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# Planning Statement incorporating Design and Access matters

**PROPOSAL : CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO CAMPING SITE AND ERECTION OF AN AMENITY BUILDING**

**ADDRESS : LAND OFF SUTHERLAND ROAD, LONGSDON, STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS, ST9 9QB**

**APPLICANT : MR I SALT**

**DATE : MAY 2019 JOB No. : 2015-2087**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr I Salt to prepare and submit a full planning application for the change of use of unused land, bound generally by Endon Brook, the Caldon Canal and the former railway line, to use as a camping site including the siting of eight camping pods and of an amenity building. The application is accompanied by a location plan, site layout plan, elevational drawings and flood risk assessment.

1.2 This statement analyses the site, the proposal and the policy context within which it is made. Thereafter it provides justification for approval of the proposed development primarily on the basis that the scheme would constitute appropriate development for a recreational use and small scale facilities within the Green Belt without any harm to its openness or visual amenity. Furthermore the proposed development would not be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the neighbouring land uses, nor would it be detrimental to highway safety or raise any issues with regards to biodiversity and flooding.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site comprises of an irregular shaped parcel of land which measures approximately 0.55 hectares. Formerly used for agricultural purposes, the site currently has no use and forms part of a larger field and is bounded by the disused railway tracks to the north and the canal tow path to the south. Whilst the application site itself is relatively level the site sits in the bottom of the valley with the land to both the north and south climbing. For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

## 3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 This is a full planning application which seeks consent for the change of use of the land for recreational camping, and for the stationing of eight small camping pods and the erection of an amenity building. The camping pods are principally sleeping spaces. This situation obviously generates a need for toilet and washing facilities. These are provided in the proposed amenity building. The proposed building which would have a simple rectangular footprint measuring 42.6 sq metres would be single storey and contain dedicated toilet and shower facilities for male, female and disabled visitors. The proposed building which would be constructed from waney edge timber boarding and grey fibre cement profiled sheeting would be located in the north western corner of the site. The pods are of timber constructions- timber boarding on the walls and timber shingles on the roofs.

## 4.0 HISTORY

4.1 A planning application site for the erection of a facilities building on the site has been refused.

## 5.0 POLICY

5.1 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.

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan, which in this area comprises of the adopted Core Strategy (2014).

5.3 Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications (para 12). The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SO1 (Spatial Objectives); SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development); SD4 (Pollution and Flood Risk); SS6c (Other Rural Areas Area Strategy); SS7 (Churnet Valley), DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); E3 (Tourism and Cultural Development); T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport); R1 (Rural Diversification) and NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources).

5.5 The relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework are

Sections 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy), 11 (Making effective use of land), 13 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change), 14 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

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

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT

6.1 As set out above this is an application for the change of use of an area of former agricultural land as a recreational camping site. Associated with this proposed use, the application also proposes the erection of a eight camping pods and an amenity building providing washing and toilet facilities for both the pods and other camping uses. The key issues are considered to be:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
- If held to be inappropriate would harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm be clearly outweighed by other considerations. If so, would this amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal;
- The effect on openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt;
- Whether the proposal is sustainable or not;
- Design considerations and the development's impact on the locality;
- Highway considerations;
- Impact on flooding;

*Principle of development*

6.2 For the purposes of development the site is within the Green Belt as indicated on the Proposals Map of the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. As such there are tighter controls on what form of development can be permitted. The Local Plan has now been replaced by the Moorlands Core Strategy which does not contain a specific Green Belt policy. Because of this, the national Green Belt policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework constitute the appropriate planning guidance for the proposal. Paragraphs 143-145 of this state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is "inappropriate" and that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt unless it is one of the exceptions listed in the NPPF or unless very special circumstances apply.

6.3 Certain forms of development are considered in Para 146 as not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include "material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds). Para 145 considers that “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” are not inappropriate as long as they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

6.4 It should be noted that planning permission is sought for the change of use of the land to a use that is considered by the NPPF to not be inappropriate. As such, this element of the proposal is acceptable in principle. The NPPF goes on to accept that small buildings that enable or support such uses are, in themselves, not inappropriate. The proposed amenity building is single storey and limited in floorspace, in fact it is less than half the size of the refused application. The proposed pods are also limited, and provide little more than sleeping accommodation. On this basis it is considered that the proposed structures are supported by NPPF policy.

*The effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt*

6.5 The NPPF confirms that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and confirms that their essential characteristics is their openness and permanence. Sutherland Road in this location is characterised by a mix of housing types and sizes. The application site makes a very limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt at this point due to its topography, levels and screening.

6.6 Whilst the provision of the amenity building and pods would result in some loss of openness to what is effectively a green and undeveloped site it is considered that any loss of openness would be minimal due to the relatively modest size and scale of the proposal. In addition the simple form, design and materials of the structures will ensure that it is in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area. On balance therefore it is considered that there would be no material harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt and the proposed development would therefore be compliant with adopted Development Plan policies.

*Sustainability*

6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework incorporates a presumption in favour of sustainable development and is considered to be a material consideration of the highest weight in the determination of this application.

