

**7. FULL APPLICATION – ADDITION OF A CYCLE HIRE OPERATION TO THE CURRENTLY DISUSED OFFICE ROOM OF THE VISITOR CENTRE BUILDING. MANIFOLD VISITOR CENTRE, HULME END (NP/SM/0518/0448 410299 / 359321 P8736 MN 08/06/2018)**

**APPLICANT: HELEN BOWER ON BEHALF OF THE PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**1. Site and Surroundings**

- 1.1. Manifold Visitor Centre is located at Hulme End, approximately 1.6 miles from Hartington village, on the southern side of the B5054.
- 1.2. The visitor centre is operated by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and occupies a former railway station building, part of which is used to provide un-manned visitor information whilst the other part is vacant, having previously been used as an office room. A further building is located 5 metres to the south east and is occupied by a cafe business.
- 1.3. The visitor centre is adjacent to a public picnic area that serves as one of the two main access points to the Manifold track, which follows the old route of the Leek and Manifold Light railway.
- 1.4. There is an onsite car park comprising 60 parking spaces, located approximately 75m to the west of the visitor centre, and an adjacent car park that is dedicated for café customers.
- 1.5. The site is outside of any designated conservation area.

**2. Proposal**

- 2.1. The application seeks full planning permission for a change of use to establish a cycle hire operation on the site. The cycle hire would be operated by the Peak District National Park Authority, with 40 cycles available for hire. Cycles would be stored within the former office, and the business would operate from it. There would be no physical changes to the building, and no external works or cycle storage is proposed.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

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

- 1. 3 year time limit**
- 2. In accordance with submitted plans**
- 3. No outdoor storage of cycles**

**4. Key Issues**

- The principle of the development and landscape, highway and amenity impacts

**5. Relevant Planning History**

- 5.1. 1983 – Planning permission granted for construction of new access to B5054 and closure of existing access
- 5.2. 1985 – Planning permission granted for construction of car park
- 5.3. 1994 – Planning permission granted for change of use of county council depot premises to an interpretation/information centre and provision of public toilets

**6. Consultations**

- 6.1. **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council** – No response at time of writing

**6.2. Fawfieldhead Parish Council – No response at time of writing**

**7. Representations**

- 7.1. One letter of representation has been received at time of writing. This does not object to the proposal, but advises that the site already has issues with litter due to insufficient bin provision and with poorly maintained public toilets within the visitor centre. They also query how the use of the public car park for cycle hire users will be policed, as the other car park on the site is for café customers only.

**8. Policies**

- 8.1. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public

When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 8.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
- 8.3. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*

Development Plan policies

- 8.4. Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.
- 8.5. Policy GSP2 addresses enhancement within the National Park and states, amongst other things, that opportunities will be taken to enhance the Park by the treatment or removal of undesirable features or buildings.

- 8.6. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
- 8.7. Policy DS1 provides an overview of the development strategy for the Park.
- 8.8. Policy L1 identifies that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
- 8.9. Policy RT1 states that the Authority will support facilities which enable recreation, environmental education and interpretation, which encourage understanding and enjoyment of the National Park, and are appropriate to the National Park's valued characteristics. It goes on to advise that new provision must justify its location in relation to environmental capacity, scale and intensity of use or activity, and be informed by the Landscape Strategy. It notes that where appropriate, development should be focused in or on the edge of settlements. In the open countryside, clear demonstration of need for such a location will be necessary. It also states that wherever possible, development must reuse existing traditional buildings of historic or vernacular merit, and should enhance any appropriate existing facilities.
- 8.10. Policy LC4 states, amongst other things, that any development must, at least, respect and conserve the landscape of the area.
- 8.11. Policy LT18 states that the provision of safe access arrangements will be a prerequisite of any development, and that where the provision of safe access would damage the valued characteristics of the area, the National Park Authority will consider refusing planning consent.

Relevant Core Strategy (CS) policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L1, RT1

Relevant Local Plan (LP) policies: LC4, LT18

## **9. Assessment**

### Principle of the development

- 9.1. The proposed development would enable outdoor recreation which encourages enjoyment of the National Park. Further, its utilisation of existing recreational infrastructure – the visitor centre and the Manifold Trail – would minimise any landscape impacts and the proposed use is a quiet recreational activity that is appropriate to conserve and enhance the National Park's valued characteristics.
- 9.2. The use does justify the proposed countryside location, being within easy access of the Manifold Trail, whilst also having access to existing parking facilities.
- 9.3. The use would utilise part of the original station building, which is of historic merit, dating from the early twentieth century and being representative of rail development of that time.
- 9.4. For these reasons the proposal complies with the Authority's recreation and tourism policies and is acceptable in principle.

### Landscape impacts

- 9.5. The landscape impacts of the development would be minimal, limited to any additional parking associated with the development and cycle movements along the trail. In the context of the existing car park and because the trail is already well used by cyclists these impacts would be acceptable.
- 9.6. This is subject to there being no outdoor storage of cycles, which could have further impacts on the appearance of the area depending on the position and number of them. It is recommended that if permission is granted a condition is imposed to restrict such storage.

### Amenity impacts

- 9.7. Given the location within an existing visitor centre building and the nature of the new use, the development would not lead to any significant increase in noise or other disturbance, or reduce the privacy of any nearby properties.
- 9.8. It is therefore concluded that the development could be accommodated on the site whilst conserving the amenity of all nearby residential properties and other neighbouring uses.
- 9.9. Representation has advised that a lack of bin provision currently results in littering at the site. This is an ongoing issue however rather than specific to the proposed use; it is not considered that the addition of a cycle hire business to the site would significantly increase litter at the site as the majority of visitors will simply be collecting or returning cycles to the premises. The use itself would not generate litter.

### Highway Considerations

- 9.10. The site would be accessed from the highway using the existing site access, and parking would be provided by the existing pay and display car park. The applicant advises that usage figures for the car park show that the average number of spaces used each day varies between 5 and 14 depending on the time of year. Given that the maximum capacity of the car park is 60, this would provide sufficient space for parking associated with the cycle hire use. As such, whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed cycle hire may well intensify the demand for parking, it is considered that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate this.
- 9.11. One letter of representation has queried how it can be ensured that cycle hire customers use the pay and display car park rather than the café car park. The same currently applies to those accessing the trail from the site or using the visitor centre, and so is not unique to the cycle hire operation. This is a matter to be resolved by the car park owners and is not relevant to the planning application under consideration.
- 9.12. It is concluded that given the existing site use, car parking arrangements, site access, and exit visibility there would be no substantive reason to refuse the application on grounds of highway safety or amenity.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1. The development would introduce a recreational use that is consistent with both the Authority's statutory purposes and planning policy.
- 10.2. There is otherwise no conflict between the intent of policies in the Development Plan and Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework and there are no other relevant considerations that would otherwise indicate planning permission should be refused.

10.3. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval.

**11. Human Rights**

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

**12. List of Background Papers (not previously published)**

None

**13. Report Author and Job Title**

Mark Nuttall – Senior Planner