

6. CHANGE OF USE FROM RESIDENTIAL (USE CLASS C3) TO A WELCOME AND VISITOR RECEPTION HUB (USE CLASS F1) AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT ILAM HALL COTTAGE, ILAM MOOR LANE, ILAM (NP/SM/1225/1294) ALN

APPLICANT: MRS LIZ BOWN – NATIONAL TRUST

Summary

1. The proposals are for the change of use of a single C3 dwelling to a visitor welcome and reception hub in association with Ilam Hall.
2. The proposed use is policy compliant and the loss of the unencumbered open market dwelling does not conflict with adopted policies.
3. The minor impacts on the grade II* listed building and on archaeology, trees and ecology are outweighed by the substantial benefits of improving the management of visitors to the site, improving the visitor experience and allowing a better understanding of the National Park.

Site and Surroundings

4. Ilam Hall and Ilam Hall Cottage (also known as Gardeners Cottage) are grade II* listed buildings located close to the southern boundary of the National Park.
5. The site is owned and managed by the National Trust (although the Hall itself is let to the Youth Hostel Association) and is a significant tourist attraction in this part of the National Park.
6. The Coach House and Stable Block is also grade II listed, and is the tower known as The Peppercot. The Hall and Gardens are within the Ilam Conservation Area.
7. Ilam Hall Cottage is an open market dwelling, and is currently tenanted. It is attached to the northernmost wing of the Hall, and sits between the Hall and the main visitor car park. The property currently has enclosed gardens to the north and east of the house. It has three bedrooms.

Proposal

8. Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the dwellinghouse (use class C3) to a visitor welcome and reception hub (use class F1).
9. The change of use would take place within the shell of the existing building. The existing garden of the dwellinghouse would be opened up by the removal of perimeter fencing and a new path laid to provide pedestrian access from the visitor car park to the north. Seven timber bollards with low voltage LED lights would be placed along the access path that runs around the property.
10. Minor alterations to the listed building are proposed including fire upgrading of internal doors, the laying of new vinyl flooring, new smoke detectors, alterations for the provision of wireless data and a new external light
11. On the ground floor would be a welcome room, meeting room, second-hand bookshop and staff toilet and storage facilities. On the first floor would be a staff office and a staff welfare room, along with additional storage.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. **Statutory time limit**
2. **In accordance with amended plans**
3. **No development shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological monitoring is submitted to an approved by the National Park Authority.**
4. **No development shall commence on the approved external works (including demolition works, excavations, construction works, or storage of materials or equipment or machinery within the application area) until the protective fencing measures specified on the Tree Protection Plan [Drawing Number J6878 TPP] have been implemented in full. Thereafter all of the detailed requirements indicated on the Tree Protection Plan [Drawing Number J6878 TPP] shall be adhered to in full and the protective fencing shall be retained with no construction or storage activities within the Construction Exclusion Zone throughout the construction period.**
5. **Prior to any demolition works, excavations, construction works, or storage of materials or equipment or machinery within the application area a pre-commencement meeting shall be held and attended by the developer's appointed arboricultural consultant, the site manager/foreman and a representative from the National Park Authority to discuss details of the working procedures and to agree those stages at which arboricultural supervision is required in order to meet the purpose of the Tree Protection Plan [Drawing Number J6878 TPP]. Prior to commencement of any works a brief written report of the successful completion of the pre-commencement meeting shall be submitted to the National Park Authority. A further written report of site supervision measures shall be submitted for approval in writing by the National Park Authority within 28 days from completion of all of the works for which the supervision measures are specified.**
6. **The recommendations set out in the letter by Skyline Ecology dated 18th December 2025 shall be strictly adhered to.**
7. **The design, lux levels and operation of the ground mounted bollard lights to be submitted and approved.**

Key Issues

- Principle of change of use
- Impacts on heritage assets
- Archaeology
- Impact on trees
- Ecological considerations
- Climate Change Mitigation

Relevant Planning History

Ilam Hall has a detailed planning history. Relevant to the current proposals are:

- February 2025 – pre-application advice sought with regard to proposals for an

interlinked masterplan for Ilan Hall and Dovedale (including proposals for a visitor reception hub) – Enq ref 51266.

