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Planning Development

Planning and Heritage Statement

The Woodman Inn, Thunderbridge Lane, Thunder Bridge, Kirkburton, HD8 0PX

Introduction and Background

The Woodman Inn at Thunder bridge currently comprises: a public house; a number of ancillary holiday cottages; gardens; two car parks; and a timber / fabric wedding marquee in the grounds.

The current marquee was originally erected for the purposes of holding various functions and events, mainly weddings by the previous pub owners. The original intention would be that the marquee was only in place for 28 days per year utilising permitted development rights, however it is understood the marquee became a 'victim of its own success', and this number of days was regularly exceeded in the early years.

The applicant, Frederic Robinson Limited, purchased the pub and surrounding land / cottages in June 2022 and inherited the marquee as part of the sale.

It is understood that when purchasing the property, Robinsons had not initially appreciated the marquee may have needed planning permission to be erected for more than 28 days a year. However, one of the key attractions of the property for Robinson at this time from a business viability perspective, was the fact the premises was capable of accommodating weddings of a reasonable capacity and frequency, with the presence of the marquee being a key part of this.

There is capacity for small weddings on the first floor of the pub of circa 25/30 people, however this part of the premises has limited capacity compared with the marquee and is therefore less in demand. It is important to note that the upstairs room and marquee are not used at the same time for weddings – i.e. only one wedding at a time occurs at the premises.

It then became apparent in the summer of 2024 that the marquee had been continuously in place for over four years (from June 2020 onwards). A Certificate of Existing Lawful Development was subsequently submitted to the LPA and granted (Kirklees Ref: 2024/93150). This sought to demonstrate that the existing marquee was (a) lawful as a result of the passage of time and can therefore remain on a permanent basis; and (b) that the marquee is a 'building' for purposes of Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

Pre-Application Enquiry

A pre-application enquiry was submitted to the Council in December 2024 concerning the replacement of the existing marquee with a permanent venue structure (ref: 2024/21477) with a meeting to discuss the proposals taking place with officers shortly after.

On a without prejudice basis, the principle of development was considered to be supportable by the Council and there were not considered to be any other significant constraints to the development. The following sections of this report have fully addressed the points raised by officers relating to visual amenity, heritage impact, residential amenity, highway structures and trees - including the inclusion of relevant reports where necessary.

Pre-application Engagement

Kirkburton Ward Councillors have been notified of the proposals in advance of the application being submitted.

Relevant Planning History

2024/93150 – Certificate of lawfulness for existing erection of marquee building - Granted

2016/91686 – Change of use of lower ground floor to commercial catering kitchen, erection of orangery and boiler room and alterations (within a conservation area) - Approved

2015/93316 – Change of use from dwellinghouse to additional accommodation for the Woodman Inn (within a conservation area) - Approved

Policy Designation

The application site has the following designations in the Local Plan:

- Green Belt
- Strategic Green Infrastructure Network
- Wildlife Habitat Network
- Thunder Bridge Conservation Area
- SCR with Sandstone and/or Clay and Shale

The Proposals

This application seeks planning permission for the removal of the existing marquee building, alterations to the existing stone and oak framed building and erection of a permanent venue building. The proposed new building would be situated in the same location as the current marquee and outdoor seating area and would be attached to the existing orangery.

The new building would have a footprint measuring 279 sq.m in total. The building would be constructed using an oak frame support structure with a stone wall finish on the rear elevation with glazing proposed along front and north side elevations. The proposed structure has been selected for its structural integrity, sustainability and thermal performance.

The building would have a pitched roof that is stepped down over the southern section. The roof would be tiled in artificial stone slates and contain rooflights. An oak framed entrance porch is also proposed

at the southern part of the new building with an open veranda is proposed adjacent to the front elevation.

The existing stone and oak framed building is proposed to be converted from its current use as a bar and server, to a breakout lounge, WC's and link to the existing kitchen. The kitchen to serve the new venue would continue to be located in the existing stone building attached to the southern elevation.

