

## PLANNING STATEMENT

Ryedale District Planning Team,

Re: Land at Stittenham Hill, York. YO60 7TP (Odin's Rest Wild Glamping)

Thank you for considering this application for the change of use of the above land from disused scrub and poor quality arable land in order to develop and expand a low impact, wild glamping site.

We are currently operating under an exemption certificate issued by Freedom Camping Club for approx. 50% of the site. (Planning approval granted by the Secretary of State by virtue of Article 3 and Class C or Part 5 Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.) However we wish to submit this application so that we can improve our current offering as well as for the business to be more connected to the local community. We have found in a very short amount of time that the existing accommodation will be considerably outstripped by the demand we are finding for the unique experience we provide.

We are also requesting retrospective planning permission for the access onto Stittenham Hill (at grid reference 468828, 467405) and the associated hardstanding, now used as our car parking area. Having been an historical access for agriculture we were unaware that there was no official planning permission for this access and hardstanding when we inherited the land last year so would like to put this in place. In addition we wish to form a track the length of the ex-arable field in order to provide access for the emergency services. This would be the same materials as the existing hardstanding (loose stone chippings).

The main proposal is as follows:

- 25 mixed non-permanent units for glamping, e.g. canvas tents / yurts / glamping pods
- 1 non-permanent site office / reception / warden's unit
- 9 off-grid composting toilets with gravel soak-away
- 6 off-grid LPG shower units with gravel soak-away

Under the exemption we currently have an allowance for 10 'tented units' and 5 caravans / shepherds huts / non-permanent movable structures. We would like to expand the number of units to a total of 25 across the full 6.78 hectares - this is less than 4 units per hectare (or just 1.5 units per acre).

We also require a site office / dedicated warden's unit for ancillary use and would be happy to use a caravan or similar non-permanent unit - we note a standard sized static caravan is often used on similar sites for this purpose. This would be placed in accordance with the site map, adjacent to the car parking area in order to receive guests. Due to the nature of a tourist facility such as this one, we believe that, in the interest of health and safety for both our visitors and our staff, it is imperative that a staff member stays on site whenever we have guests staying. Whether to facilitate arrivals and the services provided to guests, or for security throughout our visitors' stay, a designated place from which to operate is vital. In keeping with our commitment to eco-friendly and green practices, the aforementioned static caravan / unit would be run entirely on solar power as there is no mains electricity (nor do we have any intention of installing it) on site. It is our full intention to keep all our practices as environmentally friendly as possible.

We currently have chattels consisting of 3 composting toilets, 2 off-grid showers and 2 communal log-powered hot tubs and we would increase these to 9, 6 and 5 respectively to provide ample facilities for the number of proposed units. Composting toilets are by far the most eco-friendly toilet option - although they require slightly more physical work on our behalf, the benefit this has for the environment and the eco-system in general is phenomenal. Our off-grid showers require no electricity and only biodegradable, eco-friendly body wash and shampoo (provided by ourselves) is allowed to be used. All these facilities align with our mission to promote eco-friendly

practices wherever possible. We are passionate about creating and sustaining a place that is sensitive to its environment, putting back much more than we ever take out.

Having consulted with the Howardian Hills AONB team who provided extensive information including which native trees would be best for the area, (as well as for future survival), we initiated a private programme of re-wilding. In 2021 the arable field was sown with a native meadow mix grass seed which is now well established and we have planted over 300 trees with more to come. The list includes but is not limited to: Oak, Beech, Field Maple, Hazel, Hornbeam, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Crab-apple and Holly. The conservation and enhancement of our re-wilding project is an integral part of our wild-glamping experience. Increasing the biodiversity and creating habitats to restore the ecology of the area is at the heart of our goals. However, in order to achieve this in conjunction with increasing the economic prospects of the area, and enabling access to the AONB for groups that would not normally have the opportunity to access it, we believe utilising the whole space (once re-wilded) will be necessary. Before commencing our extensive programme of re-wilding and obtaining the exemption certificate with Freedom Camping Club, we commissioned a qualified ecologist to provide a full and comprehensive ecology survey (Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey) for the site. Although we have attached this survey for you to view, we would like to bring particular attention to the aspect of the report (section 6) that concludes that aspects of the wildlife / ecology / biodiversity would benefit from our proposed plans.

#### Ryedale Local Plan

We believe our application aligns with the RLP policies as follows:

##### SP8 - Tourism:

- Provision of a diverse range of accommodation - there is nothing of a similar nature in the vicinity, being mostly caravan parks or lodges.
- Provision of quality accommodation - all of our glamping units have the highest quality in mind, from the design / aesthetic of the unit to the furniture, furnishings and bedding provided.
- Provision of a year-round business which will assist the wider local economy during the low season. The area of land we are currently operating in under the exemption unfortunately becomes inaccessible for approx 2-3 months (depending on the severity of the seasonal weather) so the proposed plan would open up the remainder of our site and enable us to operate throughout the winter months, bringing much needed tourism and an economic stimulation to the local businesses that normally feel the pinch of the low season. (We already promote the use of businesses in Sheriff Hutton, Welburn and surrounds.)
- Development of nature tourism by maintaining and enhancing a part of the Howardian Hills AONB, and providing a base from which to explore the beauty of the local area.
- Diversifying farm land to create a tourist destination.
- Intention to work with RDC and the Howardian Hills AONB to eventually offer some glamping facilities (accommodation, shower, toilet and indoor space) that will be accessible / disability friendly in order to combat the lack of current places which provide disabled accommodation in rural locations.
- Potential for local job creation: considering forecasts once we have implemented our plans we will realistically need to employ 2 part time cleaners, 1 landscape / conservation technician as well as a possible second site manager / warden.

##### Policy SP9 - Land Based and Rural Economy:

- Farm and rural diversification activity i.e. re-wilding and creating an economically and environmentally viable alternative to farming the land. (the site was intensively farmed prior to commencement of our re-wilding programme and it is a fear of ours that should we not be able to expand the current site, the rest of the land may have to be reverted back to agricultural land and be farmed in order for it to be economically viable, which completely goes against everything we would like to achieve)
- Potential to assist in retaining traditional rural skills via using local people for appropriate workshops as well as land maintenance of our site / facilities.

Policy SP13 - Landscapes:

- Aligning with the Howardian Hills AONB management objective by:
  - Creating a sustainable development with no compromise to any future generations and their needs
  - Enhancing the AONB biodiversity through our programme of re-wilding (primarily resilient native broadleaves).
  - Improving and making additional habitat areas through sustainable management of the trees and shrubs e.g. utilising fallen wood for habitat piles / shelters.
  - Offering time and facilities on the site gratis for Howardian Hills projects e.g. Junior Rangers or the like, and similarly working with local charities and communities to ensure a diverse range of users can come to the Howardian Hills and enjoy its beauty.

Policy SP14 - Biodiversity:

- Continue programme of re-wilding indefinitely in hope of assisting the reemergence of ancient woodland to the Howardian Hills
- Hope to encourage a more diverse range of species such as bats and amphibians by dredging an existing pond in the ex-arable field, as detailed in the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.

In addition to the above, I would just like to state how very proud we are to be the caretakers of such a wonderful piece of the world and, as a young couple are thoroughly looking forward to enhancing and sustaining the land for generations to come. Developing this business will allow us to stay in the local area as well as providing an opportunity to promote the benefits of re-wilding and sustainable business practices to the next generation of farmers / land owners.

Yours faithfully,

Lucy

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