

**9. FULL APPLICATION - EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND INTERNAL RE-CONFIGURATION OF EXISTING VISITOR CENTRE FOR RETAIL AREA, TOURIST AND INFORMATION SERVICES, MUSEUM, CAFÉ, CLASSROOM AND INTERPRETATION SPACE AT CASTLETON VISITOR CENTRE, BUXTON ROAD, CASTLETON (NP/HPK/0616/0529, 414905/382963, 28/7/2016/AM)**

**APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**Site and Surroundings**

Castleton Visitor Centre is located at the western end of Castleton, north of the road to Winnat's Pass, approximately 110m north west of St Edmund's Church and within the designated Castleton Conservation Area. The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and 3.

The centre is occupied by the National Park Authority and in a mixed use comprising museum, retail and a catering kiosk with ancillary office and storage space. The building is made up of a range of limestone and render buildings with pitched roofs clad with concrete tiles and natural stone slate. Windows and doors are constructed from aluminium finished in a recessive grey.

There are public toilets attached to the northern end of the centre and the public car park adjacent to the site, with a shared access; this is operated by High Peak Borough Council. Orchard House is the nearest neighbouring residential property, located approximately 6.5m to the west of the centre.

**Proposal**

This application seeks planning permission for internal re-configuration of the centre to provide a café and larger retail and relocating the museum and media / classroom.

The amended plans show that a 45 cover café would be created within the northernmost part of the building with kitchen, disabled toilet, office and store. To facilitate this the floor space of the building would be extended by moving the existing glazing to the easternmost/outermost edge of the existing canopy on the east elevation of the building. The plans also show that a new extract vent would be installed on the western elevation to discharge air from the café kitchen.

The existing main entrance in the south elevation of the building would be altered to insert glazing to match the existing window frames and the entrance would be moved to the east elevation where two of the windows would be altered to glazed doors. A separate window would also be altered to form a new glazed door to provide access into the re-located media/classroom.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions or modifications:**

- 1. Statutory time limit for implementation.**
- 2. In accordance with specified approved plans.**
- 3. Notwithstanding the approved plans, no planning permission is granted for an extract vent terminating on the west elevation. Prior to the installation of any extract vent, full details of its position and design shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

4. **Prior to the first occupation of the café hereby approved, full details of the bin storage area shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.**
5. **Any door on the west elevation of the building shall remain closed at all times and not be utilised for access other than in an emergency.**
6. **External finish of new door and window frames shall match the existing.**
7. **The hours of opening of the development hereby permitted shall be restricted to 09:00 – 17:00 hours on any day.**

### **Key Issues**

- Whether the proposed development is acceptable in principal.
- The impact of the development upon the character, appearance and amenity of the building, its setting within the Conservation Area and that of neighbouring properties.

### **History**

2001: Planning permission granted conditionally for conversion and extension of existing building to form visitor / heritage centre.

The above planning permission was granted subject to a planning condition which prevented any change between the approved layout of uses within the building along with a condition which restricts hours of opening to between 08:00 – 20:00 Monday to Saturday and 09:00 – 20:00 on Sundays.

2003: Planning permission granted to vary condition 4 imposed upon the 2001 to allow for public opening hours to extend to 23:00 hours for up to 15 days a year.

2003: Planning permission granted for external alterations to erect three shelters, boundary wall, two pieces of artwork and the installation of security shutters.

### **Consultations**

Highway Authority – No objection.

Borough Council – No response to date.

Borough Council Environmental Health – No response to date.

Parish Council – No objections.

### **Representations**

A total of five individuals have written to the Authority at the time this report was written. All five individuals object to the proposed development and the reasons given are summarised below. The letters are available to read in full on the website.

- Object to the reduced area dedicated to a museum in the visitor centre as this provides interest, education and diversity and as such is the most important part of the visitors centre.