The replacement marquee would be no larger than the current marquee in terms of capacity (120 guests), however on-site male and female WC facilities, disabled WC, a small storage room, and a formal entrance lobby / reception would be incorporated into the new structure, also enabling the new marquee to link with the adjacent building via the Orangery (the bar area would be swapped from the Orangery to the new structure).

This energy efficient building would control heat loss through the use of a highly insulated system to the walling and roofing elements of the structure, above that required under current Building Regulation requirements and, by way of the use of renewable energy. This would comprise PV solar panels and associated pump. It is also likely that a mechanical ventilation heat recovery system will be utilised.

Assessment of the Proposals

Principle of Development

Through the pre-application enquiry, the Local Planning Authority The principle of development was discussed at the pre-application meeting where it was concluded by officers that the proposals were likely to be supported in principle, both in relation to the positive business & economic aspects of the case, together with likely support for a 'very special circumstances' case in the Green Belt (given that the proposals will be materially larger than the existing marquee structure and therefore would not fit into any of the established categories of 'appropriate development' in the Green Belt).

Economic Development Factors

Paragraph 88 in the NPPF states:

'Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings.'

Paragraph 7.12 of the Local Plan states: "The Council's overarching objectives for the economy place significant emphasis on the need to support the growth aspirations of the districts indigenous businesses, as well as securing the inward investment opportunities which are likely to occur during the course of the plan period."

The proposals aim to future proof and grow of the business through offering a space which is more robust and accommodating. The plans are for the space to be more user friendly, not only for weddings, but other social and business occasions including celebrations, community gatherings, training and conferences. The proposals also bring together two separate spaces in that the current bar area will be integrated into the same building as the event space.

In terms of the level of **investment**, the owners Frederic Robinson are seeking to significantly invest in the Woodman Inn business with this proposed development. The high quality Oak framed marquee would cost in the region of £400,000 to £500,000. This represents a significant inward investment for

the local area in Kirklees, and demonstrates a firm commitment to invest in the long-term success of the Woodman Inn as a pub, restaurant, place to stay, and special occasion venue.

The space will be more inviting to allow guests to personalise their celebrations, in that the applicant will be able to use all, or partial, areas of the space for a more intimate occasion. The project will future proof the business in terms of look, feel, and condition. With the current deterioration of the marquee, investment will be required consistently, which may be off-putting for prospective guests. The applicants believe this will lead to an increase of 15+ weddings per year, and up to 15 further events per year.

To fulfil this demand the applicants anticipate the recruitment of between **5 and 8 additional jobs will be generated, with an extra 180 labour hours a week projected in the year following completion.** This requirement spans across all areas of the business including front of house service, housekeeping, management, and chefs. The current team is circa 50, and the proposals will therefore take the total numbers employed to 55 to 58 team members as a result of the additional trade.

Green Belt

Paragraph 153 in the NPPF states:

‘When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.’

Through the pre-application enquiry, whilst the Local Planning Authority indicated broad support in principle for the proposals, they stated that the very special circumstances outlined in the pre-application submissions would need to be presented as part of a formal planning application, because the replacement building would be materially larger than the current marquee as a result of incorporating additional accommodation necessary for the smooth running and comfort of weddings in particular at the venue (see below).

The Council’s pre-application response stated:

“Weighting could be given to supporting the rural economy and this could be VSC to allow for bigger building. This would need to be outlined in detail in any future submission. This was included in the pre-application submission.”

The very special circumstances in this case comprise:

- 1) Rural economic and tourism benefits and the continued success and viability of the Woodman Inn

The NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity through the planning system ¹, and in connection with supporting the rural economy, it states that planning decisions should enable “the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of

¹ NPPF Paragraph 85

businesses in rural areas”, and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside”

The Kirklees Local Plan at 7.6 states: “The Local Plan will assist in the creation of new jobs in a variety of ways supporting local services in rural areas, enhancing visitor facilities.....”

Policy LP10 (Supporting the rural economy) states that “the economic performance of the rural economy will be improved by:

- b. supporting the needs of small and medium sized enterprises;
- c. increasing local employment opportunities;
- d. supporting and increasing tourism related development, including encouraging new facilities and accommodation for tourists...”

