

**Burnett, James**

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**From:** Curley, Jane  
**Sent:** Monday, July 18, 2016 9:06 AM  
**To:** Planning (SMDC)  
**Subject:** FW: Moneystone Quarry Policy Comments  
**Attachments:** FW: SMD/2014/0682 Planning Policy comments Moneystone Quarry

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**From:** Wooddisse, Ruth  
**Sent:** 13 July 2016 16:11  
**To:** Curley, Jane  
**Cc:** James, Mark  
**Subject:** Moneystone Quarry Policy Comments

Jane,

Thank you for summarising the main changes from the previous application. The two key issues remain the same as the previous application, the principle of a tourism development in this location and the impact of the proposal on the landscape, heritage, biodiversity and local connectivity. (Previous comments attached).

Principle of development – the policy status remains unaltered. Please see previous comments in this respect.

Impact of development – last time concerns were raised over the issue of detail particularly regarding the intensity of use at the hub building including issues of scale, design, sustainability and how it is to be used and potential traffic impacts from day visitors. General comments relating to various uses and proposed scale were also made. (Please see previous comments attached.) The new application reduces the height of the main hub building and indicates additional landscaping within hub area. The total number of lodges remains the same. Core Strategy policy E3 states “All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area...” and ‘preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.’

The proposal accords with the Core Strategy and Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD in respect of the proposed uses on site and it is in a location where tourism and leisure development is supported. The key consideration remains the impact of this specific proposal on the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and its connectivity with the surrounding area.

Ruth Wooddisse

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STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL  
REGENERATION SERVICES

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**APPLICATION  
CONSULTATION MEMO**

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**To:** Mark Lynch  
**From:** Kathryn Poulter  
**Direct Dial:** 4138

**Your Ref:** SMD/2014/0682  
**Our Ref:** 7590/7576/KP  
**Date:** 20/11/2014

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**Outline planning application for leisure development at Moneystone Quarry**

The policy observations contained in this memorandum are based on information available to the author at the time of writing, which may be incomplete. The observations may be revised in the light of new information. Comments are made on policy issues only, and are without prejudice to the final recommendation made by the case officer or the final decision on the application.

**Background**

The site lies in the open countryside. It is a former quarry with a revised restoration plan having been approved by Staffordshire County Council on the 13 March 2014. There are SSSIs and SBIs in the area. The area between Oakamoor and Whiston is a Mineral consultation area. Proposal 7 of the Minerals Local Plan is a saved allocation. Staffordshire County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority. There are Rights of Way in the area.

The proposal is for “outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access for the erection of a high quality leisure development comprising holiday lodges; a new central hub building (providing swimming pool, restaurant, bowling alley, spa, gym, informal screen/cinema room, children’s soft play area, café, climbing wall and shop); café; visitor centre; administration building; maintenance building; archery centre; water sports centre; equipped play and adventure play areas; multi-sports area; car parking, and managed footpaths and cycleways set in attractive landscaping and ecological enhancements.”

The Environment Statement contains an ‘Indicative Schedule of Accommodation’. An illustrative Masterplan and cross sections are included with the planning application.

The site has planning history.

**Policy Considerations**

**NPPF**

- Para 9 “Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment , as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):
  - Making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;

- Moving from a net loss in bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;
  - Replacing poor design with better design;
  - Improving the conditions in which people, live, work, travel and take leisure; and
  - Widening the choice of quality homes"
- Para 10 "Plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas."
- Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 11).
- Presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14).
- LPA's should approve proposals which accord with the development plan without delay (para 14).
- NPPF is a material consideration in determining planning applications
- Government committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity
- Para 17 sets out 12 core planning principles.
- Para 19 "Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
- Para 26 – assessing applications for leisure development outside of town centres states that local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floor space threshold - if there is not a locally set threshold the default is 2,500 sq m if the application is not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. An impact assessment is not considered necessary as the proposal is in accordance with the Core Strategy and Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD in principle and scale.
- Para 28 – supporting sustainable rural tourism and leisure development that benefits businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors. There is requirement that such development respects the character of the countryside. There is support for the provision of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.
- Para 30 "Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should therefore support a pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport."
- The NPPF para 32 states "All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment." The NPPF sets out things that it should take account of.
- Para 34 on location and sustainable transport modes
- Para 35 on how "Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore developments should be located and designed where practical to
  - Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
  - Give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
  - Create safe and secure layouts which minimize conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;

- Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and
  - Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.”
- Para 36 identifies that all developments which generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a Travel Plan.
- Para 63 “In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative design which helps raise the standard of design more generally in the area”
- Para 64 “Permission should be refused for development of poor quality design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”
- Para 75 “Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”
- Para 93 on supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- Para 96 on requirements for new development
- Para 109 should be consulted on the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- Para 112 use of agricultural land regarding poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality
- Para 113 on the hierarchy of biodiversity sites.
- Para 118 on determining applications relating to conserving and enhancing biodiversity
- Para 121 “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that:
  - The site is suitable for its new use taking account of the ground conditions and land instability, including from natural hazards or former activities such as mining, pollution arising from previous use and any proposals for mitigation including land remediation or impacts on the natural environment arising from that remediation.”
- Para 125 on encouraging good design and limiting the impact of light pollution
- Section 13. Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