- There are significant numbers of existing cafes and tea rooms in Castleton.
- The proposed external extract fan on the west elevation would have an adverse impact upon the visual aspect of the building.
- The proposed external extract fan on the west elevation would create constant noise and odour related to cooking which will adversely affect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and specifically Orchard House.
- If the doors on the west elevation become access points for deliveries or moving rubbish from the café or is left open there would be further kitchen and cafeteria noise and overlooking from members of the public in the café. This will adversely affect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and specifically Orchard House.
- The window proposed on the west elevation will overlook the conservatory, bedroom and garden of Orchard House. *Officer Note – the window that this point refers to has been omitted from the amended drawings.*
- Concern that use of the land between the building and Orchard House as staff smoking / recreation area or for siting waste food bins would adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring properties and specifically Orchard House.

### **Main Policies**

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L3, RT1, HC4 and HC5

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LC5, LS1, LT11 and LT18

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Paragraph 115 within the Framework says that great weight should be given to conserving landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage within in National Parks. Paragraphs 128 – 134 make a strong presumption in favor of the conservation of designated heritage assets such as Conservation Areas and says that development which would have a harmful impact should not be accepted unless there is an overriding public benefit.

Paragraph 28 says that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. Policies should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses, communities and visitors in rural areas and which respect the character of the countryside. Policies should also promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages.

### **Development Plan**

DS1 says that in settlements recreation and tourism development and community facilities are acceptable in principle. RT1 A says that the National Park Authority will support facilities which enable recreation, environmental interpretation and encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park. RT1 B says that development should be focused in or on the edge of settlements and RT1 D says that development must not prejudice or disadvantage peoples' enjoyment of other existing and appropriate recreation, environmental education or interpretation activities.

HC4 A says that the provision or improvement of community facilities and services will be encouraged within settlements. HC4 and LS1 say that shops, professional services and premises for the sale and consumption of food and drink must be located within settlements and be of appropriate scale to serve the needs of the local community and the settlement's visitor capacity. Premises for the sale and consumption of food and drink will be permitted provided that there is no harm to living conditions or to the role or character of the area, including its vitality and viability.

GSP3, L3, LC4 and LC5 together require a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the significance of the cultural heritage of the National Park and require development to conserve the character, appearance and amenity of existing buildings, their setting and that of neighboring properties. LT11 and LT18 require development to be provided with adequate parking and safe access.

The Authority's adopted Design Guide and the Castleton Conservation Area appraisal which was adopted in 2010 are also relevant material considerations in the determination of this application.

### **Assessment**

#### **Whether the proposed development is acceptable in principle.**

The visitor centre is located within Castleton, which is a designated settlement for the purposes of policy DS1. This application proposes internal and external alterations to the existing centre to facilitate the internal re-organisation of the museum / interpretation space and retail space within the building and the expansion of the existing catering kiosk into a café in the rear of the building.

Whilst officers understand the concerns raised in regard to the reduction in floor space allocated to the museum within the building, taken together policies RT1, HC4, HC5 and LS1 offer clear support in principle for appropriate tourism, shopping and food and drink premises within designated settlements such as Castleton. It is also clear from the submitted plans that the museum would be retained within the centre of the building along with a media / class room and interpretation space in the shop and café.

The proposed uses would be retained within the existing building and it is considered that both the larger shop and the café would be an appropriate scale to serve the needs of both the local community and Castleton's visitor capacity. It is acknowledged that there are a number of cafes in Castleton, but this site, close to the main car park and already providing some catering facilities, is well located to serve visitor needs and would enhance the visitor offer. Competition between individual businesses is not a material planning consideration. It is therefore considered that in principle the proposed development is in accordance with relevant development plan policies.

#### **Impact of the development**

To facilitate the internal re-organisation of the building the application proposes several alterations to the existing building to move the access to the building from the road facing gable to the east elevation, to provide a new access to the media/class room and to increase the internal space available for the café by extending beneath the existing canopy.

The submitted plans show that the existing entrance in the road facing gable would be removed and provided with new glazing to match the existing above the opening. New glazed doors would be provided in the existing glazing on the eastern elevation again to match the existing frame design. There are no objections to these alterations which would reflect the design of the existing fenestration and therefore subject to conditions to secure an appropriate matching finish it is considered that the character and appearance of the building would be conserved along with its

setting in the Conservation Area in accordance with GSP3, L3, LC4 and LC5.