Paragraph 97 in the NPPF states: ‘To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs.’

The principal area of concern for the owners, and the reason for the proposals, is one of **continued success and viability of the business** as a whole.

Through these proposals to significantly invest in the Woodman Inn at Thunder Bridge, the owners seek to ensure the continued growth and success of the business as a pub, restaurant, overnight accommodation, and function venue – thereby providing significant economic and tourism benefits for the local area, together with safeguarding existing jobs and promoting the potential for future additional jobs.

Although the marquee caters for other events on a lesser frequent basis², the key benefits of these proposals are that if the wedding marquee situation can be afforded a long term future, this will continue to safeguard existing jobs created through the existing marquee arrangement and the important additional revenue this brings to the pub (see next point). Currently, around half of the 50 jobs at the Woodman Inn are currently dependent on weddings being held in the current marquee.

The business currently employs a team of 7 chefs, with the Head Chef and another chef primarily looking after the weddings and events. 9 part time kitchen porters are also employed and help contribute to weddings and events. The business also has 10 members of staff solely on the Events Team who are employed on the day to help facilitate the wedding or event. The business also employs 5 housekeepers who clean all of the public areas and rooms, ensuring the venue and accommodation is kept to the highest standard. Finally, the applicants also employ night porters who set everything up for events.

² Funerals, christenings, business conferences, baby showers, gender reveals, birthday parties and other special occasions.

The take-up of accommodation at the Woodman Inn (comprising 19 rooms) is significantly greater when weddings are booked³, which again generates valuable income for the business, and helps cover continuing overheads in terms of maintaining this collection of numerous listed and unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area.

More crucially, the proposals will safeguard the viability of the Woodman Inn as a whole for the longer term, as the business is predicted to make an annual loss in the absence of the marquee facility, compared with a reasonable profit with it, as matters stand.

As such, without being able to hold weddings, the premises as an important local pub, restaurant and wedding venue is threatened, and all 50 existing jobs would then be jeopardised.

The Council will also no doubt be aware of the 'perfect storm' that has hit the hospitality industry in the last couple of years, as a result of: the financial pressures from Covid; the later surging fuel prices; significant inflationary wage increases; the 'cost of living' crisis; and wider inflationary costs. These have all contributed to serious problems for the hospitality industry and many pubs and restaurants have closed (and continue to close) as a consequence.

Furthermore, many other local businesses provide services in connection with weddings, and who also would therefore be detrimentally affected in the event that the viability of the Woodman Inn was threatened.

As an additional point in relation to the matter of ongoing viability, the owners currently spend an excessive amount on heating costs for the existing marquee, which would be greatly reduced with the new – fully insulated - proposed events structure.

Finally, bookings for the existing marquee are very seasonal - primarily being in the warmer months - and the applicants wish to have a permanent structure that can be used comfortably all year round. As a result, this will also create more local employment opportunities if the Woodman Inn is able to hold more events outside of the summer.

- 2) The fall back position and Green Belt (visual) and heritage benefits - The granting of the Certificate of Lawfulness application for the existing marquee as a permanent building under planning law represents a legitimate fallback position for the applicant's proposals for a permanent replacement building on the same site.

Case law has determined that a fallback position no longer must be probable or have a high chance of occurring, but simply needs to be more than a theoretical prospect.

In the case of *R (on the application of Zurich Assurance Ltd T/A Threadneedle Property Investments) (Claimant) v North Lincolnshire Council (Defendant) & Simons Developments Ltd (Interested Party)* [2012] EWHC 3708 (Admin)¹, the Judge concluded in paragraph 75:

"However, I remain unpersuaded by Mr Tucker's ground of challenge. The prospect of the fallback position does not have to be probable or even have a high chance of occurring; it has to

³ And because accommodation bookings accompany the wedding bookings, there is less reliance for the business on online booking platforms that take a not insignificant commission from each booking. This therefore enables the business to retain more of the income from the accommodation bookings associated with weddings in particular.

be only more than a merely theoretical prospect. Where the possibility of the fall-back position happening is “very slight indeed”, or merely “an outside chance”, that is sufficient to make the position a material consideration (see *Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2009] EWCA Civ 333 at [20]-[21] per Sullivan LJ). Weight is, then, a matter for the planning committee.”

