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PLANNING / DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



PROPOSAL : **WORKS TO FORM 3NO. PONDS AND ENHANCE HABITAT**

ADDRESS : **WOODEND FARM, WESTWOOD, WETLEY ROCKS, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST9 0BU**

APPLICANT : **MR C POINTON**

DATE : **NOVEMBER 2017** **JOB No.** : **2007-1441A**

Registered in England No 3775545 V.A.T. Reg. No. 646 9246 05

CONTENTS:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 USE

3.0 AMOUNT

4.0 LAYOUT

5.0 SCALE

6.0 LANDSCAPING

7.0 APPEARANCE

8.0 ACCESS

9.0 PLANNING POLICY

10.0 SUMMARY

11.0 CONCLUSION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr C Pointon to prepare and submit a full planning application to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for the installation of 3no. ponds and enhancement of the habitat on land at Woodend Farm, Westwood, Wetley Rocks, Staffordshire.

2.0 USE

The application proposes the installation of 3no. ponds and habitat enhancement. The use will remain unaltered as it will still be agricultural land.

3.0 AMOUNT

The area of the site measures approximately 0.1ha in area.

4.0 LAYOUT

The ponds will follow the line of the existing stream.

5.0 SCALE

The scale of the ponds is in proportion to the stream and the land that they occupy.

6.0 LANDSCAPING

The ponds will form part of the landscaping and improvements to the habitat will be undertaken in accordance with the submitted ecology report.

7.0 APPEARANCE

The appearance of the area will not be adversely affected by this proposal as it will complement the existing character of this rural area.

8.0 ACCESS

There will be no alteration to the access as part of this proposal.

9.0 PLANNING POLICY

As you will be aware Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that when determining a planning application, the decision maker must make their determination in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Given this obligation, this chapter therefore considers national guidance relevant to the application as well as the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014). The following is considered relevant:

<u>Core Strategy</u>,

SS1 – Development Principles
SS1a – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS6c - Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
SD1 – Sustainable Use of Resources
DC3 - Landscape and Settlement Setting

NE1 - Biodiversity and Geological Resources

National Planning Policy Framework

There is considerable planning policy and guidance relevant to the planning application proposal at both local and national levels. The NPPF is significant as it sets out the Government's commitment for a positive response to planning proposals that would deliver sustainable development in order to assist growth to the economy. It has been made clear that the planning system has a key role in facilitating growth and development should be supported with a presumption in favour of granting planning permission. This change of emphasis provides an important background to the application proposal.

National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting economic growth and sets out policies for the control of development. The Development Plan represents the starting point for the determination of this application, which in this instance is the Core Strategy. The guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework is also relevant, in particular the following Chapters:

9. Protecting Green Belt land
10. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Within the NPPF it is also worth noting the following relevant paragraphs:

- Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 2).
- 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, (para 10)
- Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, (para 11).
- At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. LPA's should approve proposals which accord with the development plan without delay (para 14).
- Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land (para 81).
- As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (para 87).
- When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (para 88).
- Local planning authorities should adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change,16 taking full account of flood risk, coastal change and water supply and demand considerations (para 94).
- Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure (para 99).

- The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
  ● protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
  ● recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
  ● minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
  ● preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
  ● remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate (para 109).
- To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should: promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan (para 117).
- When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:
  ● development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;
  ● opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged (para 118).

10.0 SUMMARY

The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises of a small watercourse located in an agricultural field. The site lies to the south Woodend Farm, Wetley Rocks, and is bordered to the north, south and west by open fields. To the east of the site is the access road.

The NPPF determines that sustainable development includes three dimensions: - economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **Environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy

- **Economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

- **Social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;

The submitted proposal will result in substantial beneficial enhancement to the wildlife habitat in the area and will also reduce potential flooding from the stream, as well as reducing the rate of soil erosion when the stream is in full flow. The openness of the Green Belt will not be harmed by the

proposal and it is considered that the proposal will therefore accord with the aims of the principle of development in the Green belt as defined in the NPPF. Furthermore, the proposal will deliver benefits to the character and appearance of the landscape through the enhancement of the wildlife habitat and the prevention of further erosion that will eventually harm the surrounding land through erosion. Such benefits are considered to weigh strongly in favour of the proposed development.

11.0 CONCLUSION

The Government has a strong commitment to growth and provides a strong presumption in favour of development and is committed to increasing levels of growth. Paragraph 186 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. It also states in the NPPF that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay, and where policies are out-of-date permission should only be refused where there is significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the benefits of the development.

The proposed development is therefore considered to constitute a sustainable form of development when considered against the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and is also in accordance with the provisions of the policies listed above in the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy. The proposal will provide a natural and attractive solution to a problem with regards to flooding and erosion, whilst also incorporating enhancements to wildlife habitat. It is with due respect that the Local Planning Authority is politely requested to support this planning application to allow the installation of 3no. ponds and undertake habitat improvements through granting planning permission accordingly.