## **Core Strategy**

- SS1 - Development Principles
- SS1a - Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- SS6c - part 5 on supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS7
- SS7 Churnet Valley Area Strategy - “The Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. Within this area particular support will be given to the following forms of development and measures:
  - i. Short stay and long stay visitor accommodation;
  - ii. The expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities;
  - iii. Measures to enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley;
  - iv. Measures to remediate and restore derelict land, buildings and features

- including the appropriate redevelopment of sites;
- v. Actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the valley, including the maintenance, buffering and connection of designated sites and actions to mitigate climate change.
- vi. Measures that support and integrate the heritage transport infrastructure of the valley, sympathetically with enhancing and developing links to strategic footpaths, cycle and horse riding routes.
- vii. Measures to improve connectivity and accessibility to and within the Churnet Valley by sustainable transport means.

Requires that “Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and demonstrates strong sustainable development and environmental management principles.” It states that the consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals “in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximize opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.”

Requires “Complementary and sensitive highway improvements to access routes and/or measures to support other alternative means of access will be required to serve any developments which generate significant additional demand for travel.”

Identifies that a Masterplan will be produced to guide the detailed planning and management of the area.

- SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources - requires all development to make sustainable use of resources, and adapt to climate change. It states that “Development on non-allocated greenfield land will only be considered acceptable where the proposal:
  - Relates to the provision of needed development which cannot be accommodated on a deliverable previously developed or allocated site in the locality and is in a sustainable location, or;
  - Relates to the conversion or reuse of a rural building in accordance with policy R2, or;
  - Would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset through appropriate enabling development in accordance with policy DC2, or;
  - Is for a rural exceptions affordable housing scheme in accordance with policy H2.”

SD1 requires that “development is located and designed to minimise energy needs and to take advantage of maximised orientation to achieve energy savings in line with Policy SD3.”

Requirement that all major-scale planning applications (10 or more residential units or 1,000+ square metres floor area) are accompanied by a Sustainability/Energy Statement – the policy provides details of what this should address.

SD1 part 5 states “The Council will expect that all developers investigate the potential for re-using construction or construction waste materials, especially those sourced locally (which include those minerals available on site, as appropriate) and integrates where possible on-site waste management facilities.”

Part 6 states “The Council will promote water conservation standards in approved schemes which exceed those set out in the Building Regulations...”

- SD3 Carbon-saving Measures in Development - states the Council will promote further carbon-saving measures in both new and existing developments...
- E3 Tourism and Cultural Development - states "New tourism and cultural development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports the local economy and promotes the distinctive character and quality of the District and enhances the role of Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination having regard to the Area Strategies and Policies SS5, SS6 and SS7."
- E3 states "New tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations, including within the Green Belt, new accommodation, attractions and facilities should:
  - i. Be of a scale and design which can be easily assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner;
  - ii. Normally be limited to the conversion of existing buildings; or
  - iii. exceptionally, may be new build where it is required to support or complement existing accommodation, facilities or attractions and there is an identified need which cannot be met in other ways. Preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.

E3 requires "All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance."
- TCR2 Retailing Outside Town Centres states that "Other major retail proposals (of 500m<sup>2</sup> gross or more) will not be permitted outside town centres in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres unless the proposal can be demonstrated to be acceptable under national policy." From the information provided the visitor centre is listed as being up to 490m<sup>2</sup> and is described as including retail- if you are minded to recommend approval could the floorspace be conditioned?
- DC1 Design Considerations, DC2 The Historic Environment, DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting - see the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008) and the Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2011)
- C1 Creating Sustainable Communities
- C2 Sport, Recreation and Open Space
- C3 Green Infrastructure
- R1 Rural Diversification states "Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity of an existing settlement."
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources including in relation to SSSIs and SBIs in the area and requirements for enhancement.
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport - includes a requirement that for

“Development which generates significant demand for travel or is likely to have significant transport implications (as identified within a Transport Assessment) will where appropriate:

- Contribute to improved public transport provision
- Provide proactive facilities and measures to support sustainable travel methods e.g. cycle path links, cycle storage facilities, bus stops etc
- Provide and actively promote travel plans”
- T2 Other Sustainable Transport Measures

### **Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document**

- Adopted on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and is a material planning consideration.
- Section 5.2 sets out the Masterplan principles.
- Section 6 sets out the Spatial Strategy which is one of ‘Balanced Development’ across the whole of the area. Eight character areas are identified. Moneystone Quarry is identified as a key opportunity site within the Moneystone Character Area.
- Section 7.6 Moneystone Character Area includes a Concept Statement including development principles and Concept Plan for Moneystone Quarry (section 7.6.5)
- Section 8 Development and Management principles is relevant which set out key principles and guidance for the development and management of the whole of the Churnet Valley Masterplan area to ensure that future development proposals reflect the aims of the Masterplan and delivers the Strategy.
- Section 13 Transport Strategy sets out a number of essential and desirable measures in relation to Moneystone Quarry key opportunity site.
- Also, the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD identifies the Minerals Local Plan within the constraints in the Concept Statement for Moneystone Quarry Opportunity Site –Staffordshire County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority should be contacted with regards to the Minerals Local Plan.

