

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

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BUSINESS SUPPORT TEAM

Planning Statement
Use of shooting lodge for
weddings /events
Gorse Lodge
Stubton

09/1740



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Planning Statement

Design & Access Statement

Change of use of shooting lodge to mixed use including overnight accommodation for wedding guests, civil ceremonies and reception, corporate entertainment, conference facilities and continued use in association with clay pigeon shooting ground

Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

1. Introduction	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
2. The application site	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
3. The proposed development	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	8
4. Planning policy considerations	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11
5. Planning considerations	...	....	...	...	...	...	...	...	17
6. Regeneration Statement	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
7. Marquee: design & access considerations	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	26
8. Conclusions...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	28

1.Introduction

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

1. This statement relates to an application for planning permission that will enable the mixed use of an existing shooting lodge for the holding of weddings and other similar functions , the authorised shooting lodge use of the property continuing at all other times. Included as part of the proposals is the retention of a marquee for use in connection with the proposed events. This application comprises a re-submission of an earlier application for the proposed use (S08/0923).
2. The application property Gorse Lodge comprises a range of former agricultural buildings granted planning permission in the 1990 for use as a shooting lodge / gamekeeper's lodge. Subsequent applications were granted planning permission for the use of a woodland area and field to the north of the lodge as a clay pigeon shooting ground. Various applications have subsequently been made to vary the times and frequency of use of the clay pigeon shooting ground, and an application will be submitted shortly to 'renew' a temporary permission for extended operating hours.
3. The site is set some 1.5km along a private track leading north from the Stubton – Brandon road, in a remote rural location. The nearest residential property is set some 800m to the south-west, and accessed along the same private track. Residential properties in Stubton are some 1.8km to the south-west of the site. There are a number of isolated dwellings set along the Stubton / Brandon road, 1.2km to the south, and Brandon village is 1.9km to the south-east. Fenton is situated 1.4km to the north-west. The PFI kart Racing circuit is located 1.2 km to the north east, and Court Leys, on the Marston – Stragglethorpe road. Is some 1.5km to the east.
4. The initial conversion of the former agricultural buildings to a shooting lodge use represented an appropriate form of rural diversification, and the addition of wedding ceremonies and similar functions represents an appropriate consolidation of that approved use, which optimises the use of the buildings.
5. The scale and character of the group of buildings are particularly suitable for use as a location for wedding ceremonies and functions. A controlled use for such purposes, restricted in terms of the scale and operating hours, can satisfactory take place alongside the continued occupation of the property as a shooting lodge. Planning permission has been granted for a similar wedding related uses in rural locations at Allington Manor and at Stubton Hall.
6. A planning application was submitted in August 2008 for the proposed change of use. Following receipt of consultation responses and an unresolved, highways matter, the application was withdrawn . Since that date further detailed discussions have been held with the local planning authority and the local highway authority. The revised application now submitted reflects the detail

of those discussions, and has addressed the issues of concern raised during the life of the previous application.

7. It is recognised and understood that appropriate controls should be attached to the running of such events. This matter has been the subject of discussions with Development Services and this application and the proposed operating parameters have been informed by and are consistent with those discussions. In this respect however, the remoteness of the site from the nearest residential properties is such that noise and disturbance issues are unlikely to arise or be a material issue in the determination of this application.
8. The key considerations in this case are the appropriateness of the use in this location, the protection of nearby residential amenity and highways considerations. Through appropriate controls over the **timing** of events , the use of **amplified music** , and the management of **vehicular movements** to and from the site, it is considered that residential amenity can be protected and highways interests safeguarded, .
9. The purpose of this application is to enable the continued use of the premises in connection with the clay pigeon shoot, and the use of the premises (including a permanently erected marquee) for the holding of wedding ceremonies and other functions, including functions and corporate days, subject to the following parameters;
 - ❖ An unspecified number of indoor events
 - ❖ Up to 50 guests to attend Civil Ceremonies
 - ❖ Wedding reception guests typically in the range 40-80 persons
 - ❖ Sound limiting device installed in marquee to control noise levels, to level set and agreed with local planning authority.
 - ❖ Location and direction of speakers to be agreed with planning authority to minimize noise disturbance. Doors to remain closed during playing of amplified music.
 - ❖ Live music to cease by 12.00 midnight.
 - ❖ Recorded music to cease by 12.30am (with 'cooling down' period in last 30 minutes).
 - ❖ On site car parking provision
 - ❖ Overnight accommodation for up to 13 guests, within 6 bedrooms.
10. Whilst it is noted that the previously submitted application for the proposed use was generally supported by the Planning Officer (see Committee Agenda Report for application ref: S08/0923), the key distinctions between this application, and the previous application is to clarify and define the hours of operation of events, and to provide greater clarity upon how those events are to be managed and run. The application has been prepared in a manner, which will enable the planning authority to impose appropriate, enforceable conditions upon any grant of consent which will provide acceptable safeguards to ensure the protection of residential amenity. By means of this application, the applicant is offering certain controls over that activity which, it is considered will provide greater controls over the use, that will protect adjoining and nearby residential amenity.

2.The application site

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

Gorse Lodge

11. The application site in this instance comprises Gorse Lodge, arrange of single and two storey agricultural style red-brick and pantile buildings , located in a remote rural setting on the eastern edges of the Trent / Witham vale, several kilometres to the west of the Lincoln Cliff (at Caythorpe), and several kilometers to the east of the River Witham at Claypole. The locality is characterised by generally level ground, containing irregular shaped arable fields, with strongly defined field boundaries. Set to the north of the lodge is a small woodland area, and similar woodland areas are scattered across the landscape. Although largely influenced by historic agricultural activity, more recent interventions have also shaped the landscape. A short distance to the north of Gorse Lodge is Fulbeck Airfield, still in military use. To the north-east, set back from the Marston Stragglethorpe Road, is a fairly modern kart racing circuit (PFI).