- June 2020 – planning permission granted for installation of temporary visitor welcome hut for 18 months (NP/SM/0420/0311). Temporary permission has been re-issued several times, with the latest permission granted in January 2026 for a further period of 1 year (NP/SM/1225/1239).
- June 2018 – planning permission granted for redesign of existing car park layout, plus re-alignment of car park approach road; Change of use from caravan site to car park; Change of use of part of Hall Cottage Garden from garden to car park (NP/SM/0318/0223).
- March 1987 – listed building consent granted for alterations of listed building at Ilan Hall Cottage (NP/SM/0187/002).

Consultations

12. **Highway Authority:** no objections. The site is remote from the highway and will have no impact on the highway.
13. **District Council:** no issues to raise.
14. **Parish Council:** strongly objects. *‘At a time when our community is experiencing a significant shortage of homes available for both rent and purchase, the loss of a residential dwelling to a commercial or visitor-focused use would further exacerbate an already acute housing issue. Residential properties are essential for supporting local families, key workers, and the long-term sustainability of our community.*

The removal of a home from the local housing stock for non-residential purposes is, in our view, unacceptable. While there is a shared desire to protect our area from inappropriate development, this proposal represents a permanent loss of a residential property and cannot be overlooked. The cumulative impact of such changes poses a serious risk to the balance and vitality of rural communities.

We acknowledge and respect the important role the National Trust plays in conserving heritage and supporting tourism. However, this must be carefully balanced against the fundamental need to retain existing homes for local residents. In this case, the Parish Council considers that the balance weighs firmly against the proposed change of use.

For these reasons, the Parish Council unanimously objects to this application and urges the planning authority to refuse permission.’

15. **Authority’s Conservation Officer:** *‘The proposals seek to adapt the building to enable its use as a welcome visitor and reception hub. On balance, the works are considered to be acceptable and enable the conversion without any significant intervention to historic fabric. The proposal will open up the garden to the north of Hall Cottage, reestablishing its visual connection to and relationship with the land the north, and provide greater opportunity for an appreciation of the cottage itself as well as the remnant features of the kitchen gardens in its grounds. The removal of the existing timber feather board fence will improve the general environs of the listed building. A new path connecting the car park with the visitor centre and the Hall to the south will aid wayfinding and accessibility through the site. The proposals therefore align with the requirements of PDNPA Policy DMC10.*

A small degree of harm has been identified from proposed works to upgrade doors within the cottage. In line with PDNPA Policy DMC7 and NPPF paragraphs 212 and

215, the harm should be considered against the public benefits of the proposals, which are significant.

The proposals present an opportunity to deliver a minor beneficial effect to the character and appearance of the Ilam Conservation Area and the landscape as a non-designated heritage asset by restoring the visual connection and sense of openness between the cottage and the landscape to the north and integrating the kitchen garden structural elements into the publicly accessible parts of the estate. The proposals therefore align with the stipulations of PDNPA Policies DMC5 and DMC8.'

- 16. Authority's Archaeologist:** (in summary) *The site of the proposed development is a site of archaeological interest. Hall Cottage and its garden are known to be within the 18th/19th century kitchen garden as depicted on the 1839 Cobb map of Ilam. The site falls within Ilam Park, which as a parkland is not registered, but is of sufficient quality and importance to be a Registered Park and Garden; it is a significant and early example of a designed Picturesque landscape, as demonstrated by the 2017 historic landscape study commissioned by the National Trust.*

Under the proposed developments for the previous part of the welcome scheme (NP/SM/0318/0223), parts of the former kitchen garden were evaluated (trial trenching), specifically the former caravan park (now the overflow car park). It demonstrated that well preserved remains of the kitchen garden and its associated buildings and structures survive in this area at a very shallow depth. These remains have archaeological interest in the information they hold relating to the form, structure and use of this lost garden, and its place in the development of Ilam.

