

# EDWARDSON ASSOCIATES

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19 December 2011



Dear Mrs Saunders,

**Proposal: Alterations and extension to form enlarged bar/restaurant area and use of function room as letting bedrooms at The Flask Inn.**

Please find the attached application documents. This letter comprises the required Planning and Design and Access Statement in connection with the application to forward to consultees as you consider appropriate.

## Background

The Flask Inn has been suffering from a serious decline in trade in recent years to the extent that it has been running at a significant loss. It is in need of refurbishment and the facilities offered require adjustment to better meet modern day customer requirements.

This application proposes altering the existing public house building to provide some high quality en suite letting bedrooms within the former function room and to extend the bar to provide an area to serve breakfasts to visitors stopping in the letting accommodation and to act as a restaurant for all those using The Flask. There is no dedicated restaurant area at present and the provision of this facility in a light and airy conservatory type structure is considered essential to the future of the business here.

In recent times, even the large customer base from The Flask Caravan Park and Grouse Hill Caravan Park has dwindled as visitor expectations have risen over the years. The owners of The Flask have now had to take the business back in hand to make the necessary investment to upgrade the premises and hopefully ensure it can go on to meet the needs of visitors and local people alike.

The area of the National Park around The Flask has been a popular visitor destination for many years. The immediate environs provide caravan and tenting facilities, the filling station/shop as well as the café and public house.

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The objective is to make better provision for people already coming to specifically visit this area and those passing through who may wish to stop off for a drink or meal or who seek quality accommodation. It is also intended to ensure that the character and appearance of the area is not unduly affected with careful siting and design minimizing any impacts on the locality. The enhanced facility proposed within the conservatory building is seen as the key improvement which will improve the appeal of the public house for drinking and eating as well as its attraction to people potentially using the accommodation here, both that now proposed and the six existing letting bedrooms. Enhancing the quality of the accommodation is important but so is increasing the number of letting units to be able to appeal to larger groups/parties of guests and to provide a customer base large enough to justify the staffing requirements associated with bed and breakfast based enterprise like this.

### **Design Component**

The extension element of the development has been designed as a simple conservatory so as to be subservient to the existing building and to maintain the sense of a building group having developed organically over the years. This design approach will ensure that the low key, simple appearance and character of the frontage of the building will be retained with the main two storey element and attractive entrance largely undisturbed.

The extension is of appropriate proportions and in keeping with the setting of the general area. It will be unobtrusive being out of general view from the main road. The existing conservatory to the café is a much more prominent feature of this building group.

### **Appraisal of Context**

This proposal relates to the enhancement of facilities centred on meeting the needs of visitors coming to this part of the National Park, both holiday makers and local people who use the public house. The improvements are vital to the future of the whole of the public house as a viable enterprise.

National planning guidance such as Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) and the Good Practice Guide is generally supportive of appropriate rural diversification proposals like this. Several of the policies within Local Development Framework (LDF) are considered relevant to this proposal, both those of a general nature and specific policies relating to tourism facilities. This proposal is considered accord with the general thrust of the LDF and specific policies as outlined below.

Core Policy A seeks to further National Park purposes/duty by encouraging a more sustainable future for the Park and its communities whilst conserving and enhancing the Park's special qualities. Core Policy A provides for development in locations that is of a scale which will support the character and function of individual settlements. This proposal should not impact adversely on local settlements but provides a focal point for visitors and for local people out walking etc and so encourages the sustainable enjoyment of the National Park by providing readily accessible services/facilities etc without the many visitors staying on the two holiday park here having to travel by car.

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Core Policy B sets out the spatial strategy for the Park and regards the site as being within "Open Countryside" although it is of note that old Development Plan policies previously regarded the group of properties around The Flask as having settlement status. It is envisaged that the sustainability of local communities will be improved through enhanced employment opportunities on the site. The development will support an important existing economic use meeting the needs of tourism where there is an essential need to be located within the countryside.

Core Policy G endeavours to ensure that the landscape, historic assets and cultural heritage of the National Park are conserved and enhanced. This scheme will be generally unobtrusive in the landscape and will not detract from its cultural heritage.

Core Policy H seeks to strengthen and support the rural economy by providing local communities with a range of opportunities for entrepreneurship, education and training. The accommodation will help strengthen and support the local community by providing employment and training for staff.

The LDF also includes more detailed Development Policies. In particular, Development Policy 3 (DP 3) is concerned with design issues and DP14 with tourism/recreation.

DP 3 seeks to maintain or enhance the National Park's distinctive character through design. The alterations to the existing building on the site are minimal but for the new build conservatory. This has endeavoured to take on board the principles established by way of the existing building and previously approved extensions to buildings in this group, including the large conservatory to the café. The resulting development will be pretty much unseen from most public vantage points and invisible from the main road.

DP 14 concerned with tourism and recreation is particularly supportive of proposals that will improve the quality of the tourism/recreation product and indicates that the expansion or diversification of an existing tourism business will be supported when schemes meet several criteria. In this case the special qualities of the Park are enhanced and conserved and are not undermined by the sensitive siting of the conservatory; access to the site remains as existing being straight onto the key road network with access also achievable by other sustainable modes of transport including walking; activity levels associated with the development are unlikely to change significantly from historic levels which are considered to be acceptable in the context of this group of commercial enterprises – the proposal here is seen as assisting with the management of existing visitor demands in the area; good use will be made of the existing building in reusing a little used function room – the enhanced facilities cannot be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing building and no others are available in this location.

The way the various facilities in this locality function as a focal point for visitors both generally walking in this area or stopping on the caravan parks helps make them mutually supportive with significant benefits to the local economy whilst providing an important service to visitors and local people alike.

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The key professional input to this proposal has been in relation to the design and appearance of the scheme to ensure that they will not detract from the overall appearance of the building while minimising any impacts on the wider locality and providing a quality facility to better serve the visitors coming to this part of the National Park. In evaluating the scheme, it was considered important to ensure that any potential increase in the use of the site was acceptable within the current policy framework and accords with national policy advice including PPS1, PPS4 and the Good Practice Guide.

The position of the site in relation to neighbours is such that local communities have not yet been involved. The scheme should not give rise to any issues general disturbance or other unacceptable impacts on third parties.

**The Access Component**

Appropriate parking spaces will be provided for persons of both full and limited mobility. The site will be accessed via the existing road.

**Conclusion**

The principle of extending the building and providing additional visitor letting accommodation is considered to comply with the up-to-date policies set out in the LDF. The scheme has been designed to improve the standard of facilities to better meet the needs of visitors coming to or passing by the site. The proposal is considered to accord with general national policy and guidance as well as helping achieve National Park purposes.

It is hoped that officers will be recommending this application for approval but should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either Roy Edwardson of this office or myself.

Yours sincerely

**Mark Southerton MRTPI**

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