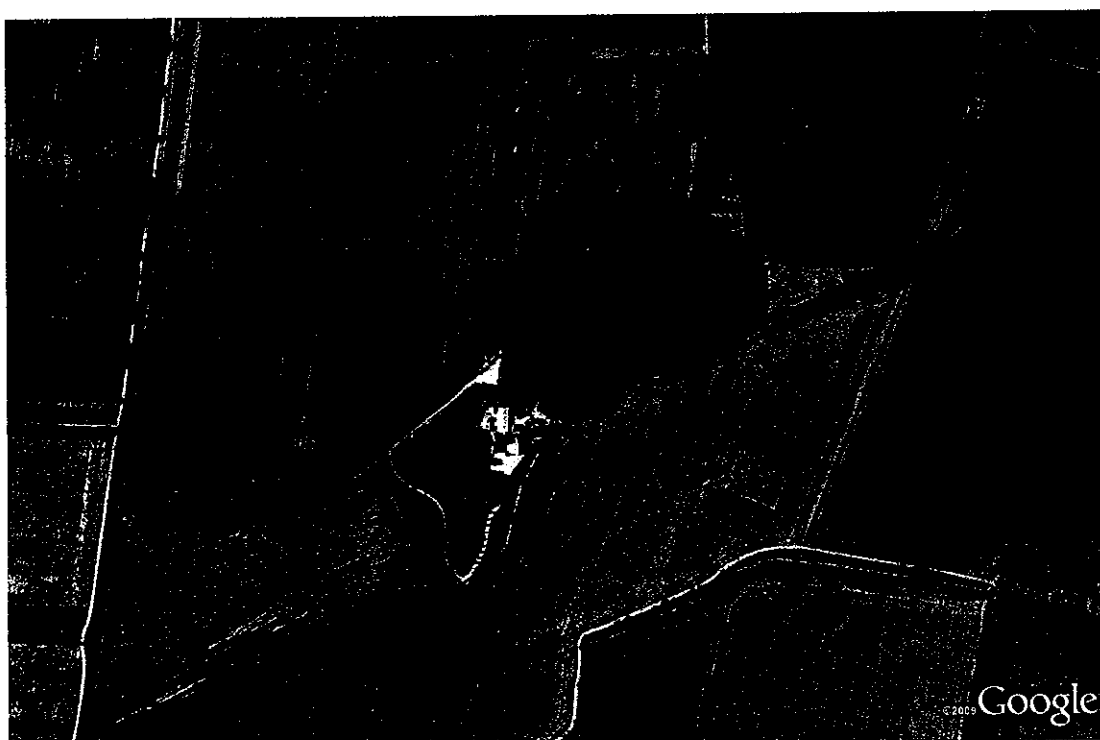


Gorse Lodge and the surrounding area

11. The site is set some 1.5km along a private track (referred to as Moor Farm Lane) leading north from the Stubton – Brandon road, in a remote rural location. The nearest residential property is set some 800m to the south-west, and accessed along the same private track. Residential properties in Stubton are some 1.8km to the south-west of the site. There are a number of isolated dwellings set along the Stubton / Brandon road, 1.2km to the south, and Brandon village is 1.9km to the south-east. Fenton is situated 1.4km to the

north-west. The PFI kart Racing circuit is located 1.2 km to the north east, and Court Leys, on the Marston – Stragglethorpe road. Is some 1.5km to the east.

12. As illustrated below, the buildings comprise an attractive grouping of traditional redbrick and pantile buildings, which have been modified and extended. The site benefits from a verdant setting, flanked to the south-east and south-west by small lakes, with the backdrop of the woodland to the north.



Aerial photographs of Gorse Lodge.



12. The buildings have an established use as a shooting lodge. Initially this shooting lodge (approved under planning permission reference SK71/1078/90) was utilized in connection with traditional game shooting in the surrounding area.

13. Planning permission was subsequently granted for the use of the woodland, and the area to the north of the woodland as a clay pigeon shooting ground (SK95/0761/71/30), and SK.00/0471/71). A number of subsequent applications have been made to alter the operating times of the shooting ground, and the frequency of events. The most recent application, permitting extended hours and days for a 15 month period (S07/1583/31) has recently expired. Pending submission of a 'renewal' application, the operation of the clay pigeon shooting ground reverts to the terms of the earlier permission. Planning permission has been granted to extend and alter the shooting lodge (S98/0725) and to erect a shop, office and toilet block (S04/1289).
14. Located to the north-west of the lodge complex, and to the west of the woodland is an open paddock area, laid to grass. The southern portion of this paddock area is intended to serve as a car parking area for events. This is accessed by a track leading around the western side of the lakes. There is sufficient space available in this area to accommodate the specified guest numbers.
15. Set to the north of the lodge, between the buildings and the woodland, is a lawned area. Essentially screened from view by the buildings, landscaping and the woodland, the area now contains a 30m x 15m marquee structure. This structure is used in connection with the events (existing and proposed) and comprises part of this application.



Marquee located to the north of the Lodge buildings

16. Access to the site is via a track leading northwards from the Stubton – Brandon road. A number of isolated dwellings and a farmyard area are accessed along the southern section of this track, before it diverts in a north-easterly direction towards the lodge. The roadway is constructed to a high standard, with wide grass verges, offering adequate facility for vehicles to pass.