The area that forms the garden around Hall Cottage Garden have not been previously archaeologically evaluated. It is likely that archaeological remains in the area of Hall Cottage's garden will add to our understanding of the form, structure and use of this lost garden, and its place in the development of Ilam. The groundworks associated with the proposed development have the potential to encounter, damage and destroy previously unrecorded belowground archaeological remains relating to the lost kitchen garden and the development of Hall Cottage. This will harm archaeological interest of the site, but not to the core significance of Ilam Hall and parkland. The scale of the groundworks is relatively small. The level of harm is therefore considered to be minor. The public benefits of improving visitor welcome at Ilam are considerable. The harm identified above need to be mitigated by a conditioned scheme of archaeological monitoring on all groundwork.

- 17. Authority's Ecologist:**

An Ecological Statement (December 2025) for the installation of low-level lighting and removal of small areas of hedgerow at Ilam Hall Cottage by Skyline Ecology has been submitted to support the application.

We hold records of bats in the wider site area however, Skyline Ecology consider that the retention and installation of external lighting is unlikely to impact foraging or commuting bats as the proposed lighting will be low level and on timers so they will be turned off during non-operating hours.

There is low potential that the non-native hedgerow on site could be utilised by nesting birds however, the habitat is sub-optimal. The precautionary measures detailed in the ecological statement by Skyline Ecology are welcomed and should be strictly adhered to.'

- 18. Authority's Tree Officer:** *'The submitted Tree Protection Plan is detailed and suitable for the purpose. From viewing it, it is clear that if harm to significant trees is to be avoided, close adherence to the report will be required and arboriculturally-informed*

decisions will be required on certain methodology aspects as the works progress. For these reasons a monitoring/supervision condition is proposed – this arboricultural supervision is a recommendation at more than point on the TPP drawing.'

19. **Historic England:** No response at time of writing (consultation period not yet expired)

Representations

20. One letter of support has been received from the Youth Hostel Association. The response states that *'the proposals would provide a level access for guests, reducing operation risk and assisting those less mobile to use the Changing Places toilet facilities and ground floor bedrooms. It would also provide office space to enhance the working relationship between our organisations. The meeting space proposals would also be helpful for groups and schools who stay with us and are looking for areas to work.*
21. *Visitor management and the sustainability of the site would benefit from the National Trust's proposals.'*

Main Policies

22. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L2, L3, RT1, CC1
23. Relevant Development Management policies: DMC3, DMC7, DMC8, DMC10, DMC12, DMC13

National Planning Policy Framework

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration. Development plan policies relevant to this application are up-to-date and in accordance with the NPPF and therefore should be given full weight in the determination of this application. As well as the current proposals.
25. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states: Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks.

Assessment

Background

26. The current proposals for part of a wider initiative by the National Trust to improve the visitor experience both at Ilam Hall and Dovedale, called *'Gateway to the Peak District: Connecting People, Nature & Heritage.'* This wider scheme will be subject to a National Heritage Lottery Fund bid. As well as the current proposals, the broader plan hopes to deliver improved parking flow and a visitor hub at Dovedale car park, improvements to the off-road route between Dovedale and Ilam Park, a new footbridge to Hinckley Wood, improvements to the café and repairs and improvement to various listed buildings and historic features.
27. The first phase of this 'improvement plan' related to works to expand and improve the main visitor car park. Planning permission was granted for these works in 2018 and the permission has been implemented by the completion of an overflow car park in an area formerly used as a caravan site. The approved changes to the main car park have not yet been carried out. The scheme involved the creation of a number of staff and disabled

car parking space within the domestic garden area to the east of Hall Cottage, but the applicant is no longer intending to carry out these works.

