

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposal: Laundry/reception building (retrospective planning permission)
Application Site: Beech Hill, 3 Main Road, Aislaby, nr Whitby, YO21 1SW
Applicant: Mr & Mrs Horncastle
Council: North York Moors National Park Authority
Our Ref: NYM/09/005b/PS **Date:** November 2009

Preliminary Matters

1. This statement considers the planning issues attached to an application for retrospective planning permission for a chalet-style laundry building at Beech Hill, Aislaby for the existing tourist accommodation provided at Beech Hill.
2. Mr Horncastle has had consultations with the Authority on developing his tourist business. As he advised officers, the laundry building was introduced under exceptional circumstances, which included his hospitalisation for a major operation and an essential business need for his holiday accommodation.
3. Mr Horncastle has invited his immediate neighbours to the site. None have expressed any opposition to it. There appears to be a general acceptance that the holiday units contribute towards the vitality of the village.
4. The timber gazebo referred to in the National Park Authority's letter of 14 September 2009 (ref: AT/ENQ4489) will be addressed in other submissions.

The Site and Its Surroundings

5. Beech Hill is a large local stone-built detached property with a single storey west wing extension and outbuildings well set back on the south side of the main road through Aislaby. There are extensive grounds to the rear. The built development presents a relatively low profile to the street scene as the land slopes down away from Main Road. It gives an open feel to this part of the Conservation Area.
6. Beech Hill forms a loose-knit arrangement of mature properties located at the eastern part of the village of Aislaby, including Park Lodge, Aislaby Hall, The Coach House and Beech Hill itself. The village is linear in form. The dwellings opposite are an eclectic mix of differing styles and ages. It includes a pavilion style bungalow and a hipped roof bungalow. There is no consistency in design of form in these buildings. View 1 shows the buildings opposite the application site. A plan of the village is attached.
7. The Coach House is a listed building, of late Georgian, early Victorian appearance. Beech Hill is post-war but has been built on what was part of Aislaby Hall grounds, in a similar manorial style. Both Beech Hill and Aislaby Hall are constructed in stone and occupy large cultivated grounds to the front and rear. The original stone boundary wall of the grounds to Aislaby Hall fronts the site to the Main Road.

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8. The business presently provides three holiday cottages and the main house. The National Park Authority has given planning permission for two further cottages to the rear of the main building, adjoining the site boundary (reference NYM/2008/0524/FL).
9. One attraction of Beech Hill is the secluded location, close to localities. It is set well back in landscaped grounds behind an imposing front. Another is the standard of accommodation provided in what are an imposing set of buildings and the third is the spectacular south facing views. These particular characteristics are at the centre of the attraction of this accommodation and would not be compromised by the applicant.
10. Aislaby is defined as being in the category of "Other Villages" in the settlement hierarchy set out on page 28 of the Authority's Core Strategy and Development Policies document. It has limited facilities, but is sustainably located within the lower Esk valley and within convenient reach of Sleights and Whitby.
11. The application site is cut into the side of the hill. The laundry building is located immediately alongside the west wing, which at this point is a blank wall and behind a 2-3 metre high beech hedge. The development is screened by the hedge and partly by the land form. The attached photographs (Views 2, 3 and 4) show the approach to the building from the entrance.



View 1



View 2



View 3

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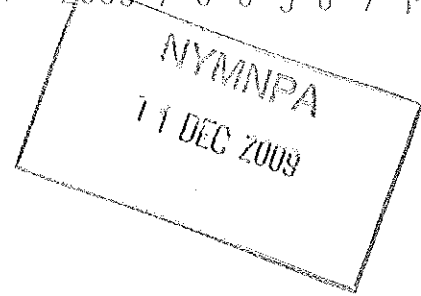
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View 4

Proposal

12. The development for which planning permission is being sought is a small, single storey chalet-style structure of timber construction. It is to serve as a laundry for the holiday visitors staying at Beech Hill. It is also intended that the structure can provide a basic office and reception facility for Mr and Mrs Horncastle, to receive customers as they arrive on the site.
13. The laundry building is located in front of the west wing but at a position on the site where it sits lower than the building and is screened from the main road by a high beech hedge. This is illustrated in the photographs included in this statement.
14. In siting the building in this location the following factors were taken into account by Mr and Mrs Horncastle:-
 - The potential of this site for some development had been brought to their attention in a letter from the Authority (dated 20 November 2007)
 - The site is lower than the adjoining land form, is screened to the north and east by a beech hedge, and to the south by the blank wall of the west wing
 - It was presently unused land and separate from that area used by the tourists
 - Alongside the wall of the west wing is was easy to connect into services



- Finally and most significantly, the location did not interfere in any way with the daily activities of the guests, concentrated as it is around the rear gardens and front of the main house. The household work attached to the laundry could be undertaken with minimal intrusion. The applicants' point out that their literature offers helpful but unobtrusive and discrete hosts. This location reflects this approach, to siting the laundry facility in an unobtrusive and discrete location.
15. The timber building reflects its subordinate service role in an unused and well screened part of the garden. Mr Horncastle has advised that he would be pleased to discuss finishing materials, scale and colours with the Authority.
 16. As part of the proposal Mr Horncastle is preparing to extend the Beech hedge around the green fronting the west wing which would completely screen the laundry/reception facility. He proposes to erect a 1.5m high timber fence that would provide immediate screening.
 17. We do not consider that a formal Design & Access Statement is required to support this planning application, as the development in question is small scale. However, in support of the application, the design reflects the use of Beech Hill for holiday accommodation, and that the building will be a small and unobtrusive addition to the site that will be hidden from public view. Its design reflects its subservient purpose.
 18. There will be no change to the existing access arrangements and no increase in activity.