Whilst the floor area and volume of the proposed building is larger than the current marquee (197 sq.m increasing to 280 sq.m and 629 cu.m increasing to 1,126 cu.m), the actual events space floorspace (and associated covers) is not proposed to be increased over and above the existing marquee. Nevertheless, it is necessary from a business perspective to incorporate additional and more convenient ancillary accommodation for the new permanent events space for the following key reasons:

- 1) The existing marquee is detached from the bar area in the adjacent building, and the WC's are located in the garage building on the other side of the building. This is both currently inconvenient and uncomfortable for guests, particularly during inclement weather. The 'linking' of the marquee with the adjacent building, will enable all relevant facilities (bar, WC's etc) to be conveniently located and under one roof. This will also greatly assist in keeping food warm at mealtimes (as currently this must be transported from the kitchen across an outdoor space and into the current marquee).
- 2) The reception area is considered essential for weddings, as it allows the bride and party to wait in a warm and dry space outside the main wedding ceremony space, before entering at the appropriate time. This facility isn't available with the current marquee.
- 3) A relatively small pitched-roof entrance porch has also been included, providing an elegant arrival moment for the wedding party and guests.
- 4) The new oak-framed veranda coming off the main venue, offers both a “stepping out” space from ceremonies and a practical staff route that avoids circulating through guest spaces.
- 5) No storage space is currently available with the existing marquee, so the incorporation of a store area adjacent to the bar in the reception area will greatly assist in terms of storage of glassware, drinks etc.

Furthermore, in terms of assessing this as a fallback position from a heritage perspective, the proposals for a high quality Oak framed and natural stone building with a traditional roof structure roof pitch, allows the opportunity to provide significant visual amenity benefits for the Green Belt, as well as heritage benefits for the wider Conservation Area and setting of multiple Grade II listed buildings in the vicinity, when compared with the existing fabric-based marquee structure, which arguably detracts from the setting of listed buildings, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and the wider rural setting and Green Belt.

- 3) Residential amenity benefits - The proposed building would provide potentially significant residential amenity benefits in respect of noise insulation from amplified music at functions, in particular weddings. Currently, the existing marquee is a simple fabric construction with little noise insulation. Given the relatively low background noises at the Woodman Inn because of its rural location, a permanent building constructed to modern standards, would reduce noise emissions significantly. A noise report accompanies this application (see further details below).

- 4) Energy Efficiency - The new marquee would be considerably more energy efficient in terms of heating requirements and insulation. It would be built to meet Passivhaus levels of insulation, with a system that has standard U-values of 0.15 W/m²K for walls and 0.12 W/m²K for the roof, as it wraps seamlessly around the oak frame.

The insulation used is made from recycled newspaper and therefore contains cellulose, the natural fibre of wood. This material also retains the positive characteristics of wood being that it is a particularly good insulator. Approximately 45 per cent of the CO₂ stored in the wood remains in the waste paper, from which 90 per cent of the insulation is made and thus, 1kg of the insulation retains around 1.4kg of CO₂. Finally, the Passivhaus quality sealing tapes ensure draughts and uncontrolled ventilation are virtually eliminated.

Other renewable and low carbon technologies will also be utilised, including:

- Air source heat pump (ASHP) providing space heating.
- High efficiency air-to-water CO₂ Heat Pump for hot water services (HWS).
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels generating on site zero carbon electricity.
- Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery system which will improve indoor air quality, provide consistent thermal comfort, and reduced operational energy demand.

The development's overall carbon emissions could be reduced 39.1% below the Part L 2021 baseline.

- 5) Discounting use of existing accommodation in order to reduce overall Green Belt impacts – During the pre-application discussions, the LPA requested evidence that all other existing buildings on the site/in the ownership of the applicant could not be re-used to minimise the amount / type of accommodation needed as part of the project. It was advised that as part of the application, an evidence-based survey of said buildings be provided, so as to outline that all avenues have been exhausted, demonstrating the need for this development.