6.8 Policy E3 is the development plan policy relating to tourist development in the District. It states that new tourist and visitor accommodation should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport. The policy also states new tourist accommodation should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available.

6.9 Policy R1 Rural Diversification is consistent with the aims of Policy E3 in requiring a sustainable location where no significant traffic would be generated and which would not harm the landscape or nature conservation. With regard to national planning guidance contained in the NPPF, Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy supports sustainable tourist accommodation "in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service areas.

6.10 The site is located within the boundary of the Churnet Valley which has a high tourism potential due to the attractive rural landscapes and number of tourist attractions. There is general support for new sustainable tourist facilities and accommodation only in sustainable locations such as close to villages or towns with a good range of services such as shops and public transport and close to existing tourist facilities attractions.

6.11 The settlement of Longsdon is acknowledged within the adopted Core Strategy. It has its own Memorial Hall which is actively used by the local community and two public houses. It is located on the main A53 Stoke on Trent Road 2 miles west of Leek where a wide range of services can be found. The village is also fortunate to have a regular bus service operating with routes to the neighbouring towns including Leek, Endon and Stoke on Trent. The application site is adjacent to the Cauldon Canal with the tow path providing an easy link to Cheddleton to the east and Endon to the west, both of which offer a wide range of facilities. In addition the application site lies adjacent to the Deep Hayes Country Park, a locally renowned tourist attraction comprising of 24 hectares mix of woods, meadows and pools. The development would therefore be located on the edge of a sustainable settlement and there is more than a reasonable prospect that any future visitors and users of the site will not be solely reliant on the car as their sole means of transportation to access services and facilities as they will be able to access them on foot, by cycle and public transport.

*Design*

6.12 The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments

where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

6.13 The proposed amenity building and pod structures are modest in terms of size and scale. They have a simple utilitarian appearance which reflects their functional use and the use of natural materials will ensure that it is in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area. In this respect it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policy DC1 and the NPPF.

6.14 The nearest dwellings are New Springs Farm which occupies an elevated position 121m to the north west and The Haven which lies approximately 140m to the south east on the opposite side of Sutherland Road. The proposed development would not by virtue of its intended use and the intervening distance between it and noise sensitive receptors harm the amenities of residents through loss of privacy, noise or disturbance. Accordingly it is considered that the application accords with CS Policy DC1 and guidance contained in the NPPF.

*Highways*

6.15 Paragraph 108 of the NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

6.16 The proposed development would be accessed via the existing access off Sutherland Road which has recently been upgraded due to the site being used as a temporary storage facility for British Waterways whilst they undertook some renovation works on the canals. No alterations to the access are proposed as part of this application and there would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

*Flood Risk*

6.17 The PPG advises on how Flood Risk Assessments should be prepared to ensure that development asses the likely risk to a development site and follows avoidance, managing and mitigation measures as appropriate. Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk but where development is necessary making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

6.18 Policy SD4 of the Core Strategy states that development deemed acceptable within areas at risk of flooding due to national or other policies or other material considerations, must be subject to a flood risk assessment. Additionally approved scheme must be designed and controlled to mitigate the effects of flooding on the site and the potential impact of the development on flooding elsewhere in the floodplain. In all cases schemes will be determined after having considered both individual and cumulative impacts.

6.19 The application site is shown within Flood Zone 3 on the EA Flood Map for Planning - an area considered to be at flood risk with a 1% (1 in 100) probability of greater flooding from rivers in any year. The planning application is supported by a FRA. The proposed development relates to a

less vulnerable type of development and ensures that there is no increase in surface water ruin off from the development proposals. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with policy SD4 of the Core Strategy and government advice contained within the NPPF.

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Paragraph 38 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 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.

7.2 For the reasons given above it is considered that the proposal would provide an appropriate facility which would assist with sustainable tourism in the area. By virtue of the proposed buildings' size, scale and overall massing there would be limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt and its form, design and materials will ensure that it would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the Green Belt and that it would be in keeping and quickly assimilated into its rural surroundings. The proposed development would not be prejudicial to the amenity of any of the surrounding residential dwellings nor would it harm highway safety, any established ecological interests or raise any flooding issues. The proposal would therefore comply with policies contained in the Council's Core Strategy and would be in line with the government guidance in the NPPF.

## 8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

### USE

The application proposes the change of use of the site to a recreational camping site and the erection of a small amenity building and small structures that would assist the efficient use of the site.

### AMOUNT

The proposed amenity building would have a floor area of 42.6 sq metres. The pods have a combined floorspace of 135.6 sq.m.

### LAYOUT

The layout of the development will be as shown on the submitted site layout plan. The proposed amenity building would have a simple rectangular footprint would be positioned within the north western corner of the field. The eight camping pods are positioned alongside the southern boundary of the site.

### SCALE

The proposed building and structures would be single storey.

### LANDSCAPING

The site is located within a rural setting and benefits from substantial existing mature landscaping and it is not considered that any additional landscaping will be required.

### APPEARANCE

The proposed amenity building would be constructed from waney edge timber boarding and grey fibre cement profiled sheeting. The pods with have timber boards for walls and timber shingles for roofs.

### ACCESS

The proposed development would be served by the existing field access.