

CM/080221/11

My name is Duncan Lawrence, owner of The Drift Cafe.

The cafe opened in March 2014 with no paid staff, the Drift has since become the biggest employer in the area, with 28 staff. Profits continue to be invested in the business with the creation of more rural jobs.

The proposed development is in line with the NPPF, Morpeth Local Plan and NCC emerging Local Plan, supporting a prosperous rural economy, rural tourism and rural job opportunities. The development will be ancillary to the existing Cafe business and as such should be supported.

The scale of the development was reduced and following consultation with senior planning officers **I was informed that the benefits of the application outweigh the harm**, therefore should carry considerable weight.

No consultees have objected, including Cresswell Parish Council.

Northumberland Tourism strongly support the application recognising the value to the local economy.

Although there are some objections, they are primarily concerned with parking issues along the verge adjoining the site, this will be addressed with conditions and instruction from Highways.

There will be a considerable Parking Net Gain, therefore these objections should not be a material consideration and should carry no weight.

Other objections relate to ecology; the project to create a new Wildlife haven will enable natural processes to thrive across the site increasing the abundance of birds and other wildlife, and will leave a long lasting legacy.

There will be a considerable Ecological Net Gain, therefore these objections should not be a material consideration and should carry no weight.

The development will include much needed free public toilets, there are currently no such facilities around the popular Council Boat Club Car Park, with the general increase in visitors to the region, this will be a significant benefit to the area and must be considered to be an important Net Gain.

The region was previously an industrial coal mining area, the Drift Cafe building, built in 1930, was actually a drift coal mine, hence the name, the proposed development will be a fitting sustainable regeneration of the land. If the project is allowed to proceed, the benefits of the improved character of the area are clear.

The benefits of the proposal are absolutely clear and robust, the development is about sustainable rural job opportunities and tourism, the project will create 20 permanent FTE new jobs. The Drift Cafe business has grown and thrived since opening in 2014, we know our market and we are certain of the accuracy of the expected employment figures for the project. The emerging tourism in the region needs quality four star accommodation and eating facility, the value of tourism overnight stays to the local economy is considerable. The proposal encourages sustainable travel such as cycling and walking.

If there is considered to be any level of harm to the character of the area, it is clearly outweighed by the benefits of the proposed project, a case is easily made that there is no level of harm and that the character of the area will be visually improved with the addition of this coastal sensitive development.

NCC emerging local plan states:

5.63keeping the rural economy thriving presents one of the greatest challenges for this plan to address.

5.64 Rural areas need to generate adequate wealth to support local services and more sustainable communities - part of the Plan's vision. This means that the plan must seek to add to the diversity of job opportunities in rural areas for young people to access.

5.65 Opportunities to enhance the skills of those living and working in rural areas of the County will be supported.

Policy ECN15 Northumberland will be promoted and developed as a destination for tourists and visitors, this will be achieved through the development of new visitor attractions and facilities, accommodation and the expansion of existing tourism businesses.

The NPPF Paragraph 83 supports a prosperous rural economy.

Conclusion

The scheme is robust and would not lead to harm to the character of the area, it would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.

The popular village of Cresswell is a good location for the provision of holiday accommodation on this scale due to the proximity of the beach and popular tourist destinations, whilst increasing capacity for tourist accommodation in the local area would provide social and economic benefits to the local community, local businesses and local tourist attractions.

Northumberland Tourism strongly support this application.

The benefits clearly outweigh any considered harm as stated by NCC senior planning officers.