Also, National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) ‘Ensuring the vitality of town centres’ – ‘What should local planning authorities consider when planning for tourism?’

### **Discussion**

The two key issues are the principle of a tourism development in this location and the impact of the proposal on the landscape, heritage, biodiversity and local connectivity.

#### **Principle of Development**

The site is located within the Churnet Valley area where there is in principle planning policy support for sustainable tourism development (Core Strategy Policy SS7) including short and long stay visitor accommodation and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities. Moneystone Quarry is also specifically identified in the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD as a key opportunity site for new leisure development based around restoration of the quarry which includes a concept statement and concept plan identifying a maximum of 250 holiday lodges in total and the provision of supporting facilities. The land is subject of a restoration plan and is therefore not considered to be previously developed land (see Annex B: Glossary to the NPPF).

The Masterplan is an SPD and therefore a material planning consideration when



considering planning applications in the Churnet Valley area. As the site is identified in the Churnet Valley Masterplan as a key opportunity site for leisure development it is not considered necessary to go through an impact assessment as required by para 26 of the NPPF nor a sequential approach with regards to site selection as required by Core Strategy Policy SD1. It is also considered that the proposal accords with policy E3 in terms of supporting the local economy and promoting the distinctive character and quality of the District and enhancing the role of Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination.

The Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD identifies the Minerals Local Plan within the constraints in the Concept Statement for Moneystone Quarry Opportunity Site. Staffordshire County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority should be contacted with regards to the Minerals Local Plan.

#### Impact of Development

Core Strategy Policy SS7 requires that “Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and demonstrates strong sustainable development and management principles.” It states that the consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals. Core Strategy Policy E3 also requires that the development is capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. These are all considered to be significant matters which need to be carefully assessed having regard to any proposed mitigation measures.

Core Strategy Policy E3 requires that new build development away from any settlement, should be of a scale and design which can be easily assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner and preference should be given to buildings of a non-permanent nature. The proposal appears to generally accord with the guidance in the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD which includes a development strategy, concept statement and concept plan for the site.

#### General comments

- EIA - does not appear to mention The Ramshorn Estate, Oakamoor - holiday lodges para 3.30
- Moneystone Park Feasibility Study October 2014 does not appear to consider lodge development at Alton Towers which was granted planning permission by the Council in May 2014 (reference SMD/2014/0107) in the proposed new supply.
- If you are minded to recommend approval, an occupancy condition should be added to the holiday lodges to ensure they cannot be permanently occupied.
- The Masterplan specifically states ‘Recreational lake to include non-motorised water based activities in Zone 3’ can this be conditioned to ensure no motorised activities can take place to ensure activity does not ‘undermine the tranquillity and character of this sensitive part of the Churnet Valley’?
- A climbing area of up to 320m<sup>2</sup> is listed twice in the ‘Indicative Schedule of Accommodation’? Also, two cafes are listed one of up to 70m<sup>2</sup> and one of up to 130m<sup>2</sup>?
- What does the adventure play area and climbing/ropewalks involve? How is landscape impact etc being considered with it being an outline application?
- Retail element is described as being within the visitor centre in the EIA (EIA

chapter 2 describes a visitor centre and farm shop as up to 480m<sup>2</sup>) this is different from the quantum of development list which just states visitor centre up to 490m<sup>2</sup>. If a retail element is included in the visitor centre this would be under the 500m<sup>2</sup> specified in Core Strategy Policy TCR2 – could this be conditioned?

- Retaining the admin building 525m<sup>2</sup> (as existing) - R1 supports the re-use of suitable existing buildings - priority is commercial use. Is the building authorised?
- Multi- Sports Area - up to 1400m<sup>2</sup> - what does this involve?
- Can the footpaths/ cycleways be conditioned? The Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD states:
  - “Utilise the opportunity the site affords for outdoor recreational activities such as cycling, walking and horse riding and water based activities...
  - Incorporate measures to create off road links to be used by cyclists, walkers and horse riders to reach other attractions...
  - Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport to reach the site and once at the site to explore the surrounding area.”

## **Conclusion**

The proposal accords with the Core Strategy and Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD in respect of the proposed uses on site and it is in a location where tourism and leisure development is supported. The key consideration is the impact of this specific proposal on the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and its connectivity with the surrounding area. Although it is recognised that this is an outline planning application with all matters reserved except access, there is concern over the issue of detail particularly regarding the intensity of use at the hub building including issues of scale, design, sustainability and how it is to be used and potential traffic impacts from day visitors. See Core Strategy policy E3 “All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area...” and on ‘Preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.’

Kathryn Poulter  
Planning Policy Officer