

PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING STATEMENT

Kilton Inn, Hoo Green, Knutsford

AG HOTELS LTD

172/001

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1. Proposed layout

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Assessment is submitted in support of a pre-application submission for a new sustainable, eco lodge development at the Kilton Inn, Hoo Green, Knutsford.
- 1.2. The proposals are part of a major investment, by new owner AG Hotels into an existing pub, restaurant and hotel as part of a strategy to secure the long-term future of the facility.
- 1.3. The proposal has been prepared with the brief on diversifying the accommodation offer and visitor experience for the business. The key was to create a more sustainable “eco” approach to the new accommodation offer, in a manner which is complimentary to the existing business.
- 1.4. The proposals raise a number of issues which the applicant would like to discuss with Cheshire East prior to submission of a detailed planning application.
- 1.5. The purpose of this Statement is to support the pre-application submission and summarise the approach, work to date and relevant technical considerations.
- 1.6. The report is structured as follows:
 - Chapter 2 summarises the site and the surrounding area;
 - Chapter 3 considers the planning history at the site
 - Chapter 4 summarises the planning policy framework that is currently relevant to the site and in the future;
 - Chapter 5 outlines the planning considerations that would be relevant to any development proposal
 - Chapter 6 sets out the key issues for discussion with Local Planning Authority as part of the Development Team process.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

The Site

- 2.1. The The Kilton is located in a prominent main road location on the A50, Warrington Road at its junction with Bucklow Hill Lane. The property is in an affluent semi-rural location in North Cheshire and also close to junction with the new A556, Knutsford bypass. Knutsford town centre is situated approximately 3 miles to the east.
- 2.2. A link-detached 2 storey brick built property with painted and rendered elevations beneath pitched slate roofs. The property has been extended by way of various single storey additions. There are beer patios to the front and side of the property (160 covers). The public house also has a dedicated car parking area providing c.60 Spaces. It should be noted that the premises sit adjacent to a Premier Inn, which is physically integrated into the public house.

3. Planning History

- 3.1. The planning history of the site has been reviewed in detail to understand the evolution of the current property on the site and the various works that have been undertaken over years
- 3.2. There are various applications for the hotel extensions and signage applications associated with the public house use.
- 3.3. The planning history does not influence the future development on the sites but does provide clarity of the current position and shows no history on the land to the rear.

4. The proposals

- 4.1 The pre-application enquiry relates to a proposed sustainable, eco-lodge development at the Kilton hotel site.

The works comprise of ;

- Siting of 45 lodges / igloos on land at the rear and side of the existing Kilton Inn and Hotel,
- Alterations to existing car park,
- Creation of ancillary facilities to support eco lodge development,
- Photo voltaic panels to provide all energy requirements of the eco lodges.
- Farm shop and post office to serve the development and local community

- 4.2 The proposals are shown on the layout plan accompanying this submission, which demonstrates a strengthened landscaping, creation of amenity lakes and opportunities for ecological enhancement and bio diversity net gain.

- 4.3 The concept is to create a car free environment within the lodge site so all car parking is concentrated around the current car parking which is reconfigured to meet the additional need.

- 4.4 The proposed farm shop is to serve the development and also provide a facility for the local community, which could also include a post office.

- 4.4 The purpose of these proposals is to secure the long term future and viability of the Kilton Inn and hotel. The issues faced by the operator, AG Hotels, are set out below in the text taken from a letter to local politicians / residents who had questioned the plans and future of the operations on site.

Hotel viability

You may have come to know that Kilton Inn Pub has been forced to reduce its trading hours. This letter has been written to provide some explanation behind this decision.

We are witnessing reduced trading volumes in the current market. We believe this may be due to cost-of-living crisis and changing consumer habits, in so much that customers are cutting back on dining and drinking out, making it harder for the pub to maintain a revenue base sufficient to cover the operating expenses.

We are also struggling to recruit qualified chefs to cook high quality of food, whilst lack of kitchen staff has forced us to use expensive agencies staff to do the cooking, which has put extreme cost pressures on the business.

As you may understand, running a pub involves substantial operating costs such as mortgage, staff salaries, utilities, maintenance, security, supplies, food cost etc, all of which have significantly increased, leading to us finding harder to sustain operations of the pub.