3.The proposed development

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

17. Having had the benefit of operating a number of private events at Gorse Lodge, the applicants now have a better understanding of the operation of this type of event. They also now understand the optimum size of party that can be comfortably accommodated at the premises (both with and without a marquee) and the type of package that can best meet guest's expectations for what is a very important event in their lives. The applicants also recognise that any activity must have full regard to the residential amenity of those properties nearby (albeit some distance from the site) and operate in a manner that is sensitive to the site's location within a rural area.
18. Wedding ceremonies now take place in a variety of locations (Authorised Premises) other than churches and Registry Offices. Experience from elsewhere has demonstrated that potential customers looking for a secular wedding ceremony, for the most part, wish to combine a wedding ceremony with a wedding reception in the same location. In 2007, civil ceremonies accounted for 67 per cent of all ceremonies, which is an increase from 61 per cent in 1997. Re-marriages now actually account for a higher proportion of all marriages than first marriages. Although it is difficult to generalize, re-marriages typically take place outside of the church environment, and non-Registry Office locations are becoming increasingly popular. Marriages in Authorised Premises accounted for 43 per cent of all marriages in 2007 and two-thirds of all civil marriages/partnerships. In 2006, 40 per cent of all marriages took place in Authorised Premises; in 1997, this proportion was 8.1 per cent. The quality of the location and its surroundings are a key factor in the choice of venue. Historic buildings (whether listed or not listed) in attractive, private settings are becoming a popular choice. Gorse Lodge, and the tranquil, verdant quality of the local environment has proven to be extremely popular as a location for weddings and other family celebrations. The location is also able to offer overnight accommodation for some guests, which adds to the quality of the overall offering.
19. This application proposes the change of use of the premises from its permitted use as a shooting lodge to a use for a shooting lodge and use for wedding ceremonies, civil ceremonies and other private functions (including corporate type events).
20. It is difficult to be absolutely prescriptive about the type and nature of events that will be held, as each function will vary according to the requirements of the wedding couple and family. Set out below however is a resume of the parameters within which it is anticipated all types of events will operate.

No of guests / delegates

- ❖ A maximum of 50 guests to attend wedding ceremonies. These will typically take place within the Lodge building itself.
- ❖ Additional 40-80 guests to attend Wedding reception (this will vary considerably between events, although a maximum of 150 attendees in total would be expected).
- ❖ Corporate events will typically take place within the Lodge building itself. This can accommodate up to 50 delegates theatre style, or 30 delegates in a classroom format.
- ❖ Overnight accommodation for up to 13 guests within 6 guest bedrooms

Hours of operation: Weddings and Private Parties

- ❖ Monday – Thursday 1200 – 2400
- ❖ Friday and Saturday 1200-0100 the following day
- ❖ Sunday and Bank Holidays 1200 – 2400

Hours of operation: Corporate Events

- ❖ Monday – Friday 1000-2100
- ❖ Saturday 1000-2200
- ❖ Sundays and Bank Holidays 100-1600
- ❖ Corporate Events might typically include clay pigeon shooting. This would take place in accordance with the terms of the relevant planning permission for the usage of the shooting ground, in terms of hours of operation etc.

Lodge lettings

- ❖ Typically 1000 arrival and 1000 departure the following day

Marquee Usage

- ❖ Location of marquee to be fixed.
- ❖ Siting of stage area / dance floor area to be agreed with local planning authority.
- ❖ Location of speakers and amplification system / mounting to be optimally located to minimize sound effects upon surrounding property.
- ❖ Installation of a sound limiting device (set at level to be agreed with the local planning authority)
- ❖ Doors to be kept closed to minimise spill out of noise.
- ❖ Live music to cease at 2400. Recorded music to cease at 0030.
- ❖ 'Cooling down' period instigated for last 30 minutes of music duration

Outdoor areas

- ❖ Outdoor areas to be used by guests for gathering / socialising etc
- ❖ No outdoor amplified music

Fireworks

- Where requested, fireworks will not be released after 10.00pm.

Car parking

- All guest car parking to take place in paddock area to the north-west of the Lodge.
- Signage to be erected at car park exit, requesting guest to have consideration to nearby residents on departure.

Reporting arrangements

- The applicants would also be willing to undertake appropriate reporting arrangements that would enable the planning authority to be aware of the dates of booked 'marquee events', for dissemination to third parties.

21. It should also be recognised that the parallel public entertainment licensing regime, in the form of temporary events notices, and premises licensing will similarly provide controls over the operation of the premises above and beyond any planning controls, which will further ensure that residential amenity is protected. The applicants fully recognise that the granting of a premises licence is dependent upon the satisfactory conduct of events under temporary event notices, and it is therefore in their interests to ensure that any use is operated in accordance with any planning conditions imposed.
22. It must also be recognised that the characteristics of the venue lend themselves to smaller scale private, and exclusive events. Larger venues will typically cater for different types of often much larger events. The applicants intend to target a very specific clientele with an exclusive and unique product. The very character, ambiance and intimacy of the property largely determines the type of events that will be held; and in this regard effectively acts as a self-limiting factor, in terms of event size and type and character.
23. The proposals have been the subject of discussion with officers from Development Services and Environmental Protection, and the submitted application reflects those discussions. It is considered that all potential areas of concern have been addressed, and are capable of proper planning control by means of the imposition of appropriate conditions.

4.Planning Policy Considerations

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

Overview

24. Given the specialist nature of the use proposed, there is no specific guidance within national planning policy documents that specifically addresses the development proposed. However, there is more general guidance contained within both PPS7 and PPS4 that provides broad support for rural diversification and employment development. Also relevant in this instance are the provisions of the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism, which replaces PPG21 and which is generally recognized as having broadly equivalent weight to a PPS.
25. Likewise, the development plan offers limited guidance on the type of development proposed, and it is necessary to consider the broader employment and tourism related policies in within RSS8 and the Local Plan.
26. However, a relevant consideration in this case is the extant, authorized use of the site, as consolidated by various permissions to extended the facility. The premises have an authorized commercial use as a shooting Lodge, with few restrictions upon how that use may operate in terms of opening hours and intensity of use. As such, in considering the extension of uses in this case, it is necessary to view those in the context of the authorized use, rather than as an entirely new use.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

27. Planning Policy Statement 7, at paragraph 5, emphasizes that planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas. In particular, Paragraph 5(ii) states that future LDD policies should set out criteria for permitting economic development in different locations, including the future expansion of business premises , to facilitate healthy and diverse economic activity in rural areas. The development in this case must be seen as representing the expansion of an existing rural enterprise, and one which can be accommodated without broader impacts upon the local environment.
28. Whilst there is an emphasis permeating the guidance upon the sustainable location of development, there is no suggestion that this should preclude appropriate development outside of larger settlements and local service centres. There is ample evidence that the authority has been minded to support appropriate rural employment and tourism development in rural locations, outside of larger local service centres (eg. Stubton Hall Hotel, and the PFI Karting Circuit and the previous permissions at the application property).
29. PPS7 places a strong emphasis upon the protection of the countryside and its character. However, Paragraph 16 emphasises that this does not represent an absolute ban upon development in countryside areas. It particularly emphasises (at sub-paragraph (ii)) that support should be given to countryside based

enterprises and activities which contribute to rural economies and/ or promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside. The proposed development squarely satisfies these objectives.