In this regard, the application is accompanied by a plan and schedule of existing accommodation, detailing the current use of all the existing buildings on the site and within the ownership of the applicant. In summary:

- Much of the existing accommodation comprises guestrooms for overnight stays (with one cottage used for overnight staff). As detailed above, it is considered very important as part of the overall events offer for there to be sufficient overnight accommodation to serve as many of the wedding party as possible - and in particular, the core family members and friends of the bride and groom.
- Building H (the existing WC's for the marquee) will be converted to much needed storage space in connection with functions (tables, chairs etc) as well as additional fridges and freezers (because the applicants struggle operationally with food storage due to the number of events) and for additional dry food storage, again to cater for events.

Finally, on Green Belt matters, the Council stated a desire to see the mass of the building broken up wherever possible. In this regard, whilst the roof pitch of the new building needs to increase to a standard 30 degrees to enable roof slating to be installed, and match in with the roof pitches on the existing building, the massing of the building is broken up by way of reducing the scale, massing and height of the connecting section between the new event space and the existing building and Orangery.

Furthermore, the incorporation of the entrance porch and flat roofed timber veranda, also help provide visual interest and variety across the new build elements.

On the eastern elevation facing the road, the new extension (link and function hall) follows the same line as the existing building which currently contains the bar. This adjustment improves the overall alignment and buildability of the roof ridges.

Given the collective factors raised above, the proposals are considered to represent very special circumstances in the Green Belt, of sufficient weight to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 153.

Visual Amenity and Heritage Impact

Local Plan Policy LP24 states:

'Proposals should promote good design by ensuring: a. the form, scale, layout and details of all development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape.'

Local Plan Policy LP35 also states:

3. Proposals should retain those elements of the historic environment which contribute to the distinct identity of the Kirklees area and ensure they are appropriately conserved to the extent warranted by their significance, also having regard to the wider benefits of development. Consideration should also be given to the need to: b. ensure that proposals within Conservation Areas conserve those elements which contribute to their significance.'

Paragraph 135 in the NPPF also sets out various design objectives, including the need to ensure that developments function well and add to overall quality, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character, and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

The application site is located in the Thunder Bridge Conservation Area. The Council does not have an appraisal for this CA, however it contains a series of traditional predominantly two-storey stone buildings of weaver's cottage origin and character, interspersed with newer buildings of similar character. Some of these buildings are Grade 2 listed (see map extract below c/o Historic England).



The proposed replacement building would be situated in the same location as the existing marquee which is to be demolished. The scale of the proposed development is considered to be appropriate for its location, making efficient and effective use of the land and space available on-site without appearing cramped or overdeveloped.

The primary structure of the building will be a high quality bespoke Green Oak Frame, designed and constructed in-house in Herefordshire by Oakwrights. This robust and charming system will age with the property and produce unique character.

In detail, the new building features an internal post-and-beam oak frame which is visible within the main spaces. An oak frame is also proposed externally for the front porch and elevations, which adds character and coherence to the overall design. The oak frame will age with the property making it blend in well with the local natural environment.

The proposed building would be single storey with a relatively low ridge height so as to harmonise with the surrounding landscape whilst also maintaining a traditional 30° roof pitch, in keeping with other traditional buildings in the vicinity, including the adjoining one (which it will seamlessly integrate with).

The proposed materials including natural stone and good quality artstone roof slates (such as Greys) which would be in keeping and sympathetic to the local built environment and Conservation Area. Glazing is proposed along much of the west elevation providing visual interest whilst also allowing plenty of natural light to enter the building.

Given the established fallback position of the existing marquee building, which is constructed of timber and fabric, this arguably detracts from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as it stands. The proposals therefore provide the opportunity to replace this existing marquee with a high quality building constructed of traditional materials, designed to be more in keeping with existing buildings in the vicinity in relation to materials, layout and roof form. It is argued that this will ultimately enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and better safeguard the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Paragraph 212 in the NPPF states:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.’