The only way to make the historic pub (and hotel) viable is post a significant amount of investment that will increase the footfall and trading volume. The proposed scheme looks at adding c. 60 holiday lodges to the site, convenience store/post office, adding new hotel bedrooms and completely refurbishing the hotel.

The scheme has various attractive features like eco lodges, farm shop and post office. Such investment in the proposed project will not only make Kilton Inn Pub and hotel viable, but also boost local economy and tourism in the area, leading to creation of new jobs.

We have spoken to some local people, and they are thrilled to hear about the proposed exciting plans. We would be grateful if the council supports our plans

- 4.4 The planning case and assessment of the investment and future proofing are set in detail in this report.

5. Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Statutory Development Plan

The Statutory Development Plan for Cheshire East

- 5.2. The adopted Development Plan comprises the two documents set out below;

Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies

The Local Plan (Part One), which was adopted by the Council on 29 January 2015, provides the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic policies for the borough to 2030. This includes setting out the level and location of new housing and employment land, as well as the identification of a number of strategic sites.

SD.1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD.2 - Sustainable Development Principles

SE.1 – Design

SE.2 – Efficient Use of Land

EG.2 - Rural Economy

EG.3 – Existing and Allocated Employment sites

EG.4 – Tourism

PG.6 – Open countryside

Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies

The purpose of the Local Plan (Part Two) is to provide the detailed policies and land allocations required to deliver the overall strategy for Cheshire West and Chester for the period to 2030. The amount of housing and employment land needed is clearly identified in Local Plan (Part One) and it is not the role of the Local Plan (Part Two) to include any policies which alter or amend these requirements. The extent of the Green Belt is a strategic matter and is defined in Local Plan (Part One).

GEN 1 – Design Principles

ENV 3 – Landscape Character

ENV 5 – Landscaping

RUR 6 - Outdoor sport, leisure and recreation outside of settlement boundaries

RUR 8 - Visitor accommodation outside of settlement boundaries

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. An updated version of the NPPF was published on 20 July 2021 and provides the overarching national policy to which all locally produced planning policies and decisions must adhere.
- 5.4. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The three overarching objectives - economic, social and environmental - should be pursued in conjunction of each other, in mutually supportive ways.
- 5.5. The subject proposals are considered to achieve these three objectives in the following key ways:
- **Economic:**
Together, the enhanced accommodation offering and investment will increase trade with existing local suppliers whilst growing this network to include other local businesses. The proposal is expected to generate additional employment at a range of skill levels. The seasonally resilient lodge arrangement capitalises upon growing trends within the tourism sector, particularly the move towards experience and sustainable driven tourism. The proposed lodges will extend the viability of businesses outdoor offering into the offseason, bolstering the local visitor economy which is often constrained by its reliance upon the short summer season. The proposal would reinforce the resilience of the Kilton Inn and Hotel as a business and local employer, helping support their recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - **Social:**
The proposals would safeguard a highly regarded local hotel and public house whilst expanding the capacity and range of high-quality tourism accommodation and hospitality within the District. The subject proposal's material impact upon the financial prospects of the hotel will enable the business to continue to invest into the future, improving its offer further still for the betterment of both visitors and the local community. The high-quality outdoor accommodation will create a more diverse experience and leisure opportunity in this part of the District.
 - **Environmental:** The proposal is supported by a suite of enhancement measures providing a net gain in biodiversity. The compact and prefabricated nature of the lodges ensures minimal ground disturbance. The design scheme has been informed by a Landscape Consultant, sensitively siting the lodges to reduce impacts of the proposal. The habitat creation associated with the proposals will see a sustainable mix of native planting site wide, with further tree planting throughout. Not only does this enhance the landscaping it provides a significant opportunity to improve the biodiversity across the site. With support from an Ecologist the proposals will provide wildflower meadow planting and ecological diversity around new ponds to create substantial biodiversity net gain.

The photovoltaic proposals within the site will provide all the energy requirements associated with the proposed lodges further enhancing the environmental benefits of the scheme. This is further increased with the energy potential to support the existing hotel and public house operations.