28. As part of the improvement plan, it was identified that on entering the main car park, the arrival and visitor experience was not clear and so a trial of a temporary welcome hut was progressed. This has demonstrated a need for a more permanent welcome facility, that is clearly visible and accessible from the car park and which can also provide staff welfare space.
29. At the pre-application stage, the Trust investigated the construction of a new-build welcome Hub building, but officers advised that in the locations identified, a new building would cause harm to the setting of the grade II* listed buildings and possible harm to trees and archaeology. Officers that the conversion of the existing Hall Cottage should be investigated instead, in accordance with policy RT1.
30. As well as providing visitor welcome space, Hall Cottage is large enough to allow for the re-location of an existing second-hand bookshop that is currently located within the stable building. This will free up space on the ground floor of the stable building to allow the first-floor café (which is currently not accessible for disabled people) to be relocated (subject to obtaining planning and listed building consent in the future).
31. The proposals would also allow more direct and level public access from the car park and the visitor hub to the existing 'Changing Places' restroom and the Youth Hostel entrance on the east side of the Hall.

Principle of Development

32. Core Strategy policy RT1 (criteria A and B) states that the Authority will support facilities which enable recreation, environmental education and interpretation, which encourage understanding of the National Park's valued characteristics, provided (where the site is in open countryside) that there is a clear demonstration of need for such a location. Our view is that the applicant has demonstrated a clear need for the proposals in order for the site to be able to better absorb rising visitor numbers, to improve the visitor experience, and to enable the public to better understand and engage in the heritage and nature-based opportunities that the site holds.
33. Criteria C of RT1 states that wherever possible development must reuse existing traditional buildings of historic or vernacular merit and so the proposals are compliant with this provision in principle.
34. The Parish Council has raised strong objections on the basis that the development would lead to the loss of a local dwellinghouse, and that this in turn would exacerbate a perceived shortage of housing in the village. Whilst we understand and note these concerns, Hall Cottage is an unencumbered open market dwelling. It does not have any kind of local needs or agricultural occupancy condition and there so there is no requirement whatsoever for the dwelling to be occupied by a local person. It could also be rented out as holiday accommodation without any need for planning permission. The Authority does not have a policy that seeks to resist the loss of open market dwellings and the proposals are policy compliant in principle in all other respects.
35. Consequently, our view is that the change of use of the dwelling to the proposed use is acceptable in principle.
36. The main detailed considerations are the impacts of the proposals on heritage assets, archaeology, trees and ecology.

Impact on Heritage Assets

37. Core Strategy policy L3 and Development Management policies DMC7 and DMC8 jointly seek to ensure that that development conserves and where appropriate enhances the significance of heritage assets. Where less than substantial harm occurs, it must be weighed against public benefits. The application is accompanied by a Planning and Heritage Assessment.
38. Externally, the proposals would open up the garden to the north of Hall Cottage, re-establishing its visual connection to and relationship with the land the north, and provide greater opportunity for an appreciation of the cottage itself as well as the remnant features of the kitchen gardens in its grounds. The removal of the existing timber feather board fence would improve the general environs of the listed building.
39. Internally, there would be a small degree of harm through proposals to upgrade internal doors in response to fire safety (i.e. the fitting of free swing closers, back seals and application of intumescent paint). One door between the lobby and bathroom at ground floor is warped and is proposed to be replaced. The Authority's Conservation Officer considers that this door should be repaired rather than replaced and this can be required by condition.
40. The proposals present an opportunity to deliver a minor beneficial effect to the character and appearance of the Ilam Conservation Area and the landscape as a non-designated heritage asset by restoring the connection and sense of openness between the cottage and the landscape to the north and integrating the kitchen garden structural elements into the publicly accessible parts of the estate.
41. In summary, the small degree of harm identified would be greatly outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, in accordance with adopted policies.

