

Stouslie Farm House
Hawick
TD9 7NX

Planning Department
Scottish Borders Council Headquarters
Newtown St. Boswells
Melrose
TD6 0SA

2nd June 2020

Dear Mr Shearer,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your time during our call yesterday. It was massively beneficial for me to talk directly with yourself as our planning officer to better understand the issues relating to our planning application.

Following your email sent on the 22nd May and our subsequent conversation, I would like to summarise the 3 main issues reported by the council and our proposed solutions for your consideration.

Issue One:

The business plan provided with the full planning application does advise that there would be quite large profits after years 2 and 3 but there is no predicted balance sheet of expenditure therefore it is difficult to confirm if profits are realistic and this proposal would indeed represent a viable and sustainable rural diversification. This information should be provided to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise.

Solution:

When submitting the full planning application I was unaware that full financial information should also be included. Please accept my apology for this misunderstanding. I have now attached a copy of the full business plan that includes a summary of the financial information and a spreadsheet containing a full financial breakdown of:

- Start up costs
- Cashflow projection - Business setup
- Cashflow projection - Year 1
- Cashflow projection - Year 2
- Cashflow projection - Year 3
- Personal expenses
- Loan repayment estimation

The business plan and full financial breakdown was developed with the help and advice from Business Gateway and our accountant at JRW Group. I attended business/financial planning training sessions and had 1 to 1 meetings with Business Gateway to ensure that this business idea was a viable and sustainable project.

Issue Two:

The main issue is the site chosen for the proposed development. The development is located in a previously undeveloped field which occupies a isolated location away from the farm steading and any other buildings. This siting for the development would represent a sporadic form of development which would fail to respect the character of the surrounding area.

Solution:

Careful consideration was given to the proposed site location before submitting our full planning application, this is outlined within the Site Selection report. However, I would like to explain in further detail the context of the site and surrounding location. Please see the Google satellite image of the surrounding area highlighted with all existing developments in comparison to the proposed Glamping site (page 5).

The field in which the proposed Glamping site would be situated has in fact been previously developed. On the west side of this field 'Stouslie Schoolhouse' and stables were constructed some time ago. In addition to this Priestrig croft and Fiddlehill holiday cottage are also located a little further northwest of the site.

The distance measured between each site is as follows:

- Stouslie farm house to the Glamping site 175m (160m from the last farm building)
- Stouslie Schoolhouse to the Glamping site 152m
- Fiddlehill holiday cottage to Glamping site 184m
- Priestrig croft to Glamping site 206m

Please note all distances were measured using Google maps to ensure accuracy.

The Glamping site is centrally located between all existing developments. It can easily be seen from Stouslie Farm house and only takes 85 seconds to walk from the farm house along the public road to the entrance of the site. Please see below a Google street map image from the proposed site entrance looking east towards Stouslie farm house.



Stouslie Farm House and steading

As the site is in an elevated position it looks across the back of Stouslie Schoolhouse to the west. This can easily be seen in a Google street map image from the public road where the entrance to the site would be formed. Please see below.



When choosing this site the following observations were made:

1. It is within close enough proximity to Stouslie Farm house that it will not impact upon any farm activities or present any potential health and safety issues for our customers where heavy machinery and livestock are concerned. Almost all farm traffic runs east of Stouslie farm as we rent West Boonraw farm and run both together as one operation.
2. It is a respectful distance away from our neighbours so that it does not impede upon their privacy.
3. It is close to the Stouslie Farm house, only an 85 second walk away so that we are on site to welcome and assist customers who have chosen to come and visit the Scottish Borders.
4. It is not set in an isolated location on the periphery of the farm where no other existing developments are nearby. We chose this site so that it was within a populated area nearby our own farm house and neighbours. Our nearest neighbours east of Stouslie Farmhouse are 1.4 kilometres away.
5. Given the lie of the land within this field this site sits on a natural plateau near to the public road resulting in a significantly reduced requirement for heavy groundwork to take place causing less disturbance to the environment. It is also on a natural free draining site with no risk of flooding.
6. Water will run naturally to the site without the need for a water pump. The water capacity test also confirms that we have enough water to service the site and hot tubs.
7. The percolation test provides evidence that this site will accommodate an adequate drainage system approved by SEPA.
8. The natural backdrop of Beech trees and Beech hedging along the other side of the public road provides shelter and a beautiful backdrop which will help to blend the pods into the natural landscape, particularly as the pods are made of wood with brown Britmet roof and are compact in size (only 2.6m tall).
9. With the introduction of the new Soft Landscape proposal we will further enhance the existing landscape using native trees and hedging providing a windbreak, privacy and food/shelter for the local wildlife allowing the pods to be assimilated into the wider landscape.

