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1. Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been submitted by Cass Associates on behalf of North York Moors National Park Authority in support of a full planning application for alterations and extensions to the Sutton Bank National Park Visitor Centre, alterations to the existing car park, provision of a new car park and a detached extension to form a dark skies viewing building and bird hide.

1.2 The application is made in respect of the land shown on the Location Plan submitted with the application.

1.3 This Design and Access Statement will:

- Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied (design, use, amount, layout, materials, scale and appearance);
- Explain the approach to access;
- Reference the relevant planning policies at a national and local level; and
- Explain how the proposal complies with relevant planning policy and guidance.
2. Design Approach & Principles

2.1 The existing building is a configuration of linear sections around a square entrance courtyard. The building is of traditional load bearing construction with masonry stone walls, punched windows and massing broken up with timber and glazing panels together with clerestory glazing band all beneath a pitched roof and overhanging eaves.

2.2 The approach to design is influenced by the use of the site and the requirement for general improvements which include: the improvement of WC's; provision of 'Changing Places' accessible WC, baby change and showers; larger café and kitchen; enlarged café terrace; additional storage space; and staff facilities.

DESIGN

2.3 The roof over the kitchen and stores is proposed as a projection of the existing pitched roof running north-south. The roof over the store and cycle workshop is proposed as a distinct hipped roof to match existing with valley gutter abutting the existing roof.

2.4 The main entrance extension is proposed as a curved glazed curtain wall to encourage visitors to enter the building and also open the building into the outside courtyard space.

2.5 This modern intervention is a contrast to the existing heavy loadbearing context. The roof is proposed as a flat roof with clean edge at the glazed wall junction as a practical solution to the curved façade.

2.6 The proposal includes a dark skies viewing facility/bird hide which includes a pavilion building for small groups of visitors (up to 30 adults or 50 children).

USE

2.7 The current use of the building as the Sutton Bank National Park Visitor Centre will remain unchanged.
2.8 The centre currently provides a café, bike sales and hire facilities, retail/exhibition space and toilet facilities for visitors to the National Park.

2.9 In addition to these uses new storage and workshop facilities and a ‘Changing Place’ accessible WC, baby change and showers will be provided as part of the proposal. This can be accessed from within the building or via an external door with a radar key during 'out of hours' times.

2.10 The proposed works will include general improvements for the use of the visitor centre and allow for it to cater to an increased number of visitors.

2.11 The alterations of the existing car park to the west of the visitor centre and new car park to the north west will provide the additional parking capacity required by the increase in visitors.

2.12 The dark skies building and viewing area will add to the educational and leisure facilities currently available. The building is intended to be used for presentations and talks together with a dual use as a bird hide with a number of bird watching windows on the north west and north east elevations.

AMOUNT

2.13 The amount of additional space to be provided within the visitor centre will include changes to the front elevation with curved glass elevation reflecting the circular shape of the courtyard, providing additional space for the café and retail/exhibition area.

2.14 The café terrace to the rear of the building will also be extended to provide additional seating areas.

2.15 The existing car park to the west of the site has a capacity of 56 vehicles. This will increase to a total of 79 vehicles, including 4 dedicated disabled spaces.
2.16 The new car park to the north west of the site will have a capacity for 56 vehicles.

2.17 The dark skies building and viewing area will cater for small to medium sized groups.

**LAYOUT**

2.18 The layout of the building responds to the client’s aspirations to improve the building’s internal circulation and connection between its component part with an open plan approach, whilst also increasing the area to respond to the space requirements that the visitor volumes require.

2.19 The café area is proposed to increase in size by removing the existing east (courtyard facing) wall and opening into a new curved section of building with views into the entrance courtyard.

2.20 The new retail/interpretation space incorporates the existing foyer, exhibition space and some ancillary staff-only space into one open plan area in the south wing. A new extension on the south elevation allows for the cycle workshop, storage and some staff room.

2.21 The extension of the existing car park and provision of a new car park have been designed to provide the necessary increase in capacity in appropriate areas.

2.22 The kitchen requires updating and a bigger area to cater for the anticipated increase in visitors. In support of this, the extension incorporates the associated stores. An existing external container store is incorporated within a purpose-built extension adjacent to the services yard area.
2.23 The pavilion is proposed to be within the Cliff Wood area of the site with a footpath/ramp from the over-slip car park to the north west of the main visitor centre.

