PLANNING STATEMENT
including design considerations

- Date Issued: January 2019

SITE ADDRESS:
- Mount Pleasant Farm, Gimmershill, Whiston, ST10 2JE.

APPLICANT:
- Mr. Masterson.

PROPOSAL:
- Retrospective application for use of land for the storage and sale of caravans.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The applicant's intention is to use of land for the storage of caravans ancillary to the sale of caravans from the site. The business is an online business ("Staffordshire Caravans") run by the applicants and all customer visits to the site are by arrangement. No casual customers call. There is no sign advertising the business at the entrance to the access track on the main road. This has been done deliberately so as not to encourage casual visitors.

1.2. The applicants do not intend to store more than ten caravans on the site. There are currently nine re-used caravans for sale on the business' website. The amount of proposed storage space is only sufficient for ten caravans.

2. APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1. As can be seen from the location plan the farm is at the end of a long track and cannot be seen from the main road (A52). The caravans are stored at the north-eastern side of the farm complex about 400 metres from the main road (the A52). Please see the submitted location and site plans.

2.2. The Farm is no longer a working farm and is given over to horses. The proposed caravan storage area would only occupy a small part of the site. The holding is 15.6 acres in area.

2.3. There are only two residential properties on the access track – "Gimmershill" and "Mount Pleasant Farm". Gimmershill is located about 80-90metres from the main road with Mount Pleasant Farm at the end of the track.

2.4. A public footpath runs through the middle of the Farm from the south-east to the north-west.

3. PLANNING POLICY

3.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not change this but it must be taken into account as a material consideration in planning decisions and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan or where policies are out-of-date.

3.2. The key documents when assessing this planning application are the Development Plan for the Moorlands and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF) which sets out national planning policy and is a material consideration. In the Staffordshire Moorlands the Development Plan consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy approved in March 2014.

3.3. The application site is located in open countryside and relevant policies in the Core Strategy include:

- SS6c – Other Rural Areas.
- DC1 – Design Considerations.
- DC3 – Landscape Setting.
- R1 – Rural Diversification.

3.4. For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section as is the NPPF where relevant.

4. THE CASE IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION

4.1 The applicant's case is that:

1. The proposal is in accord with Core Strategy Policy R2 which requires that proposals do not harm the character, biodiversity, and appearance of the countryside; promotes sustainable economic activity; and facilitates economic activity amongst other things.

2. The proposal is diversification of an existing rural enterprise and as such is in accord with Core Strategy Policy SS6c.

3. The proposal is a sustainable business in a rural area and is also farm/rural diversification and as such is in accord with Paragraph 83 in the NPPF which encourages all types of business in rural areas. Please also see paragraph 84 in the NPPF which recognises that sites for business in rural areas are often outside villages and settlements and are not well-served by public transport.

4. It is a small-scale business. The number of visitors is relatively small. The main activity is in spring and summer. The average number of visitors per week is no more then 2-3. The applicant also sells to the trade and he delivers those caravans directly to the buyer's site.

   The proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on local roads because the amount of traffic associated with it is relatively small. The business is mainly seasonal with the main business taking place in spring and summer when the public mainly visit. The number of visitors (all by appointment) in summer is about 2-3 per week. In autumn and winter there are relatively few visitors. In autumn and winter, the number of visits tails off to virtually zero. The sales in autumn and winter are mainly to trade and caravans sold to the trade are delivered direct by the applicants to the customer's premises.

5. The level of traffic of traffic visiting the premises is low and would not cause any harm to the amenity of residents living at Gimmershill particularly as visits are by appointment and are arranged at times of the day when impact on residential amenity would be minimal.

6. The development is small-scale and would have only a low, or negligible, visual impact because of relative remoteness, distance from houses and other public footpaths. The storage area is sandwiched between the farmhouse and a rural building. To the east the caravans are partly screened from view by a stone wall. To the west there is space for planting a row of hawthorn trees to mask the caravans.

7. The site is located in the Churnet Valley (Core Strategy Policy SS7). However, the proposal has no impact on diversity; would have minimal impact, if any, on the landscape; and would have no adverse impact on tourism.

8. The business is run by the applicants from the farm with the result that there are no travel-to-and-from-work journeys.

9. The proposal is sustainable and as such the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies (Paragraph 11 in the NPPF). For decision-making this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

   Economically the business brings income into the Moorlands and local area and employs two people. Environmentally, the business brings in income which helps manage the farm, landscape and the land.

6 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

6.1 The benefits of changing the use of the land to caravan storage and sales significantly outweigh any disbenefits. The essential character of the farm and landscape remains unchanged; there is no adverse impact on biodiversity or the landscape and the development is in line with both local and national planning policy.

6.2 For all the reasons above and in the main text the Council are asked to approve the proposed development.