- 5.6. A presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the Framework (paragraph 11). For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

- 5.7. Paragraph 84 of the framework details that planning decisions should enable:
- a). the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b). the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; and
 - c). sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.
- 5.8. Paragraph 85 highlights that to meet local business needs in rural areas, sites may have to be found adjacent to, or beyond, existing settlements and in locations that are not well served by public transport.
- 5.9. In such circumstances, paragraph 85 highlights the need for developments to be sensitive to their surroundings, and not to have an unacceptable impact on local roads, whilst exploiting opportunities to increase the sites sustainability.
- 5.10. It is highlighted that the subject proposals are intended to supplement an existing, established hospitality and accommodation business and as such the principle of a 'new' tourism venture in this location does not require consideration. Notwithstanding this, the continuing diversification of the operations at the Kilton Inn and Hotel, and facilitating the ongoing success of this rural business and key local employer are all aspects which are strongly supported by the NPPF.

Green Belt

- 5.11. Paragraph 133 states "The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."
- 5.12. Paragraph 134 sets out the purposes of the Green Belt;

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.13. Paragraph 145 sets out what types of development are appropriate in the Green Belt.

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development;
 - or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

5.14 Para **151 of the NPPF states** “ When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.”

Very Special Circumstances

5.15 An application must prove that its benefits outweigh the resulting harm to Green Belt, bearing in mind Paragraph 145 which states: “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

- 5.16 Very Special Circumstances will depend on the weight of each of the factors put forward and the degree of weight to be accorded to each is a matter for the decision taker, acting within the “Wednesbury Principles”. This stage will often be divided into two steps. The first is to determine whether any individual factor taken by itself outweighs the harm and the second is to determine whether some or all of the factors in combination outweigh the harm.

There is case law that says that a number of factors, none of them “very special” when considered in isolation, may when combined together amount to very special circumstances and goes on to say that “there is no reason why a number or factors ordinary in themselves cannot combine to create something very special”

It will be demonstrated that the proposals are subject to Very Special Circumstances which would outweigh any harm to the Green Belt and should be supported.

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle of Development

- 6.2. As the property is situated in the Green Belt, the policy framework is restrictive on new development in order to protect the openness of the Green Belt.

The purposes of the Green Belt are to;

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 6.3 There is a specific Green Belt policy (PG 3) in the Adopted Cheshire East Local Plan which will be used as the basis for making decisions on planning applications. This seeks to resist inappropriate new build development.
- 6.4 However, Policy PG3, allows for exceptions to this, such as agricultural, forestry and outdoor sports and recreation use. One of the exceptions also allows replacement buildings if they meet the policy criteria.
- 6.5 This proposal is not in line with the requirements of Policy PG3, so therefore Very Special Circumstances are set out to demonstrate how these outweigh any harm to the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances - Justification

- 6.6 The Kilton Inn and Hotel has recently come under new ownership. The owners are proposing to make a significant investment to modernise and transform the hotel into a destination of distinction. Shifting market dynamics within a post-pandemic world alongside the rise of experiential tourism demand a response to ensure the long-term viability of the business.
- 6.7 The subject proposals will enable the Hotel to diversify its visitor proposition, provide greater choice and attract a wider market with a greater ability to serve more customers on a year-round basis.
- 6.8 The subject proposal has been designed to provide an alternative accommodation offer in a manner that the hotel and hotel lodges work together in a mutually complementary way, providing opportunities to cross-sell the various aspects of the Kilton Inn and Hotel offer to visitors.

- 6.9 As per paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings, will be supported.
- 6.10 As both the hotel and restaurant utilise a wide range of local produce and services, the anticipated growth in visitor numbers and expenditure resulting from the subject proposals will bolster resilience across the supply chain, with the direct, indirect and tertiary impacts strengthening the socio-economic wellbeing of the local community. As such, it is considered that the proposals will contribute positively towards the sustainability of the local community and local businesses alongside the Kilton Inn and Hotel. Indeed, the public benefits of the proposal receive wide policy support, at both national and local level, representing a material consideration.