30. Paragraph 17 of the guidance supports the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings. Re-use for economic development purposes is seen as preferable; a point that is re-affirmed in the more recently published PPS4. The proposed re-use in this case clearly optimises the use of an existing resource, and will make a significant contribution to local employment. As such the development must be seen as squarely satisfying the objectives of the guidance.

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

31. Whilst considerably broader in its scope than PPS7, PPS4 echoes similar themes in terms of rural employment development and growth. Whilst again the primary emphasis of the guidance is upon sustainable economic growth in and around local service centres, there is the same positive emphasis upon appropriate rural enterprise, especially that centred upon and involving the re-use of existing buildings. Policy EC6, relating to Planning for Economic Development in Rural Areas, echoes the PPS7 guidance in relation to the re-use of rural buildings;

Local planning authorities shouldsupport the conversion and re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside (particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages) for economic development

32. Policy EC6 continues by stating that;

Local planning authorities should.....set out the criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification, and support diversification for business purposes that are consistent in their scale and environmental impact with their rural location

33. The application proposals are clearly consistent with the latter policy objective.

34. Policy EC7 relates to Planning for Tourism in Rural Areas. We would contend that there is a legitimate tourism dimension to the application proposals, insofar as the use will attract significant visitor numbers to the area, will facilitate some overnight stays on site, as well as overnight stays in the immediate locality. These tourism benefits can be secured without any detrimental impact upon the countryside. Policy EC7 states that

To help deliver the Government's tourism strategy, local planning authorities should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features. Local planning authorities should, through their local development frameworks:

- a. support the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing

facilities in rural service centres, carefully weighing the objective of providing adequate facilities or enhancing visitors' enjoyment or improving the financial viability of the facility with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites, and

b. wherever possible, locate tourist and visitor facilities in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements. Facilities requiring new buildings in the countryside should, where possible, be provided in, or close to, service centres or villages but may be justified in other locations where the required facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available for re-use

c. support extensions to existing tourist accommodation where the scale of the extension is appropriate to its location and where the extension may help to ensure the future viability of such businesses

35. Policy EC12 of PPS4 indicates that the re-use of buildings for economic development purposes will usually be preferable to residential conversions. In determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas, local planning authorities are advised to (inter alia) ;

Support small-scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages, or other locations, that are remote from local service centres, recognising that a site may be an acceptable location for development even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport

approve planning applications for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for economic development, particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages, where the benefits outweigh the harm in terms of:

- i. the potential impact on the countryside, landscapes and wildlife
- ii. local economic and social needs and opportunities
- iii. settlement patterns and the level of accessibility to service centres, markets and housing
- iv. the need to conserve, or the desirability of conserving, heritage assets and
- v. the suitability of the building(s), and of different scales, for re-use recognising that replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion

36. There is thus a positive emphasis upon appropriate employment generating, and tourism related development in countryside locations, especially where such development can be accommodated without adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside. The proposed development squarely satisfies these objectives.

Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism

37. Section 3.24 of the Good Practice Guide emphasises the importance of tourism in rural areas; it identifies that the provision of essential facilities for visitors is vital for the development of the tourism in rural areas. Tourism can be a key element in rural and farm diversification; help to revitalise market towns and villages; support important rural services and facilities; and underwrite environmental schemes and

improvements to the built and natural environment. LDF policies should 'engender a positive approach to rural tourism proposals'. 'Wherever possible' the guidance states 'tourist and visitor facilities should be housed in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements.'

38. In all cases, the advantages of a tourism development need to be weighed against the disadvantages arising from its location. Key considerations include the extent to which a proposal;

- ❖ helps to protect or improve a specific site or general location. Many new proposals offer the opportunity for landscape enhancement, to re-use an historic building or to improve a derelict and unattractive site;
The proposed development will ensure the continuing maintenance of the site as an attractive composition of rural buildings in an attractive, managed landscape setting. Positive contribution.
- ❖ contributes to tourism in the locality. New tourism developments will usually be beneficial to the local economy and complement the area's tourism function;
The development will positively contribute to tourism in the locality, and increase visitor spend. It will generate a significant number of overnight stays in the locality, both on site and nearby.
- ❖ provides a new facility for the local community as well as visitors;
The development will create opportunities for community usage of the facilities.
- ❖ assists more generally with diversification of rural economies; and, where appropriate,
The development will contribute to the diversification of the local rural economy and create local employment
- ❖ impacts on the vitality and viability of town centres.
There will be no town centre impacts.

39. Paragraph 5.10 considers the sustainability advantages of re-using existing buildings for tourism purposes;

The re-use of buildings that have become redundant further improves the overall sustainability of new developments. This also often has the advantage of maintaining important and historic buildings and providing continuity in the landscape and townscape. These sustainable attributes, which may be substantial, may offset certain planning objections to a proposal such as poor location or access. So, for example, if a hotel was proposed in a redundant building outside of an existing town centre, the decision maker would need to consider and reflect the advantages of the refurbishment proposal against the disadvantage of the less central location.

40. This particular strand is one which permeates through all of the above guidance. The re-utilisation of existing buildings can represent a sustainable development option in rural areas, especially where those buildings are utilized for commercial or tourism purposes. In this particular case, the buildings already have an established, authorized use for commercial purposes in connection with the use of the shooting ground, a use which carries few restrictions in terms of the use of the buildings. A properly planned and controlled, more-intensive usage of the building represents an appropriate and sustainable development, that will preserve the character and appearance of the countryside.

