Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

RUDYARD LAKE ACTIVITY CENTRE

JULY 2017

Site Address:
Rudyard Lake Activity Centre, Lake Road, Rudyard, ST13 8XB

Applicant:
Rudyard Lake Trust

Proposal:
Erection of conservatory, provision of canopy above existing terrace, and replacement of storage container to rear with lean-to extension

Planning & Heritage Statement:
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Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. R. Perry of Rudyard Lake Trust to prepare a planning application for the erection of extensions to the existing Activity Centre at Rudyard Lake to facilitate an enlarged café and associated covered seating area, along with the erection of a rear lean-to extension to replace an existing steel storage container.

1.2 The proposed conservatory will extend off the southern elevation of the Activity Centre, and be constructed from stone and pebble-dashed elevations, with a standing seam metal roof. A pyramidal rooflight will sit centrally on its roof providing a good source of natural daylight to the seating area below.

1.3 Attached to the proposed conservatory, and wrapping around the eastern elevation of the building, it is proposed to erect a timber-framed canopy to provide cover to the existing external terrace in front of the Activity Centre. This terrace is to be modestly enlarged at its southernmost end as part of the proposals.

1.4 To the rear of the building it is proposed to remove an existing steel storage container that was granted temporary consent under application SMD/2014/0799, and to replace it with a single storey lean-to extension to be utilised for the storage of canoes and boats associated with the primary use the of the Activity Centre.

1.5 The existing Activity Centre has a small café /snack bar which serves visitors, but is reliant upon external seating. The proposed development will upgrade the visitor experience to Rudyard Lake in line with the aims of the Rudyard Lake Trust, by providing protection from the weather during inclement

conditions, and enabling the Activity Centre to open to the public during winter months. The development is subject to a bid for grant funding from the Rural Development Programme for England (2014-2020).

2 Site Location

2.1 The application site lies comprises the existing two storey Activity Centre which lies on the south-westernmost shore of Rudyard Lake, to the west of the Dam Head. To the southeast of the building lies a converted boathouse which is now used as a Visitor's Centre, with car parking extending out in a southerly direction from the building towards the main vehicular access. The building benefits from an external terrace area to its south and east, which is enclosed by a low level wall which separates it from the car park and an adjacent vehicular access. This access serves the main storage areas in the Activity Centre, and the slipway to the north of the building. Rudyard Lake lies to the east of the Activity Centre, and on the opposite shore lies the Earl of Macclesfield Boathouse which is now an interpretation centre. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, and forms part of the recently designated Rudyard Conservation Area.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the Other Rural Areas Strategy and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. Policy SS6c also states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.3 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to Design Considerations and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

3.4 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to the Historic Environment and states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. It will seek to achieve this by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance; and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

3.5 Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy relates to Landscape and Settlement Setting and states that the Council will protect, and where possible, enhance local landscape by (amongst others) resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape, as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character.

3.6 Policy SS7 of the Core Strategy relates to the Churnet Valley Area Strategy, and states that within this area particular support will be given to the expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities, and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities. 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 demonstrate strong sustainable development and environmental management principles. 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.

3.7 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to Rural Diversification and states that all development in the rural areas will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilities economic activity, meets a rural community need, and sustains the historic environment. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated, or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development and sets out policies in respect of controlling development in the Green Belt and safeguarding heritage assets. The content of this document is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Rudyard Conservation Area Appraisal

4.2 This document assesses the characteristics and qualities of the Rudyard Conservation Area, and identifies a series of problems and pressures in the area. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this Planning & Heritage Statement, and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on the Green Belt

5.1 The application proposes extensions to the existing Activity Centre which was granted planning permission in 2001 under application SMD/2001/0736 (formerly 01/0098/FUL). Paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that the erection of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate within the Green Belt. It nevertheless identifies a number of exceptions which includes:

> *"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"*

5.2 These is no definition within the NPPF as to what constitutes a disproportionate addition, but the glossary appended to it confirms that the 'original' building should be taken as it existed on the 1st July 1948, or when it was built originally.