MATERIALS

2.24 The materials to be used in the Visitor Centre extensions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walls</th>
<th>Timber cladding and stone panels to match existing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>Pitched slate with a ridge, to match existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>PPC thermally broken aluminium windows and curtain wall system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainwater Goods</td>
<td>Cast aluminium anthracite grey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.25 The materials to be used in the construction of the Dark Skies Pavilion are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walls</th>
<th>Timber cladding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roof</td>
<td>Living roof with a seed mix to be agreed with the National Park Ecologist,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>PPC thermally broken aluminium windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainwater Goods</td>
<td>Cast aluminium anthracite grey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.26 The visitor centre currently measures approximately 655m². The proposed extension will see this increase to 1015.1m² in total. This equals an extension of 360.1m². This is broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extensions</th>
<th>Size (m²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Room/Cycle Workshop</td>
<td>105.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Scooter Area/Lobby</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance/Cafe/WC</td>
<td>142.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Places/Male WC</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Room</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Store/External Store</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.27 The dark skies pavilion will measure 34.5m². It is proposed as a single storey timber clad building to match the main visitor centre with mono pitched living roof with seed mix to be agreed with the National Park Ecologist.

ACCESS

2.28 The existing pedestrian access to the Centre off the entrance courtyard will be repositioned and modified.

2.29 The entrance to the building has been designed to provide views out into the external courtyard, creating a clear focal point for visitors.
2.30 Vehicular access to the existing western car park will be widened by 400mm.

2.31 Access to the new north-western car park will be from the existing one-way system.

2.32 A footpath from the existing overflow car park will lead to the dark skies building and viewing area.

2.33 The proposed extension and alterations of the visitor building also includes the provision of a 'Changing Places' accessible toilet and shower, to be built in accordance with BS 8300:2009 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people, published in 2009. It recommends that Changing Places toilets should be provided in larger buildings and complexes, such as:

- Sport and leisure facilities;
- Cultural centres;
- Educational establishments; and
- Other key buildings.

2.34 A dedicated baby change area and visitor shower will also be provided.
3. Planning Policy Review

3.1 The relevant North York Moors Development Plan policies are Core Policy A (Delivering National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development) and Development Policy 14 (Tourism and Recreation) in the North York Moors Core Strategy and Development Policies (2008).

3.2 Core Policy A seeks to further the National Park purposes and duty by encouraging a more sustainable future for the Park and its communities whilst conserving and enhancing the Park’s special qualities. Priority will be given to development that will not have an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape, quiet enjoyment of the Park or quality of life of residents or visitors; development in locations and of a scale which supports the character and function of settlements; maintaining and enhancing the natural environment; conserving and enhancing the landscape, and diversifying the rural economy and enabling access to services, facilities, jobs whilst minimising environmental impacts of transport.

3.3 Development Policy 14 of the Local Development Framework seeks to ensure that new tourism development and the expansion or diversification of existing tourism businesses will be supported where the proposal will provide opportunities for visitors to increase their understanding, awareness and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park; where the development can be satisfactorily accessed from the road network (by classified roads) or by other sustainable modes of transport including public transport, walking, cycling or horse riding; where the development will not generate an increased level of activity and where it will make use of existing buildings.

3.4 The North York Moors Management Plan is also relevant to the proposal.

3.5 Included in the Management Plan is the goal to encourage an additional 1.6 million visitor days in the Park, particularly arriving at “hubs” as set out in the North York Moors Recreation and Access Strategy which includes the Sutton Bank Visitor Centre.
4. Consistency with Planning Policy

4.1 The proposed new building, alterations and extensions will provide additional facilities at Sutton Bank Visitor Centre which will complement the existing tourist provision in accordance with Core Policy A and Development Policy 14 of the North York Moors Development Plan.

4.2 The proposal will significantly improve the facilities available for those wishing to explore and enjoy the National Park by offering improved bike hire facilities, larger café and kitchen, improved toilet facilities and a larger exhibition/retail space.

4.3 The proposal also increases the accessibility of the building and facilities.

4.4 The additional parking provisions will cater for current demands and the anticipated increase in visitors.

4.5 The proposal also supports the objectives of the recently updated North York Moors National Park Authority Management Plan to increase visitor numbers at strategic hub locations, such as the Sutton Bank Visitor Centre.

4.6 For the reasons detailed above, it is kindly requested that the application be approved without delay.