Main Issue

19. It seems to us that the main issue is whether the laundry building would improve the functioning of an established tourism facility within the capacity of the site while preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Aislaby Conservation Area.

Planning Policy

20. We understand that the relevant development plan provisions are found in the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and Development Policies Development Plan Document [DPD] adopted by the NPA in November 2008. In addition, regard has to be had to the statutory purposes of National Parks. The most relevant policies in the LDF would appear to be Development Policy 4, which deals with Conservation Areas; Development Policy 5 on Listed Buildings; and Development Policy 14, which covers Tourism and Recreation.
21. The LDF DPD also contains at paragraph 3.33 a list of the special qualities that distinguish the North York Moors National Park.
22. PPS7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* is generally relevant to development in rural areas. It expects most tourist accommodation requiring new buildings to be in or adjacent to existing settlements, which is the case with Beech Hill, and supports self-catering holiday accommodation where it accords with sustainable development objectives (paragraphs 37 & 40).



Case for the Applicant

- 23. PPG15: *Planning and the historic Environment* provides advice on Conservation Areas, and listed buildings. Paragraph 4.20 states that the object of preservation can be achieved by ...development which leaves character and appearance unharmed.

Improving tourist accommodation on an established site

- 24. Beech Hill Manor and cottages have become established as providing high quality tourist accommodation serving the National Park while being within 3 miles of services and other attractions in Whitby.
- 25. A feature of the tourist accommodation is the main house. This provides the opportunity for family and other groups to have exclusive use of the house as a whole. The house provides 5 bedrooms and ground floor living rooms with south facing views over the Esk valley. The interior has been styled and furnished to a very high standard, and can provide a valuable addition to the quality and variety of holiday accommodation on offer in the north-eastern part of the National Park.
- 26. The letting policy involves all accommodation being available for the use of the paying guests – this is an intrinsic characteristic and attraction of the accommodation. Indeed it is normal for self-contained holiday accommodation. Consequently, there is no convenient and accessible space in which to provide laundry facilities and to welcome guests as they arrive on site. The chalet style building for which planning permission is being sought will provide both functions without in any way detracting from the special quality of the holiday accommodation.
- 27. On this basis, we consider that the provision of the laundry building will enable the efficient functioning of established tourism accommodation to be improved, without any material increase in the number of visitors using the site or the amount of traffic attracted to it. The small additional structure will therefore simply enable the existing capacity of the site to be realised. The facility it will provide cannot be satisfactorily accommodated within an existing building on the site.
- 28. We consider that there will be no conflict with the provisions of Development Policy 14, while the building will assist the all-year letting of tourist accommodation in the National Park.

Preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

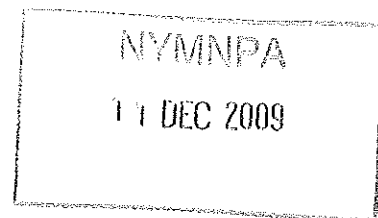
- 29. Aislaby Conservation Area covers most of the older part of the village, in a linear form along either side of the main road. The development pattern and layout is very irregular. Beech Hill is one of the larger properties, and it set well back from the road towards the eastern end of the village. The Map for Aislaby shows the relationship of the property to the adjoining properties in the Conservation Area. On closer inspection it can be seen that there is no single building line in the locality.
- 30. The consequence of this layout is that, although the laundry building is sited forward of the front elevation of the west wing to Beech Hill, it does not impinge on the alignment of buildings nearer Main Road, and is in fact set back significantly further than many more substantial buildings in the locality. It is alongside the west wing to the main house

and would reflect the present layout of development. It is separated from the main house by a hedge. It would not be seen in relation to the main house.

31. The downward slope of the land away from the road further reduces the visual impact of the building. Moreover, the present application includes the provision of a fence and additional beech hedging that once installed will completely hide the new building from view along Main Road or any other public vantage points. Mr Horncastle has pointed out that the dwelling opposite Beech Hill is in fact a timber chalet that does not look out of place.
32. We understand that the Authority may be concerned about the effect of the new building on the setting of the listed Coach House and the amenity of its occupiers. In response, we would say that the building is very small; it would not be within or adjoin the curtilage of Coach House; and by virtue of the hedge and fence referred to above and the topography, it would not be seen in relation to it. Consequently we consider that there would be no material effect on the setting of Coach House, which would be preserved.
33. So far as living conditions are concerned, the new building has no outlook towards Coach House; its use would only be intermittent, in connection with doing the laundry and receiving guests; and it would not involve any increased levels of activity at Beech Hill. As a result there would be no effect on the occupiers of Coach House, or on its setting as a listed building.
34. In conclusion we believe that, subject to appropriate conditions to ensure the installation of suitable type of hedging and fence, and their retention thereafter, the development which is the subject of this planning application would leave the character and appearance of the Aislaby Conservation Area unharmed, in which case it follows that it would be preserved. Furthermore, there would be no harm to the character and appearance of the National Park. We consider that the provisions of Development Policies 4 & 5 are satisfied; and the national advice in PPG15.

Summary

35. It is submitted that, subject to appropriate conditions, the development that is the subject of this planning application is acceptable in principle and will be in keeping with the special character and appearance of the Aislaby Conservation Area in particular and the National Park in general. It would improve the functioning of an established tourism facility within the capacity of the site, while preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Aislaby Conservation Area. We feel that it complies with the relevant development plan provisions, as set out above, and that planning permission can be granted without harm either to the character and appearance of the area or the living conditions of local inhabitants.



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North York Moors Local Plan
VILLAGE INSET MAP 1

Aislaby

Map notation details can be
found preceding Inset Map 1



Scale 1:4,000

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