Local Plan Policy EG 2 Rural Economy

Outside the Principal Towns, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres, developments that:

1. Provide opportunities for local rural employment development that supports the vitality of rural settlements;
 2. Create or extend rural based tourist attractions, visitor facilities and recreational uses;
 3. Encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses, particularly through the conversion of existing buildings and farm diversification;
 4. Encourage the creation and expansion of sustainable farming and food production businesses and allow for the adaption of modern agricultural practises;
 5. Are considered essential to the wider strategic interest of the economic development of Cheshire East, as determined by the council; or
 6. Support the retention and delivery of community services such as shops and public houses, and village halls
- 6.11 Following on from the above, Policy EG2 (Rural Economy) advises that proposals that create/extend rural based tourist/visitor attractions/recreational uses will be supported where they support the rural economy, could not be located in a designated centre, would not undermine delivery of employment allocations, adequate infrastructure and does not harm amenity or the character/appearance of the area.
- 6.12 The proposal would provide visitor accommodation which would help support the rural economy. Given the nature of the use it clearly could not be located in a defined centre.
- 6.13 The application site will be screened from the passing highway and wider public viewpoints by the existing and proposed landscaping. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development will lead to any significant visual impact on either the streetscene or the Green Belt.

Rural Economy, Tourism & Leisure and Recreation

- 6.14 Policy RUR6 advises that proposals for outdoor sport, leisure and recreation in the open countryside will be permitted provided they accord with other policies in the development plan and:
- i. it can be demonstrated that a countryside location is necessary for the proposal;
 - ii. the proposals make the best use of existing infrastructure such as existing buildings, utilities, parking and vehicular access;
 - iii. additional buildings, structures and ancillary development are restricted to the minimum level reasonably required for the operation of the site; are well-related to each other and existing buildings and do not form scattered development or development isolated from the main sports, leisure or recreation use of the site;
 - iv. the proposal does not unacceptably affect the amenity and character of the surrounding area or landscape either on its own or cumulatively with other developments; and
 - v. appropriate landscaping and screening is provided.
- 6.15 Policy EG2 advises that proposals that create or extend rural based tourist attractions, visitor facilities and recreational uses will be supported provided it supports the rural economy, and could not reasonably be expected to locate within a designated centre, no harm to open countryside/appearance of the area and has adequate infrastructure.
- 6.16 The proposal would clearly benefit the rural economy as it would support retention/creation of jobs and local spending power from visitors/users of the site. Given the nature of the use relying on the access to the countryside it would not be appropriate for the use to locate within a designated centre and this also relates to existing uses on site and to the north so clearly this countryside location is appropriate.
- 6.17 The low level nature of the lodges would not cause significant harm to the appearance of the countryside. The current hotel and inn provides facilities for users of the site. Furthermore, the rural roads and footpaths in the area make recreational cycling and walking an attractive proposition. Therefore, it is considered that the site has adequate infrastructure.
- 6.18 SC1 advises that proposal which support and promote the provision of better leisure, community and recreation facilities, where there is a need for such facilities will be supported where they are in highly assessable locations, no harm to the landscape, amenity, biodiversity and support the visitor economy and based on existing visitor attractions.
- 6.19 The proposal is not considered to cause significant harm to amenity given the separation distances to nearest neighbouring properties and the use itself is not expected to generate significant noise/disturbance over and above the permitted use.
- 6.20 In terms of biodiversity it is not expected that the additional units would pose any significant harm to wildlife. The use is considered to support the visitor economy. The existing visitor attractions are the countryside itself and the offer of walking and cycling. The issue of

accessibility and impact on the landscape has been addressed above, as is the countryside attraction.

- 6.21 SC3 advises that new developments that improve health and well-being will be supported where they provide opportunities for healthy living and improve health and well-being through the encouragement of walking and cycling, good housing design, access to services, sufficient open space and other green infrastructure, and sports facilities and opportunity for recreation and sound safety standards.
- 6.22 The proposal offers access to the countryside and its associated recreational activities (walking, fishing and cycling etc) and is therefore considered to improve health and well-being. The site itself also has access to surrounding areas of open space in the countryside and walking/cycling routes. The site is not known to have any safety issues and the site has been deemed not to cause any significant harm to the existing highway network by the Councils Highways Engineer.
- 6.23 It is evident that the rural economy, economic and viability issues associated with retaining the long term future of the Kilton Inn are supported by local and national planning policies and should be afforded substantial weight.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-2028