Concern has been raised in representations that the introduction of the café, together with the use of the existing door openings on the western elevation and the introduction of a new window and extract fan, could harm the amenity of the occupants of Orchard House which is located approximately 6.5m to the west of the site (measured at the closest point) on the far side of the watercourse.

In response to these concerns amended plans have been submitted which show the proposed window on the west elevation being omitted. Additional information has been provided with regard to the proposed extract vent. A 0.45m diameter extract vent is proposed with an odour control unit. The odour control would include carbon filters and an activated oxygen oxidation odour suppression system. A silencer is proposed to be fitted to the system which would reduce the noise level of the system to 40dB.

Given the close relationship between Orchard House and the western elevation of the visitor centre, Officers understand the concerns raised that noise and smells generated by both the operation of the café and the extract fan could have the potential to have an adverse impact upon the residential amenity of occupants of Orchard House. The issues raised relate to the operation of the extract fan, the use of the existing doorways on the western elevation of the building and access and use of the land outside the building closest to Orchard House.

With regard to the extract fan, Officers note the intention by the applicant to install an odour suppression system and silencer to mitigate potential impacts. However, given the close relationship to the boundary of Orchard House Planning officers remain concerned that there is the potential for noise and on occasion odour to impact upon the quiet enjoyment of occupants of Orchard House. It is therefore considered that any extract fan would need to be sited on the east side of the building facing the car park or potentially exit out of the roof to avoid this impact.

Officers are in discussion with the Property Service of the Authority (as applicants) in regard to an amended position for the extract vent which is expected in time for the meeting. However, at this stage and in the absence of a resolved solution, Officers recommend that any permission is subject to a planning condition that no extract system shall be installed to terminate on the west elevation and that full details of a revised scheme are submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

There are three existing doors on the west elevation of the visitor centre which currently provide access to the museum and to two stairwells which lead to first floor offices and store rooms. The position of the three doors and the relation of the doors to the stairwells would be unchanged, therefore there are no concerns that the doors to the stairwells would generate or cause any additional or harmful impact.

The plans show that the central door would provide access to a service counter within the proposed café. Given the position of this door it is unlikely that it would be utilised by members of the public, however it is considered that if this door was left open or in regular use during opening hours that potential noise from the café and staff using the door and outside space could harm the residential amenity of occupants of Orchard House.

It is therefore considered that if permission is granted that the use of this particular door would need to be carefully controlled to ensure that it remains closed and not used for access other than as a fire door. A condition to restrict the hours of operation of the visitor centre would also be recommended in line with the proposed opening times on the planning application form.

Finally, concern has been raised that siting bins close to Orchard House could generate noise and other disturbance. The enlargement of the café as proposed would be likely to result in

additional waste generated from the site which if sited close to the boundary facing Orchard House could have an adverse impact upon amenity. It is therefore considered necessary to impose a condition requiring the location of the bin storage area to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Subject to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a harmful impact upon the living conditions of neighbouring properties in accordance with policies GSP3, HC5 and LC4. The proposed development would not result in any changes to the existing access or the public car park to the rear and therefore Officers agree with the Highway Authority that there are no objections on highway safety grounds.

The site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The Environment Agency standing advice for this type of development within an existing building is that it is acceptable provided that existing floor levels are retained which is the case here.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed development would facilitate the re-configuration of the museum and shop space within the building and expand the existing catering kiosk into a café. It is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with policies DS1, RT1, HC4, HC4 and LS1 as the proposal would involve alterations to the existing visitor centre to provide a museum, interpretation space, shop and café which is appropriate in scale in relation to the needs of the local community and the visitor capacity of Castleton.

Subject to conditions it is considered that the development would conserve the character, appearance and amenity of the existing building, its setting within the Conservation Area and that of neighbouring properties in accordance with GSP3, L3, HC5, LC4 and LC5. The proposal would not give rise to any parking or highway safety issues in accordance with LT11 and LT18.

In the absence of any further material considerations it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the development plan and accordingly is recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined in this report.

### **Human Rights**

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

### **List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

Nil