5.3 The existing Activity Centre building was constructed in 2001 and has not been previously extended. It encompasses a total floor area of some 372.4sq.m. set over two floors. The proposed conservatory extension, and rear lean-to storage extension, collectively encompasses a floor area of 76.7sq.m. which equates to an increase in floorspace of 20.6% over and above the original building. This is considered to constitute a proportionate addition in the context of paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

5.4 Even if one were to include the proposed canopy area within these calculations (which I submit it should not, given that it is open sided structure and covers a pre-existing terraced area), the total increase in floorspace would amount to 30.7%, which is also considered to constitute a proportionate addition in the context of paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

5.5 The extensions as a whole do not involve any significant encroachment into the Green Belt as they will enclose and cover the existing terraced area that wraps around the southern and eastern sides of the Activity Centre. Similarly, the proposed extension to the rear will replace an existing storage container, and be screened from wider view by the Activity Centre itself, and the steep embankment behind. This leads me to conclude overall that the proposed development is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt

Design & Impact on Heritage Assets

5.6 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. The NPPF goes on to state in paragraph 131 that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

5.7 The application site does not comprise a statutorily listed building, but does lie within the recently designated Rudyard Conservation Area. Rudyard Lake itself, with which the Activity Centre has a close physical, visual and functional relationship, was constructed as a reservoir in the late 18th Century to feed the nearby Caldon Canal and wider canal network. It has been a focal point for tourism ever since, and in particular during the period 1800 – 1850.

5.8 A number of chalets were developed along the western bank of the lake during the 19th Century and these were of a small, traditional scale. Subsequently, a number of these chalets have been replaced with permanent and more substantial structures which have resulted in what the Conservation Area Appraisal terms a 'haphazard' character with no cohesive design or character. Such changes have diminished the original character of the area, but despite this, the Conservation Area can still be afforded moderate to high significance as a heritage asset.

5.9 The proposed extensions to the Activity Centre have been designed to reflect Victorian influences that can be observed within the wider Conservation Area, and will utilise a palette of materials which is in keeping with the existing building. Their single storey form will furthermore ensure that the extensions maintain a subservient relationship to the existing building., thereby preserving its prominence within the locality.

5.10 In important views from the Dam Head looking up the Lake, the extensions will be partly screened by the existing Visitor's Centre (particularly when walking along the western part of the Dam Head) and/or will be seen against the backdrop of the existing two storey Activity Centre. Similarly, in views across the lake from the eastern shore and the Earl of Macclesfield Boathouse, the extensions will again be viewed against the backdrop of the existing Activity Centre and steep embankment behind. Aside from a minor increase in the external terraced area, the proposed development will not result in any encroachment into the areas surrounding the Activity Centre, and thus the exiting physical and visual relationship between the building and the lake will be maintained.

5.11 The proposal will also derive an enhancement to the Conservation Area by providing a more permanent and aesthetically pleasing storage solution to

replace the existing storage container located to the rear of the building. Such considerations lead me to conclude overall that the proposed development will not give rise to any material harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.

5.12 Any impact perceived to arise would have to be weighed against the benefits of the proposal in any event, which in this case will be the enhanced tourist offer i.e. provision of facilities that are capable of use during inclement weather, thereby making the lake more attractive during periods of poorer/colder weather. The proposal will also generate two additional staff members (1 full time / 1 part time) and thus will also benefit the local economy.

Impact on the Landscape

5.13 As discussed within the heritage section above, important views across and down the Lake will read the proposed extensions against the backdrop of the existing two storey Activity Centre. The proposal furthermore involves enclosure of the existing external terrace, with only a modest enlargement at its southern end which will only involve the redevelopment of an existing area of hardstanding and no loss of greenspace. The proposed development will therefore not have an adverse impact on the local landscape.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is considered that the proposed development constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposed extensions will constitute a proportionate addition to the original building and thus are an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt;

- The proposed extensions will not result in any material harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset;

- The proposed extensions are of an appropriate and complementary design that will relate well to the existing building and surrounding area;

- The proposed development will not give rise to harm to the surrounding landscape;

- The proposal will result in benefits to local tourism by enhancing the existing facilities at the Activity Centre, whilst also benefiting the rural economy.

6.2 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS6c, SS7, DC1, DC2, DC3 and R1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development.