- 6.24 This document, produced by Cheshire East is a strategy with an ambition to see the value of Cheshire East Visitor Economy grow to being worth over £1billion.
- 6.25 Cheshire East's visitor economy is worth £994m per year, employing over 11,812 fte's. (Last meaningful report 2019 pre-Covid) It is an important economic sector that contributes to jobs, growth and prosperity, both in its own right and in its contribution to Cheshire East's 'Quality of Place'. The ambition is focussed around continuing to maximise growth of the visitor economy, whilst ensuring greater prosperity across the widest number of communities that will lead to greater wellbeing for both residents and visitors. Tourism can be a force for good both in economic terms but also as an essential contributor to the excellent quality of life and place Cheshire East offers. This is a key factor not only in decisions to visit but also in decisions to settle and to invest.
- 6.26 Cheshire East is ideally positioned to take advantage of some of the key thematic trends post Covid. Apart from an excellent geographical position with good connectivity providing access to new markets, the area is well positioned to exploit key themes such as:
- Outdoor experiences
 - Friends and family get togethers
 - Wellness
 - Lifestyle and culture
 - Sustainable and green
- 6.27 Cheshire East is also well positioned to access markets from other parts of Cheshire and surrounding areas, with the highest proportion of visitors being day visitors. Whilst day

visitors are welcome, overnight visitors spend more per head, putting more money into the local economy. They also create more job opportunities in the area, meaning Cheshire East Council's aim is to get our visitors to stay longer. It means giving reasons for day visitors to dwell longer or stay on into the evening and overnight, as well as actively pursuing high level conferences as well as weddings from those parties based outside of Cheshire.

- 6.28 Working with Marketing Cheshire, the sub-regional place marketing board, Cheshire East Council is promoting the region as a short breaks' destination as well as a location for business tourism, activity related tourism, food tourism and weddings. The Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy articulates strategic themes that help to guide the identification of priorities in seeking to maximise the contribution of the visitor economy, including investment in quality attractions and accommodation provision. It also identifies strategic priorities including developing a distinctive rural tourism offer and profiling a quality food & drink offer in Cheshire East. It highlights the need to improve the quality and choice of accommodation and attractions.
- 6.29 There are a number of key priorities related to this proposed development that are set out within the Cheshire East Council Visitor Economy Strategy
- Encourage investment in quality tourism product and services in Cheshire East to the benefit of jobs and economic growth
 - Investment in quality accommodation development
- 6.30 In the context of Marketing Cheshire's strategic vision for the sub-region there are several relevant points to note including:
- Identification of the need to improve the quality of the destination product offering.
 - The key target markets in terms of profile, behaviour and spend for Cheshire include 'independent' market segments.
 - Marketing Cheshire state that developments such as Glamping sites require significant private sector investment. Their delivery will make a massive statement about Cheshire as a place to invest. Cheshire is passionate about quality – quality of facilities, experience and service. There is a desire of quality to define the experience at every stage in the visitor's journey. Quality is not about price – it is about exceeding visitor expectations.
- 6.31 Post COVID 19 there has been an increase in semi-rural locations such as Cheshire East becoming the staycation favourites due to the space that is available and the high-quality leisure and hospitality provision. The proposed development will be able to capitalize on this trend thus ensuring Cheshire East is at the forefront of the recovery.
- 6.32 Following on from the above, Cheshire East needs to increase its profile in the 'outdoor' accommodation arena with an increase in quality Glamping, Caravan & Camping sites. Consumers are looking for outdoor rural breaks rather than city Centre breaks and this is anticipated to continue at least in the medium term. Cheshire is perfectly positioned to take advantage in this staycation boom.
- 6.33 The above strategy clearly shows a demand and support for such proposals and this should be afforded substantial weight in assessing and determining any such proposals.

Sustainability

- 6.34 There In line with the noted planning policies an energy assessment has been produced to set out the energy efficiency and renewable energy strategy for the proposed development and to illustrate savings in terms of CO2 emissions.
- 6.35 Given the total energy requirements, renewable energy solutions like Solar PV and Battery Storage are recommended to meet the demand in an eco-friendly manner, aligning with UK's energy and environmental objectives.

Solar Energy / Battery possibilities

- 6.31 Our assessment of the site is based on utilising an area of unused land on the site to the rear of the existing public house.



Fig 1 (445kW)

The proposed site could incorporate up to 445kWp of solar panels sited on a ground mounted frame, as shown on image (fig 3), if the area is fully utilised (fig 1).