PPG24: Planning and Noise

41. PPS24 relates to all aspects of noise, and in particular offers guidance on the use of planning powers to minimize the adverse impacts of noise.
42. The guidance recognizes that the impact of noise can be a material planning consideration in the determination of applications (Para.2). New development involving noisy activities should, if possible, be sited away from noise sensitive land uses.
43. Noise characteristics and levels can vary substantially according to their source and the type of activity involved (Para.11). The planning system should not place unjustified obstacles in the way of employment creating developments (Para.10). The impact of noise from entertainment will depend to a large extent on the frequency of use and the design of facilities (Para.11).
44. A number of measures can be introduced to control the source of, or limit exposure to noise (Para.13). Such measures, the guidance states, should be proportionate and reasonable, and may include engineered reduction of noise at the point of the noise generation, layout considerations in terms of the distance between source and noise sensitive locations, screening by physical barriers, and administrative measures in terms of for example, limiting hours of operation, restricting activities allowed on the site and specifying acceptable noise limits. Early consultation is advised with the local planning authority, and the imposition of conditions (in accordance with Circular 11/95 tests) should be considered. (Para.14).
45. No specific guidance is given on the type of use proposed in this instance, although, in relation to sport and recreation uses, Para. 22 of Annex 3, does suggest that relatively infrequent uses such as sports stadia uses, may enable higher noise levels, subject to appropriate controls over frequency of use and the control of noise emissions during unsociable hours.

South Kesteven Local Plan

46. The development plan for the area comprises the South Kesteven Local Plan. There are no specific policies relating to the type of change of use proposed by the present application. It is relevant to note however that similar applications at the Manor House, Allington were deemed to be in accordance with Local Plan policies EN1 and E5 (specified in the reasons for granting permission).
47. Planning policy EN1 is a general environmental policy relating to all development proposals. The policy contains a number of criteria that are not applicable to the appeal proposals. However, the most directly applicable strands of the policy are (vi) relating to traffic and (vii) relating to noise.
48. Criteria (vi) states that developments should be located where the highway system can adequately and safely accommodate the volume and nature of traffic likely to be generated. This represented an issue raised in consultation responses to the previous applications and we consider this on more detail below. Pre-application discussions with the local highway authority have however confirmed that there are now no highways based objections to the development proposed.

49. Criteria (vii) seeks to avoid pollution to surroundings by reason (inter alia) of noise. The application as proposed seeks to restricts the use of amplified music to the building itself and, in a controlled manner, within the marquee. Conditions can reasonably be imposed to control noise levels arising from the use to protect residential amenity.
50. In this case the greatest protection against residential amenity impacts through noise, is the substantial separation between the site and the nearest residential dwellings. The closest dwelling in this case is some 800m to the south-west. Set between the site and the dwelling are a number of boundary hedges and landscaped areas, which will serve to interrupt and mitigate the effects of the noise. Again, appropriate controls, in the form of planning conditions can be imposed to mitigate and control the effects of noise.
51. It is relevant to note in this case that the Planning Officer's report for the previous application identified that noise issues could be adequately controlled through the use of conditions, and that this matter did not represent a ground for opposing the application.
52. Policy E5 relates to small businesses. The policy, which is generally permissive, identifies three criteria against which small business proposals should be considered. Whilst a similar development at the Manor House, Allington was stated to be compliant with this policy, it is noteworthy that the policy actually only applies to proposals within the towns in the district. It does not therefore apply to the application site in this instance.
53. Policy E6 appears more relevant in this instance. This policy promotes, and supports small scale business development within or adjoining the built up areas of villages, subject to satisfying four criteria; consistency with the character and setting of the village, visual and environmental issues, protection of historic assets where alterations are proposed, and compliance with other plan policies. The only relevant policy strand in this instance is criteria (ii) relating to environmental and traffic issues. There is no impact upon heritage assets in this instance. Criteria (iii) is not materially different to criteria (vi) and (vii) of policy EN1. It has been demonstrated above, through pre-application discussions with the planning authority, that the proposed development clearly satisfies that policy, and accordingly, must also satisfy Policy E6.
54. From the foregoing, and the detailed submissions below, we consider that the proposed development is compliant with both national planning policy and development plan policy.

5. Planning considerations

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

Planning history

55. There are a number of planning applications of relevance to the consideration of this application.

- SK71/1078/90: Conversion of agricultural building to gamekeepers lodge (Approved 06/08/90),
- S98/0725/71: Extension and alterations to shooting lodge (Approved 17/08/98)
- S99/0375/71: Extension to shooting lodge (Approved 17/05/99)
- S01/1227/71: Extensions and alterations to shooting lodge (Approved 19/11/01)
- S03/1093: modification to operating times (Refused 07/10/03)
- S04/0345/71: Shop / Office / Toilet / Shower-block (plus tower and bunding for shooting ground) (Refused on grounds relating to shooting ground)
- S04/1289: Shop / Office / Toilet / Shower-block (plus bunding)(Approved 16/11/04)
- S05/0127; Extensions to shooting lodge - withdrawn
- S08/0923; Change of use to include weddings, corporate entertainment & lettings (Withdrawn: 25/06/2009)

56. These applications (with the exception of the latter applications which were withdrawn) illustrate a history of support for the expansion and consolidation of the activities on the site. The application must reasonably be seen as representing a further development of the established existing uses. They reflect a pattern, seen elsewhere in the district, of tourism / economic development related diversification projects that can be accommodated without substantial new build, and without impact upon the rural qualities of the landscape.

Planning issues

57. From our assessment of the application proposals we consider the key considerations in this case are;

- a. The appropriateness of the use in planning policy terms
- b. The impact of the use upon the character of the countryside
- c. Noise issues and the impact of the use upon the residential amenities of the locality
- d. Traffic and access issues
- e. Regeneration / economic development issues

58. A number of these issues have been specifically identified as being required as part of an invalidation letter which accompanied the application on submission in July 2009. Where appropriate these have been identified under specific headings. A

Design & Access Statement section also considers the marquee element of the application.

