

Minutes of Outseats Parish Council Planning Meeting held on Thursday, 14th March 2013 in The Sampson Room, Hathersage Memorial Hall, at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor Jane Marsden – Chairman
Councillor Jean Hodgkinson
Councillor Anne Claxton
Councillor Bill Gordon
Clerk: David Palmer

No members of the public were present.

- 30/13 Apologies
Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Whitney, Hanley and Taylor.
- 31/13 Declaration of Members' Interests
Councillor Gordon declared an interest because he is employed by the Peak District National Park.
- 32/13 Public Speaking
No members of the public were present.
- 33/13 Planning Application NP/DDD/0213/0087 – Cow Close Farm, Birley Lane, Hathersage:
Removal of agricultural restrictions attached to existing farmhouse and farm cottage and erection of replacement agricultural worker's dwelling. Alterations and extension of main farmhouse and farm cottage to form a single private dwelling, including link extension and conversion of courtyard barn to additional living accommodation including use of one bedroom for b&b accommodation. Demolition of dilapidated farm buildings, and erection of new barn and farmyard. Conversion and change of use of detached courtyard barn for cheese production and associated storage. Repositioning of existing vehicle access to westerly side of Cow Close Farm. Reinstatement and management of the natural landscape surrounding the farm.

After a detailed discussion of the application, it was decided to respond to the Peak District National Park Authority as follows:

Outseats Parish Council would like to highlight that Cow Close Farm occupies a historic site in a sensitive location. It fills an open vista on the hillside underneath the historically significant North Lees Hall and Stanage Edge and is visible for miles around. It is also visible from the main footpaths that lead from the village of Hathersage to North Lees Hall and Stanage Edge and so will be visible to the many visitors to this area of outstanding beauty.

The Council applaud the applicant for his focus on ecological enhancement within this application and for his efforts to ensure that nature is accommodated within the proposed development.

The Council principally question whether the farm can remain functionally and financially viable as an agricultural unit. The original Cow Close Farm covered approximately 120 acres, whereas the current farm is only of approximately 60 acres. Furthermore, the land that has gone was pasture of a reasonable quality, while most of the land that remains is on very steep gradients and much of it is bracken, scrub and woodland. The net result is that there are probably only about 15 acres of productive land. In addition, the applicant states an intention to produce cheese using specialist Friesland sheep. These are a lowland breed that require a much higher quality of pasture than the breeds of sheep that would normally be expected to be found on a very small hill farm with severely disadvantaged land, such as Cow Close Farm.

Therefore, the Council must question the viability of the proposed farm and cheese production business on this site and this must call into question why an additional farmworker's cottage is required. Perhaps a full business plan for the proposed farm and cheese business would help the decision making process and illustrate whether there is true functional and financial viability?

The PDNPA's Local Plan Policy LH12 states that the development of a new agricultural worker's dwelling requires:

- *“a genuine and essential functional need for the worker(s) concerned”*
- *“there is no suitable existing accommodation in the locality that could reasonably be made available for occupation by the worker(s) concerned”.*

In this instance, the first dot point is thrown into question by the points made above as to whether the farm and cheese business is viable. The second dot point is very important as there is suitable accommodation in the locality – namely the main farmhouse! Therefore, the Council strongly question the need for the

development of the additional agricultural farmworker's home in the application. This appears to be unnecessary for both of the reasons given above.

It should also be noted that PDNPA Local Plan Policy LH3 states: "The removal of a condition or obligation which restricts the occupancy of a dwelling to a person employed...in agriculture...will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that...reasonable attempts have been made to allow the dwelling to be used by a person who could occupy it in accordance with the restriction". Therefore, if Cow Close Farm is viable as a farm and cheese business, then the existing farmhouse should retain the obligation to occupancy by the agricultural workers employed in that business. Therefore, there is no need for the additional farmworker's cottage. If, on the other hand, the agricultural business is not viable, then there is no need for the farmworker's cottage for obvious reasons. Therefore, whether or not there is a viable farm, there is no need for the additional farmworker's cottage proposed in the application!

The Council are also aware that there is a historic National Trust covenant on the appearance of the land at this site. The proposed changes, including the new driveway, which will have a significant impact on the landscape, must surely affect this appearance. Therefore, Outseats Parish Council recommend that no decision be made on this planning application until the full terms of this covenant have been reviewed.

The Council would also like to highlight the significant environmental issues related to the disposal of whey, which is a by-product of cheese making. PDNPA should satisfy themselves that the large quantities of whey that will probably be produced by the cheese business can be disposed of without polluting local water courses. This disposal may also have an effect on the financial viability of the cheese business and should be included in the business plan proposed above.

Based on all of the above, **Outseats Parish Council recommend that the application should be refused in its current form. In particular, the need for the proposed farmworker's cottage and the viability of the proposed farm and cheese making business are very questionable.** Furthermore, it requests that the Peak District National Park Authority Planning Department fully consult it again should any amendments be proposed to this scheme in such a sensitive site. It also recommends that members of the Planning Committee should visit the site before making any decision.

34/13 Planning Application NP/DDD/0213/0088 – Cow Close Farm, Birley Lane, Hathersage: Change of use and refurbishment of a traditional agricultural high quality barn to form a holiday let based on the promotion and enjoyment of living within the natural environment.

After a detailed discussion of the application, it was decided to respond to the Peak District National Park Authority as follows:

Outseats Parish Council recommend that PDNPA should look with rigour as to whether this proposed holiday let is suitable for the accommodation proposed. This is particularly in view of the complete lack of services available to the building:

- So far as the Council are aware, there is no source of water available to the barn. It currently receives no supply of mains water and there is no suitable natural water source nearby. Furthermore, even if a natural water source could be found, it would need to comply with the very stringent criteria set by Environmental Services for such water sources used for human consumption (these requirements are particularly strong where paying customers are involved).
- There is also no source of drainage and so the applicant should be asked to demonstrate that the occupation of the barn will not cause any environmental pollution.
- There is no source of electricity or any other power source near to the barn, so how these will be supplied is a relevant question.

If the above issues cannot be resolved satisfactorily, then the Council question whether this barn is truly viable as a holiday let with a kitchen, bathroom and overnight accommodation.

The Council also question whether there is safe access to the barn. In wet weather even farm vehicles will have difficulty climbing the steep slope to reach the barn. Furthermore, the Council are concerned that the permanent pasture that has to be crossed to reach the barn will become severely damaged if farm vehicles pass over it every day to make food and other deliveries to the barn as proposed. The damage to the environment (especially the permanent pasture) could be significant.

Another consideration is how the emergency services would be able to reach the barn, which becomes far more important once the building is occupied. If a fire were to break out, how would a fire engine reach the site?

For all of the above reasons, **Outseats Parish Council question whether this proposed holiday let is even viable and recommend that the application should be refused in its current form.** Furthermore, it requests that the Peak District National Park Authority Planning Department fully consult it again should

any amendments be proposed to this scheme in such a sensitive site. It also recommends that members of the Planning Committee should visit the site before making any decision.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.