The 445kW system would be capable of producing in the region of 370,000kWh/year, well in excess of the site demand for additional power.



Therefore as the demand for the new development is estimated to be 212,430 kWh/year then the system could be sized at just over half the available area (57%) 255kWp and still cover the nett demand of the proposal.

Fig 2 (255kW)

We would propose a ground mounted solar array using single panel tables, this could be mounted on a piled ground mounted frame to minimise the associated works with the installation, in this format small steel section 3m long piles are driven approximately 2m into the ground with an associated frame mounted to the top of the pile, in turn the panel is mounted to the frame with bolted fasteners.



Fig 3 Ground mounted piled single panel table

This format of construction enables the least amount of construction impact with no concrete used in its base and relies only on the friction pile embedment for the support of the system. The panels rows are approximately 3 meters apart with the front edge of panel generally mounted 800mm above floor level to allow for mowing or animals to graze under the panels.

- 6.32 The tables are set at 20 – 25 degrees from the horizontal to allow for optimal collection of solar energy. The upper edge of the panel is approximately 1500-1800mm above the ground so could easily be hidden by hedge row planting around the edge of the proposed area thus reducing the impact of long distance views.
- 6.33 In the areas between rows the ground can be seeded to grass or wildflower meadow (species height allowing) to increase the available biodiversity of the site.
- 6.34 The proposed array framing aids with removal of the system at end of life, allowing the site to be returned to prior use with little to no long term impact. Cable runs / ducting are removed for recycling, panels removed for recycling, steel frame removed and recycled leaving the field in the condition before the site was installed. The period of fallow use can also greatly improve soil quality for farming at a later date.



In addition to the panels on the land to the rear of the existing Kilton Inn there is a further possibility to add 20kW of panels to the roof that could produce an additional 15,500kWh/year.

- 6.35 The full planning submission will review the total carbon saved including embodied and operational elements. These environmental benefits are supported by national and local planning policies and should be afforded substantial weight in determining any future proposals.

Ecology

- 6.36 The site is not covered by any local or national wildlife designations.
- 6.37 The opportunity exists within a sustainable eco lodge proposal to make substantial improvements to the biodiversity on site. The creation of new ponds and new wildflower meadow planting will provide a rich background on which to maximise the biodiversity on site which doesn't currently exist.
- 6.38 These benefits should be afforded substantial weight in determining any future proposals for the site.

Landscape

- 6.39 An opportunity exists to strengthen landscaping in and around the site. Additional planting will improve the visual aspect but also add and create opportunities for the ecological benefits and biodiversity net gain which has been set out above.
- 6.40 These benefits should be afforded substantial weight in determining any future proposals for the site.

Flooding

- 6.41 Whilst not on the Local Plan proposals map the Environment Agency's Flood Map has been reviewed and this identifies the site as falling with Flood Zone 1, which is at the lowest risk of flooding.
- 6.42 While there appear to be no flooding issues, any future application for redevelopment of the site would need to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment as the site is over 1ha.

Highways

- 6.43 The proposals would utilise existing access arrangements to the Kilton inn and would provide additional car parking for the additional visitors.
- 6.44 The proposed parking would be in the same location as existing parking, in order to provide a car free environment in the main lodge area. The lodge area would be pedestrian only to create a save environment free of vehicles.

Summary

- 6.45 The Kilton inn and Hotel, as many similar business are experiencing financial uncertainty and needs substantial financial investment and diversification in offer to secure its long term future.
- 6.46 The Green Belt status of the site is acknowledged and the case has been made that Very Special Circumstances exist to justify the granting of planning permission. The following issues should all be afforded substantial weight in assessing the proposals;
- The protection of the future of the Kilton Inn
 - The demand for such accommodation in Cheshire East
 - The economic case underlined in the Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy
 - The sustainability benefits of the proposals
 - The Bio Diversity Net Gain to be created through these innovative proposals.
 - Provision of new local community facilities – farm shop and post office
- 6.47 The above benefits are all supported by the NPPF, Local Plan policy and the Cheshire East Tourism Strategy. The ability to be self-sufficient in energy creation / use, as well as providing additional renewable energy for the hotel and pub operations add further sustainability benefits and weight to the case in support of the proposals.

APPENDIX 1