Policy considerations

59. The preceding section has illustrated that against relevant national planning policy considerations, the development represents an appropriate rural activity, optimizing the use of a range of traditional agricultural buildings. The development represents an appropriate form of rural diversification. The site previously comprised agricultural land, and over recent years a succession of planning permissions have consolidated a range of non-agricultural uses on the site. The proposed use in this case represents a logical addition to the existing range of approved uses and can reasonably be seen as a n expansion and consolidation of a rural enterprise, something that is both implicitly and explicitly supported in national planning policy.
60. Whilst it is recognised that the proposed use is not located within a local service centre, or indeed any rural settlement, national planning policy does recognise that the re-use and replacement of existing rural buildings represents a sustainable form of development, by optimizing an existing resource. National planning policy guidance recognises that not all economic and tourism development can necessarily take place within sustainable settlements. In such circumstances it is necessary to weigh the benefits and disbenefits of a proposal. In this particular case, the development can be accommodated on an existing site authorized for non-agricultural uses, and involving an unspecified number of visiting members of the public. There is no indication in this case that the proposed uses would generate a greater level of traffic than that already permitted by the existing uses.
61. It also needs to be recognised in this case that the attraction of the site as a venue for weddings and other ceremonies / functions is the attractiveness and remoteness of the location. As such, the use could not reasonably be located in an urban area, or indeed a large village; it is the character and ambience of the locality that is the attraction. In this respect the use can take place without any physical alterations to the building, or the extension of the non-agricultural curtilage. From public vantage points the development will have no impact, and indeed, is not visible. The character and appearance of the countryside will be maintained.
62. Recent planning decisions attest to the suitability of the countryside to accommodate leisure, tourism and economic uses, including uses similar to that now proposed. Examples of developments permitted nearby include;
- ❖ Stubton Hall; Hotel and venue for weddings; equivalent policy context; Stubton effectively deemed to be open countryside in policy terms
 - ❖ PFI Karting Circuit; leisure use permitted in open countryside
 - ❖ Gorse Lodge Clay Pigeon Shooting Ground; leisure use permitted in open countryside
 - ❖ Caravan site at Fulbeck Lowfields;
 - ❖ Fishing lakes at Wagtail Lodge, Marston, and Allington Lane.
 - ❖ Moto Cross / Dirt Bike track at Gonerby Moor
63. These recent consents attest to the potential of accommodating employment / leisure / tourism uses in countryside locations. Relative to many of these uses, the proposed development will have little or no impact upon the countryside.

64. We have also demonstrated that the development would be consistent with development plan policy, notably policies EN1 and E6. It is also notable that in terms of the previous withdrawn application for the proposed use. The relevant Committee report concludes that the proposed use would accord with the objectives of the Local Plan, and that there were no other material considerations that would outweigh the general presumption in favour of the development that flows from development plan compliance. There are no material distinctions between this proposal and the previous application. Accordingly, we conclude that the development in this instance would be compliant with relevant national and development plan policies.

Impact upon the character of the countryside

65. The proposed use in this case utilises existing buildings for the moist part, and will have a negligible impact upon the countryside. The only additional development comprises a car parking area (already used in connection with the shooting ground) and the marquee. The marquee is located to the rear (north of the building, between the buildings and the woodland. It has no material visibility from public vantage points or nearby dwellings, and no broader impact upon the open countryside. The levels of traffic generated by the proposed use, are not likely to be materially greater than those permissible under the terms of the various shooting consents. The shooting activity and the wedding / event usage will not take place simultaneously.

Noise / amenity issues

66. A key planning issue in this case is the impact of the use upon the amenities of neighbouring properties. In this regard, the proposed clarifications, and the safeguards suggested, which are capable of control by means of conditions will not compromise residential amenity. The scale of events proposed can be acceptably accommodated on site, without car parking, for example over-spilling, onto adjoining roads. The nearest residential dwellings are in excess of 800m from the application site with substantial intervening landscaping and screening.
67. Pre-application investigations have confirmed that the existing building has the capacity to accommodate amplified music that will not result in adverse conditions at the nearest dwellings, which are some 800m+ away. It is considered that the building can be used for entertainment involving live-bands of amplified music without adverse or detrimental impact. As an additional safeguard, the applicant is willing to install sound limiting devices that would cut out or limit / modulate sound if a pre-determined level was reached. These factors combined are considered sufficient to protect residential amenity from indoor events.
68. In terms of events involving marquee usage, the applicant, in discussion with the planning authority, is proposing to offer safeguards to protect residential amenity. Amplified music within the marquee area will be controlled through the use of a sound limiting device, and an agreed positioning and orientation of the speaker systems. It is relevant in this respect to note that the marquee is located to the north of the building, and the closest dwellings are located some distance to the south-west of the building. Thus, the building itself will serve to mitigate some of the noise impact, acting as a solid physical noise barrier.

69. The hours of operation of events broadly parallel those agreed for The Manor House in Allington (approved for wedding use), albeit with a slightly later finishing time. What distinguishes Gorse Lodge from Allington however is the remoteness of the site, and the far greater degree of separation from adjoining residential properties. The degree of separation from adjoining dwellings is sufficient in our view to ensure that no adverse amenity impacts will arise.
70. One potential source of disturbance will be noise disturbance from exiting vehicles. Whilst this aspect of a use is difficult to control, the applicants will use their best endeavours to regulate and control exiting vehicles. In particular, instructions will be given to guests to respect the privacy and amenity of neighbours by driving considerately on leaving the site.
71. The applicants are also willing to operate a system whereby complaints can be registered and investigated. It is now quite common practice in wind farm appeal decisions to see conditions imposed which are intended to operate a complaint monitoring and action system, whereby complaints referred to the planning authority are investigated and actioned as appropriate. The applicants would also be willing to provide, either on demand or at agreed intervals, appropriate records of future planned events that could be disseminated to third parties for information.
72. The application has been quite specific in this case in describing the operation of the site and the use, in order to ensure that appropriate conditions can be imposed by the planning authority, if required. As such, we consider that noise and amenity interests can be appropriately safeguarded in this instance.