Archaeology

42. The Authority's archaeologist has confirmed that the site of Hall Cottage and its garden fall within the area that was historically occupied by the kitchen garden to the Hall, and that well preserved remains were found, at shallow depth, when works were carried out to create the overflow car park.
43. The groundworks associated with the proposed development have the potential to encounter, damage and destroy previously unrecorded belowground archaeological remains relating to the lost kitchen garden and the development of Hall Cottage. This will harm archaeological interest of the site, but not to the core significance of Ilam Hall and parkland.
44. The scale of the groundworks is relatively small. The level of harm is therefore considered to be minor. The public benefits of improving visitor welcome at Ilam are considerable. The harm identified above needs to be mitigated by a conditioned scheme of archaeological monitoring on all groundwork. The agent has agreed to the wording of the suggested pre-commencement condition.
45. Subject to this condition, the proposals would accord with policy L3 in relation to archaeology.

Impact on Trees

46. A Tree Constraints Plan and a Tree Protection Plan have been submitted with the application. The information provided is sufficient for us to be able to assess the impact of the development upon trees within and close to the application site edged red.
47. There are a number of trees within the garden of Hall Cottage, but these are mostly located in the eastern lawned area of the garden and would be unaffected by the proposals. There are two trees that would be affected. The proposed new path would be constructed beneath the root protection area (RPA) of a mature holly tree within the garden to the north of the house. The tree constraints plan identifies that it is growing within a raised bed with a dwarf retaining wall which may have already compromised its roots, but that any impacts can be mitigated through bespoke trenching methods using hand dig methods. Similarly, an ash to the north of the existing fence line would see trenching for fibre cabling beneath its canopy and again impacts here would be mitigated in the same way.
48. Subject to the conditions recommended by the Tree Conservation Officer, any adverse impacts on trees would be sufficiently mitigated in accordance with policy DMC13.

Ecology and BNG

49. During the course of the application, amended plans have been received. These show that a 3m length of non-native hedgerow to the west of the house would be removed. As amended, this is the only hedgerow removal proposed as part of this scheme. A length of beech hedgerow on the northern boundary of the garden would also be removed, but this was previously approved under the implemented consent for the car park improvements. As such, as amended the proposals fall within the 'de minimus' exemption from the requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
50. A supporting ecological statement has been submitted with the application; this suggests that the hedgerow should be removed outside of the bird breeding season.
51. The Authority holds records of bats in the wider area. The ecology statement concludes that the addition of a single light fitting above one of the doors and the new low level bollard lighting is unlikely to have a negative impact on bats or other species provided that it has a low lux and is on a timer. The approved plans show that the light on the door would be 5 lumens, which is low level. A condition to agree the design, lux levels and operation of the bollard lights is considered to be necessary.

Climate Change Mitigation

52. A climate change mitigation statement has been submitted. It states that the most significant climate mitigation measure embedded in the proposals is the retention and repurposing of the building which results in:
 - Embodied carbon associated with demolition and new construction is avoided.
 - Existing materials and historic fabric are retained and extended in lifespan.
 - Waste generation is minimised.
 - No extensions or additional built volume are proposed
 - Internal alterations are light touch and reversible where possible.
53. Although the building is listed and therefore constrained in terms of fabric upgrades, the scheme incorporates measures to improve operational efficiency:
 - Energy-efficient lighting.
 - Rationalisation of staff accommodation and workspace to reduce dispersed operational

travel.

- Project itself is a climate engagement intervention

54. Given the nature and scale of the proposals, the proposed measures are considered to be sufficient to meet the requirements of policy CC1.

Conclusion

55. The proposed welcome facility, through conversion of an existing heritage asset, would significantly improve wayfinding and accessibility for visitors to Ilam Park, and would contribute to their appreciation and interpretation of the National Park. The scheme would restore the visual connection and sense of openness between the cottage and the landscape to the north and would allow the remnants of the kitchen garden to be better appreciated. These public benefits would outweigh the minor elements of harm that have been identified above. Consequently, the proposals accord with adopted policies and are recommended for approval

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