Paragraph 215 in the NPPF goes on to state:

‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.’

It is considered that in balancing the moderate increase in size of the existing marquee, against the benefits in relation to a much improved building in terms of design and materials, the effects on the wider Conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings, is considered to be neutral.

Notwithstanding this, should the LPA determine that ‘less than substantial’ harm is evident, the public benefits as outlined in the sections above are considered to be significant and outweigh any such

perceived and. In particular, the upkeep and maintenance of a number of listed and unlisted buildings (non-designated heritage assets) within the Conservation Area is contingent on the long-term success of the Woodman Inn, which is inextricably linked with the ability to hold events, in particular weddings on a regular basis. The income from weddings helps generate sufficient income to look after all these buildings, and help secure the optimum viable use of the overall property in the long term.

Finally, no alterations to the existing access and car parking arrangements are proposed. Hard and soft landscaped areas are proposed around the building and would comprise natural stone paths and patio areas, interspersed with native planting and wildflowers.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable regarding visual amenity and heritage impact and complies with Local Plan Policies LP24 and LP35 and the aims of Chapters 12 and 16 in the NPPF.

Residential Amenity and Noise

Local Plan Policy LP52 states the following:

“Proposals which have the potential to increase pollution from noise must be accompanied by evidence to show that the impacts have been evaluated and measures have been incorporated to prevent or reduce the pollution, so as to ensure it does not reduce the quality of life and well-being of people to an unacceptable level or have unacceptable impacts on the environment.”

Paragraph 185 in the NPPF also states that, “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location ... In so doing they should: a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.”

A key benefit of the proposals is to replace an existing marquee building that currently contains no noise insulation, with a purpose-built structure incorporating efficient and modern noise insulation standards. Given the fact that events such as weddings tend to be accompanied by amplified music, this represents a key benefit in relation to improving residential amenity for neighbouring residents, when compared with the existing fallback situation of the lawful marquee, which could and would be continued to be used in the event that planning permission is not granted in this case.

A Noise Impact Assessment has been carried out by Environmental Noise Solutions Limited and accompanies the application. The noise survey took place from Friday 27th June to Monday 30th June 2025. The key points of note and conclusions are summarised below:

- Ambient and background noise levels in the vicinity of the site were characterised by distant road traffic noise, bird song in the early mornings, and existing permitted events taking place within the existing marquee on the Friday and Saturday evening.
- The principal noise source potentially associated with the proposed development is music breakout noise during events. Any amplified music (including DJs and live bands) will use the in-house PA system which is limited to 92dB.
- The weakest acoustic element of the building envelope is the glazed windows and doors. All windows and doors will remain closed at all times (except for access) during an amplified music event.

- The resultant music noise levels at the nearest NSRs were at least 17dB below the late evening background noise levels at the NSRs.
- The proposed development being a permanent building will create an acoustic improvement upon the existing marquee. Noise breakout associated with an event taking place within the proposed permanent structure is therefore expected to significantly improve upon the existing noise levels associated with an event taking place within the existing events marquee.
- Music noise breakout is considered to represent a No Observed Adverse Effect Level in that noise is noticeable but not intrusive. The noise impact is therefore considered to be negligible and does not represent a constraint to the proposed development.

The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable and in compliance in Local Plan Policy LP52 and NPPF Paragraph 185.

Highway Matters

As detailed elsewhere in this planning submission, the proposed replacement event space will not increase the floor area (or numbers of covers) currently provided the event space. The proposals thereby aim to increase the frequency of events at the Woodman Inn, not increase the intensity of such events in relation to guest numbers and associated private vehicle use.

Whilst no pre-application feedback from the highways department, it was pointed out that the 2016 permission did require the laying out, servicing and marking out of the larger car park, which does not appear to have occurred under the previous ownership.

The applicants are therefore content to include this as part of the proposals and are happy to accept a condition for details to be submitted and agreed.

Retaining wall condition

Discussion surrounding the retaining wall adjacent to the existing marquee on Thunderbridge Lane at the pre-application stage, due to uncertainty at the time in as to whether or not the new proposals would impact on this retaining wall. A Condition Survey was therefore requested and is summarised below.