Access and traffic issues: Transport Statement

73. The previous (withdrawn) planning application relating to the wedding / event usage included a transport Statement and details of the proposed car parking arrangements for the development.
74. PPG13, at paragraph 40, dealing with rural areas, recognises that in assessing transport and access issues in such areas, what is appropriate in a remote rural area may be very different from rural areas near to larger towns. Paragraph 43 in considering employment uses in rural areas, particularly those involving the re-use and conversion of existing buildings, states that planning authorities should be realistic about the availability and likely availability of alternatives to access by car. Similarly, they should not reject proposals where small scale expansion would give rise to only modest additional daily vehicle movements in comparison to other uses that are permitted on the site, and the impact upon minor roads would not be significant.
75. The application proposals should properly be viewed in this context. There is a permitted use on the site and adjoining land, to which there are no restrictions in terms of guest numbers or indeed vehicle numbers. The statement above also makes clear that the proposed event usage, with the exception of some corporate events, will not take place concurrently with the shooting use. Some shooting activity could presently be described as corporate events. Thus, the proposed development can properly be viewed as a 'small scale expansion'. It will involve only modest additional vehicle movements relative to the permitted use, and the impact upon minor roads will not be significant.

76. Whilst weddings and similar events are likely to involve greater overall guest numbers than the permitted shooting uses and corporate days, in practical terms increased numbers in this case will not necessarily equate to a proportionate increase in vehicle numbers. Whilst corporate events and shooting activities are likely to generate a significant number of single-occupier car journeys, weddings and similar events are more likely to generate dual-occupancy or multiple occupancy car journeys, as invited wedding guests are typically couples and family groups. This argument has previously been accepted in pre-application discussions by the highway authority in relation to a similar proposal at Marston Hall.
77. It is estimated that on any given day, the average number of vehicles attending a shooting event would be in the region of 40. The applicants estimate that this generates in the region of 20-30 vehicles.
78. Most weddings taking place at the site will typically accommodate 40-80 persons, and corporate days will attract a maximum of 50 people. Thus with higher vehicle occupancy levels, the amount of vehicular traffic generated by the wedding and event use is unlikely to be significantly greater than the extant shooting use. The statement above makes clear that the shooting use and the wedding / event use will not take place simultaneously, and therefore there will not be circumstances where vehicle generation from both uses coincide. The plans accompanying the application identify that there is more than sufficient space within the site to accommodate the traffic generated by the use.
79. Moor Farm Lane, the track leading off the Stubton – Brandon road, is a good quality road, with wide grass verges and numerous passing opportunities for vehicles. The road has already been deemed acceptable for the shooting use, without any form of improvement. Given the modest additional flows that are likely to arise (in some instances wedding / event traffic may actually be less than that of the shooting use), we consider that the development raises no highways issues that would justify a refusal of permission in this case. The junction of Moor Farm Lane with the Stubton – Brandon road enjoys good visibility in both directions and the major road has sufficient capacity to accommodate the additional flows without detriment to highways safety.
80. Relative to the existing use it is not anticipated that the proposed use would result in any increases in commercial vehicles travelling to and from the site.

Review of planning issues: Balancing considerations

81. This section seeks to draw together the various strands of the preceding sections, and to assess the extent to which there are conflicting considerations in this case, and if so, whether the balance of considerations in this case falls in favour of the proposal, or against it.
82. We have presented these submissions under a number of broad headings; planning policy, noise and amenity issues, and access / parking issues.

Planning policy issues

83. Our consideration of relevant national policies concludes that there is genuine policy support for the proposals. The site comprises an established rural enterprise, utilizing existing buildings. The development would facilitate the optimal use of these buildings, and would have no broader impacts upon the countryside. The proposal represents an appropriate rural diversification project, and would be consistent with the principles outlined in PPS7, PPS4 and The Good Practice Guide on Tourism. The development would be consistent with Local Plan policies EN1 and E6.

Amenity issues and noise issues

84. A key planning issue in this case is the impact of the use upon the amenities of nearby properties (there are no 'neighbouring' properties). In this regard, the contents of this statement, and the safeguards suggested, which are capable of control by means of conditions, will not compromise residential amenity. The scale of events proposed can be acceptably accommodated on site, without car parking, for example over-spilling, onto adjoining roads or land.
85. Pre-application discussions have confirmed that the existing building has the capacity to accommodate amplified music that will not result in adverse conditions at the nearest dwellings, which are some 800m+ away. The existing buildings appear capable of accommodating amplified music without causing any form of disturbance to the nearest properties. Through careful management, and consideration of noise levels, orientation of speaker systems and layout, the marquee is similarly capable of accommodating some amplified music without detriment. The use of the marquee is capable of effective control through the use of conditions. A sound limiting device will be installed and set at a level to be agreed with the planning authority. Separating the marquee from the nearest dwellings are the Gorse Lodge buildings which will have a considerable screening effect. Whilst further information was requested, the previous Planning Committee report for application S08/0923, identified that;
- "The site is situated in an isolated rural location a significant distance away from the neighbouring centres of population. As such the impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring or nearby residential occupiers from noise and associated disturbance is considered to be limited."
86. The hours of operation of events broadly parallel those agreed for The Manor House in Allington. What distinguishes this site from Allington is the extensive grounds, and the far greater degree of separation from adjoining residential properties. In the Allington case, the site immediately adjoins and sits opposite residential properties. On this basis, we consider that slightly extended operating hours can be reasonably justified in this case. The degree of separation from adjoining dwellings is sufficient in our view to ensure that no adverse amenity impacts will arise.
87. Accordingly, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions we consider that there are no noise / amenity issues in this case that would justify a refusal of permission in this case.

Car parking / access issues

88. The proposed development can be satisfactorily accessed. The flows arising from the proposed wedding / event usage will not be materially greater than those relating to the authorized shooting use. Car parking requirements can be adequately met on site.

Balancing considerations: Conclusions

89. Typically it is necessary to weigh the benefits and disbenefits of a proposal to reach a conclusion upon its acceptability. In this particular case, we can identify no material disbenefits that would weigh against the proposals. Accordingly, we consider that there are no reasonable grounds to withhold the grant of permission in this case, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

6. Regeneration Statement

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

90. The Council's invalidation letter of 27 July 2009 requires the submission of 'details of any regeneration benefits from the proposal', and refers the applicant to Section 4.12 of the Council's Local List.