10. From a customer appeal perspective this site will provide a peaceful and relaxing stay without interruptions from daily farm operation. It will provide a green space and beautiful view down the Teviotdale valley to enjoy and connect with nature. Showcasing the beauty of the Borders.

In the absence of a site visit Google street view provides the opportunity to see the site. Please copy and paste the link below into your search bar: <https://goo.gl/maps/paqb3LoVxWKFXATL7>

It should be noted that although we can use Google street view it does not provide the same clarity of the site as the wide camera angle can distort the image. A site visit provides the opportunity to experience the site and the context of the land as you can clearly see where each house is in comparison to the site.

Map of the Surrounding area

The distance from the Glamping pod site to Priestrig Croft is 206m

The distance from the Glamping pod site to Fiddlehill holiday cottage is 184m.

The distance from Stouslie farm house to the Glamping site is 175m. From the last farm building it is only 160m away. It takes 85 seconds to walk along the public road from Stouslie farm house to the site entrance. The entrance to the Glamping pod site can be seen from Stouslie farmhouse and vice versa.



Stouslie farm house and Steading

Proposed Glamping site

Priestrig Croft

Fiddlehill Holiday Cottage

Fiddle Hill Cottage

The Glamping site is 152m from Stouslie Schoolhouse.

Stouslie Schoolhouse and stables
 This was built in the proposed field some time ago and served as a farm cottage to Stouslie farm house. It is now a holiday home for the owners who live abroad. The back of Stouslie Schoolhouse can easily be seen from the Glamping pod site.

Issue Three:

Any site landscaping would take a considerable period of time (possibly 10 -15 years) to mature to help to screen and assimilate the development into the landscape.

Solution:

I have been in contact with a local forestry contractor, Cheviot tress nursery based in Berwick upon tweed and conducted my own research online in order to develop a Soft Landscaping Proposal that will adhere to the recommendations set out by the Scottish Borders Council Landscape Architect. Please find attached the full report which includes:

- Details on the existing landscape
- New landscape proposal
- Tree and plant analysis including a breakdown of all native plants and their estimated growth rates
- Schedule for tree and plant summary
- Programme for completion
- Ongoing maintenance

As outlined within the report, we propose to plant a combination of older (3-4 yrs) Beech hedge that is already 1-1.25 metres tall and a 2m high living willow hedge that will provide instant results within 4 months of planting. Whilst we appreciate that it will take much longer for a tree to reach its full potential size by planting a native tree mix of Wild Cherry, Rowan and Hazel as semi mature trees they will already be 2.5 to 3m in height which is higher than the pods themselves. Therefore we will see a fully established landscape in a much quicker timeframe.

In summary, I hope that the additional information provided will be sufficient to demonstrate that the proposed Glamping development will be viable and suitable for the area & landscape. I would very much welcome further discussion and preferably a site visit so that the planning department can make their decision with a full and transparent view of the proposed project. I am committed to working together with the planning office to make sure that this project does not impact the existing landscape in a detrimental way. In fact it is the very opposite where we are looking to enhance the landscape by using native trees and hedges which will provide shelter and food for local wildlife and insects whilst creating windbreaks, privacy and an aesthetically pleasing site that is in keeping with the wider landscape.

Given recent events with the Covid-19 pandemic the pods can easily accommodate new social distancing rules making people feel safe to go on holiday once again. The overall benefits this project can bring to the entire community have also been highlighted within the business plan 'Building a customer base and benefits for the wider community'. We feel that this project will help to boost the local economy during a time of unprecedented circumstances and difficulties through a direct capital investment during construction providing work for a range of different tradesmen as well as attracting more tourists to the borders. Ultimately contributing to the sustainability of local services, producers, crafters, events and attractions across the region.

Please let me know if there is anything else you would like me to provide and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,
Mrs Carly Anderson