original application.
- b. The mandatory booking requirement is hoped to restrict movement on and off the site certainly later in the evening when before, guests might be leaving to go to local hotels.
- c. Guest arrival patterns as set out in the Operational and Highways Management Statement (para 2.1) envisage the majority of guests arriving the day before the wedding with the remaining guests arriving on the day. It is anticipated that this will result in no single peak arrival period immediately prior to the ceremony.
- d. The Wild Boar Park (Country Park) will not be open on the days when private events are taking place in the tipis.
- e. The Transport Statement Addendum refers to a limit of 30 events per year.
- f. Potential and willingness to improve sight lines.

It should be noted that whilst guests staying on site will be limited to 146, an additional 50 guests could be invited to attend in the evening as the capacity for the tipis is 200. It would seem, however, from the experience at the park that the average number of evening guests is around 18. This could be monitored by staff at the park at the Pre Event Meeting.

Whilst the aim is to operate the site as a self contained destination venue, if guests are ideally going to be on site for two nights (three days) some movement off site is likely and cannot be controlled.

Although the Planning Statement refers to a number of small scale low impact community and wellness orientated events that are proposed for the tipis, we understand that already for 2026, there are already 26 weddings booked and 2 wedding fairs. This means that the 30 annual limit for events in the tipis has almost been reached unless this limit is to be exceeded or an alternative event site is to be used.

Whilst the Wild Boar Park will not be open on the days of the private events, it could be open on the intervening days. (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.) There could also be other events in the tipis on non wedding days or in the barns. On an occasion when there was a Tuesday and a Thursday wedding, guests could be leaving on the Wednesday and guests for the Thursday wedding could be arriving. The Wild Boar Park could also be open with the additional possibility of a public event. This will inevitably increase traffic movement on the roads albeit not necessarily over a concentrated period.

As with the noise, **any** additional traffic is a concern. The roads are narrow country lanes adding to the rural charm of the area but the practical reality is that the condition of the roads is poor, they are unlit and passing places are few. It is the case that there have been no accidents on the road that can be attributable to traffic going to either the Wild Boar Park or the tipis but the countryside has to work and there will potentially be traffic movement on weekdays as well as at weekends if the model proposed in the application is adopted.

7. No additional employment will be created

The Planning statement refers to seasonal employment opportunities associated with set up, coordination and service roles. 'Presently the tipis require up to 4 seasonal staff, Bowland Escapes another 4 whilst caterers also generate a further 8 seasonal positions.' (Para 7.3.4) At the recent meeting with representatives from the Park we were advised that an advert had been placed for an Event Manager.

Advertising of the site as a wedding venue continues whilst the planning decision is pending. There has to be a balance between allowing a company to diversify and to change its model of working without precedents being set that are not in the best interests of the countryside. We are reliant upon the Ribble Valley Planning Department to apply the policies, key statements and policy frameworks that are intended to protect the countryside whilst not restricting acceptable change and development. Our concern as a Parish Council is to ensure the protection of the Parish and its residents and the area in which it sits which is designated as a National Landscape.

20th May 2026.