91. Section 4.12 of the Local List refers to Economic Regeneration Statements as follows;

"A supporting statement of any regeneration benefits from the proposal including details of any new jobs that would be created or supported; the relative floorspace totals for each use where known, and community benefits; and reference to any relevant regeneration strategies. The use of regeneration statements will be particularly beneficial for larger schemes for the development of previously developed land. However, there will be cases for the inclusion of a regeneration statement for smaller schemes where it can be demonstrated that significant benefits to the community will result. The regeneration benefits of a development may help to counterbalance some of the negative aspects of the proposal. "

92. Given the relatively modest scale of the development in this case, relative to the authorised uses of the building, it is perhaps questionable as to whether a Regeneration Statement is required in this instance. Insofar as the buildings are already authorised for use for business purposes (as a shooting lodge), and in active use, the proposed development in this case, which essentially extends the types of activities that may operate from the site, cannot accurately be termed a regeneration proposal. As we have described above, the proposal may reasonably be viewed as an consolidation of an existing use that optimises the use of an existing approved commercial site. Whilst certain economic development benefits will flow from a grant of planning permission, such benefits cannot reasonably be termed 'regeneration'.

93. The shooting lodge use, without wedding /event usage, employs 2 people at the lodge itself, administering shoots and corporate days, and providing appropriate support. The use of the building for weddings and other events involves a greater number of staff, predominantly part time, principally in terms of catering and waiting staff. Employee numbers will vary from event to event, according to guest numbers, and the type of service chosen by clients. Employment in terms of waiting staff will be provided by catering contractors. Typically however, a wedding event catering for 80 people, would provide employment for 12-15 people. The implementation of the use will increase the number of Gorse Lodge employees from 2 to 5.

94. In addition to this direct employment at the site, the development will bring additional indirect employment benefits, principally in hotels and guest houses in the local area. Weddings and similar events frequently involve overnight guest stays in the local area, and, frequently return visits. In this respect the employment and economic benefits of the development extend well beyond the actual use proposed.

It is generally recognized that overnight visitor stays , on average, contribute in the region of £150-250 per visitor per night to a local economy, in terms of accommodation, food and drink and incidental expenditure. The application proposals must be seen as positively contribution to the development of tourism and economic development in the county and region.

95. Whilst the application proposals do not explicitly incorporate measures that will directly benefit the local community, the site will act as a facility available to the community for events. Moreover, the ongoing activity at the site will ensure its ongoing maintenance to a high standard and ensure that its complements and enhances the quality of the local environment.
96. The proposed development, insofar as it will attract visitors to the local area, and result in increased visitor spend in the locality, will contribute positively to the tourism strategies at regional, county and district level.

7. Marquee: Design & Access considerations

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

97. As the erection of a marquee involves a limited engineering operation, a Design & Access Statement is required. We consider that the relevant issues have largely been addressed in the preceding sections. However, for clarity, and in order to satisfy the relevant application requirement, the Design & Access issues are summarised below. This relates to the marquee only; the change of use application does not require a Design & Access Statement.

Use

98. The proposed marquee is proposed to be used in connection with the proposed event usage. Regardless of the existence of the marquee, the land upon which the marquee is located is incorporated into the existing curtilage of the shooting lodge. The land is not presently in agricultural usage, and thus no loss of agricultural land is involved. Thus in use terms the key consideration relates to the differences between the authorised shooting lodge use and the proposed mixed use retaining the existing use, plus the proposed wedding / event usage. The works are reversible. In planning terms we would regard the change of use as not material, representing an appropriate incremental change that allows for the optimization of the use of the site.

99. The marquee will be used solely in connection with the proposed event usage.

Amount

100. The marquee is proportionate in scale to the adjoining buildings, designed for purpose and proportionate to the overall scale of the site. The structure is screened from view from public vantage points by the existing Gorse Lodge buildings, the woodland to the north, and local topography, including field boundaries. Being screened from view the structure will have no material impact upon the wider landscape.

Layout

101. The siting of the marquee to the rear of the Gorse Lodge buildings ensures that its impact is minimised. It relates satisfactorily to the existing buildings, and by reason of its scale does not dominate or overwhelm them. The relationship of the marquee to the existing buildings also ensures some measure of acoustic protection from the nearest residential properties.

Scale

102. The marquee is modest in its overall scale, and will have no impacts upon the wider locality. It is largely unseen from public vantage points.

Appearance

103. The marquee is typical of its type. Whilst somewhat at odds with the adjoining buildings in appearance terms, the structure is appropriate within its context, and has no wider impacts upon the locality. As essentially a temporary structure, the marquee is easily removable. The land is capable of re-instatement when the requirement for the marquee ceases.

Landscaping

104. Whilst the opportunity exists for further landscaping to be carried out, we consider this is unnecessary in this instance. There is extensive landscaping to the south of the buildings, notably around the pond areas, whilst to the north is an extensive woodland area. Roadside and field hedges also serve to screen the site from public views.

Access

105. The proposed access solution arises from discussions with the local highway authority, and represents the most appropriate access solution for the proposed development. This has been considered in greater detail in the preceding section.

8. Conclusions

Mixed use to include existing authorised uses and wedding ceremonies and overnight accommodation, Gorse Lodge, Stubton, Lincolnshire, NG23 5DA

106. The foregoing has illustrated that the proposed change of use represents an appropriate complementary use of an important rural asset, that will have no adverse or detrimental impacts upon its character, or upon the character and appearance and amenities of the locality.
107. These revised proposals have sought to provide clarity on the operation of the use, and has been prepared following detailed discussions with the local planning authority. The application seeks to address concerns raised in previous applications.
108. The application has been purposely framed in a manner that will enable enforceable conditions to be drafted that will provide clarity on how the use will operate. Such conditions will ensure the protection of residential amenity and ensure no adverse impacts upon highways safety.

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