Nevertheless, Marston & Grundy Structural engineers have assessed the situation and considers it will not be necessary to interfere with the existing roadside retaining wall.

A Principal Condition Survey of the Retaining Wall was undertaken by Marsh Design Ltd and accompanies the application. The results of the survey are summarised below:

- The visual examination indicated that there has been historical movement in the form of moderate bulging. However, there was no evidence of any recent toppling, sliding, collapsed stone or progressive movement.
- The wall is within acceptable tolerances and deemed structurally sound. No further structural action is required.
- It is advised to dry-pack and repair any loose masonry that may be present behind the existing shrubbery and trees found within the planters in front of the main wall.

Ecology and Landscaping

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement has been produced by Knight Sky Ecology and accompanies the application. The main conclusions and recommendations are as follows:

- The only sensitive ecological feature that needs further consideration is the adjacent watercourse. The development proposal should put sufficient measures in place to safeguard the watercourse during construction. This should include siting the materials away from the watercourse and preventing any contaminants from entering the water environment.
- One bird box and one bat box are recommended to deliver ecological enhancements.

Paths and patios are likely to be constructed using a natural stone material, such as sandstone or similar, providing a durable and high-quality finish that complements the overall design of the building.

Soft landscaping will include native wildflowers and other native plant species, alongside wildlife-friendly planting throughout. This will support local biodiversity and create a more ecologically rich and visually appealing setting for the venue.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Certain types of development are exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements. This includes a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m x 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

The Government guidance states that a development 'impacts' a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.⁴

The proposals would replace the existing marquee with a more permanent structure. No habitats with a measurable biodiversity value would be impacted by the development. There are also no priority habitats within the construction area. The proposal is therefore exempt from biodiversity net gain in accordance with Regulation 4 (De minimis exemption) of The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

In light of the above, the information provided with this application is considered to address relevant statutory requirements and complies with Local Plan Policy LP33 and the aims of Chapter 15.

Trees

A Tree Constraints Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Preliminary Method Statement have been produced by e3p and accompany the application. The key findings and recommendations are summarised below:

- The Site survey identified a total of four individual trees graded Category B and two individual trees graded Category C on and adjacent to the site.

⁴ Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain

- No trees are required to be removed to facilitate the proposed development.
- No tree pruning is required to facilitate the development.
- No Root Protection Area incursions into retained trees have been identified.
- Ground protection measures should be implemented, and adequate protective fencing should be installed around all retained trees.
- No tree-related impacts are anticipated from drainage, underground utilities, proposed ground level changes or foundation designs for the proposed development.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in relation to trees and complies with Local Plan Policy LP33.

Contaminated Land

A Phase I Contaminated Land Report has been produced by Rogers Geotechnical Services Ltd and accompanies the application.

The desk study shows that there are limited possible sources of contamination on the site, and a pollution linkage is unlikely and would represent low levels of harm. It is therefore not considered necessary to undertake an intrusive geo-environmental investigation.

The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of contaminated land and accord with Local Plan Policy LP53 and paragraph 196 in the NPPF.

Climate Change

A Climate Change and Energy Statement is submitted as part of the application. The following climate change mitigation measures form part of the development proposals:

- Low energy envelope U-values.
- Low air permeability.
- Low energy LED lighting with lighting controls.
- Meters connected to BMS with auto monitoring and targeting of energy.
- Mechanical ventilation with passive heat recovery.
- Installation of air source heat pump.
- Installation of solar panels.

The proposed development would therefore have a positive impact on climate change and accords with Local Plan Policies LP24 and LP26.

Conclusion

The proposed marquee is considered to be essential for the ongoing survival, success and future sustainable growth of the Woodman inn as a multi-functional business comprising public house, restaurant, overnight accommodation, and venue for functions - in particular weddings.

The applicant submits that very special circumstances exist in this case to outweigh harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm identified.

We therefore respectfully request that planning permission is granted accordingly.

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

December 2025