Planning Statement incorporating Design and Access Matters

PROPOSED CESSATION OF USE OF LAND AS HAULAGE YARD AND DEMOLITION OF HAULAGE WORKSHOP, ANCILLARY BUILDINGS AND RESIDENTIAL CARAVAN AND ERECTION OF DWELLING AT STONEY PARK, CONSALL LANE, CONSALL, ST9 0AD

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is a Full Planning Application that effectively proposes the removal of a haulage yard and its large buildings on the edge of an attractive village in the open countryside, and to replace it with a single dwelling. The haulage use has operated on the site since 1980 and the applicant holds a current haulage Operator's Licence (OD108982J). It was started by the applicant's father-in-law and then carried on by his son. The main haulage building/workshop is used for vehicle storage and maintenance and is equipped with appropriate machinery and spare parts. The Introduction section of this Statement explains the purpose and use of the other buildings. The open areas of the site are made up of unmade ground, tarmac, grass and concrete and are used for various purposes associated with haulage.

1.2 The site lies in the open countryside between the market towns of Leek and Cheadle. Leek lies some 8km to the North and Cheadle, 6km to the South. It is approached along a private drive off Consall Lane at a point roughly in the centre of the village. The site comprises a large workshop building (22.3m.by 34.2m), a canopy attached to its southern gable that is used to store hay (6m.square), two shipping containers (one on top of the other) used for the storage of tools (9m. by 2.5m), a residential chalet to the north of the workshop (9.6m by 8m.) and a timber shelter (6m. by 3.5m) used principally for domestic associated uses.

1.3 The site accommodates large areas of hard surface. Firstly, there is a manege used by the applicant covering an area of 705sq.m. to the north of the workshop, a large forecourt measuring 1017sq.m. in front of the workshop, and a further hard surface of 583sq.m. to the south of the workshop.

2.0 Physical Context

2.1 There is a dairy farm (Knowle Bank Farm) about 170m to the north-west of the application site and a dwelling (Stoney Park Farm) about 60m to the south.

2.2 The access to the site is from a private lane that extends to the village to the south (about 320m) and extends north beyond the site to the dairy farm boundary.

2.3 The application site is situated in the open countryside.

3.0 The Planning Policy Context

3.1 The current development plan for the area is Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy. The former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Map shows the site to be in a rural area (not in a settlement boundary) zoned as Green Belt.

3.2 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.

3.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. 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.

3.4 The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the Local Plan submission version (Feb 2018) and the Saved Local Plan Proposals Map (Adopted 1998).

3.5 The Local Plan shows the application site to be in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The NPPF states in para 133 that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and its fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Para 145 sets out the exceptions where the construction of new buildings would not be regarded as inappropriate development.

3.6 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS3 (Distribution of Development); SS4 (Managing the Release of Housing Land); SS6 (Development in Rural Areas); Policy SS 10 (Other Rural Areas Strategy); SD1 (Sustainable Use of Resources); SD3 (Carbon saving Measures in Development); SD4 (Pollution and Flood Risk); H1 (New Housing); R2 (Rural Housing); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); T1 Development and Sustainable Transport and T2 (Other Sustainable Transport Measures). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

3.7 In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Space About Dwellings (September 1998 - Appendix 3 of the Local Plan) is important in the consideration of this application.

3.8 Also of particular relevance to this application is the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018) which sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery.

4.0 Key Planning Issues

4.1 The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are considered to be: -

- the principle of development
- impact on the character and appearance of the area
- impact on residential amenity and neighbouring land uses
- impact on highway safety

Principle of development

4.2 The application site is located in an area of the open countryside designated as Green Belt. It is near the outer edge of the Green Belt- the outer edge being the line of the Cauldon Canal 2km to the east.

4.3 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. At para 145 it states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt. There are exceptions to this, but this proposal does not qualify as one of these. The proposal is therefore inappropriate development requiring “very special circumstances” to be shown if it is to be supported by the Council.

4.4 Policy SS 10 of the Local Plan (Other Rural Areas Strategy) explains that in the other rural areas (the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries) new housing will be restricted to where it meets housing requirements and specific needs by…."restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with Policy H1" and "allowing rural exceptions housing (in accordance with Policies H1 and H3).

4.5 Policy H 1 New Housing Development supports new dwellings outside of the development boundaries for "limited infill residential development of an appropriate scale and character" provided that "the development will adjoin the boundary of a larger village and be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and will not "lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have an adverse impact of significance to the character of the countryside" and Policy H3 relates to Affordable Housing and is therefore not relevant to this proposal.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and the Amenity of Neighbours

4.6 The Core Strategy sets out a Vision for the Rural Areas. This states that these areas "will have viable, attractive villages and smaller settlements which will continue to foster appropriate, sensitive growth and vitality to support rural living and work." It identifies the open countryside having a "richness" of landscape, heritage and biodiversity" that will be "valued, maintained and protected in a way which sensitively accommodates the needs of farmers, rural businesses, visitors and residents." It further makes the point that "landscape character and quality will be conserved and enhanced and biodiversity fostered with appropriate new landscaping encouraged."

4.7 The existing use clearly has an impact on the character of the rural landscape, on Consall village and the countryside generally, and this is not to the good. It is also considered that the use has an impact on highway safety, and this is detrimental too.

4.8 The use has an impact of the character of the rural area by the incongruous nature of the buildings on site. They are large and industrial in character. The nature of the use brings with it large transport vehicles. Clearly, as many of these as possible are out on the road earning a living, but many remain on site, some for short periods, others for much longer.

4.9 This is a full application that delivers a design which respects the character and appearance of the surrounding development and help it assimilate with the semi-rural area beyond. The proposal meets the Council's adopted Space About Dwellings Standards in terms of its relationship with its site boundaries and the only neighbouring dwelling. There would, therefore, be no adverse impact on neighbouring properties or future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. The proposed dwelling would benefit from a generous area of private amenity space thus ensuring that future occupiers will benefit from an appropriate level of residential amenity. The proposed development would be seen as a continuation of this ribbon of development when viewed from short and longer distance views.

Highways

4.10 Paragraph 32 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.

4.11 The application proposes a significant reduction in the number and nature of traffic to the application site, and a corresponding reduction in traffic noise and manoeuvring in Consall village. The access into the application site has good highway visibility and will provide car parking that meets the Council's standards. There would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

5.0 Very Special Circumstances

5.1 There are five strands to the case for Very Special Circumstances.

5.2 The first of these is the impact the proposal will have on the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 133 of the Framework makes the point that "The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence." The proposal does just this. The existing haulage yard is essentially an urban operation, with all the urban trappings of large industrial-type buildings and large, heavy vehicles. These combine to bring a harsh urban character to the site. The application proposes to remove these and replace them with a dwelling that is modest in size, height and mass. The advantages to the general openness of the Green Belt will be immense. The existing buildings associated with the haulage use have a volume of 3,010sq.m. The existing caravan has a volume of 145sq.m. giving a combination of 3,155cu.m. proposed to be demolished. proposal therefore delivers a "fundamental aim" of Green Belt policy.

5.3 The existing operation has a detrimental impact on the appearance and character of the Countryside. The harsh urban impact of the existing building, and parked vehicles has already been referred to. Add to this the general comings and goings of these vehicles and the noise and fumes generated by them, and the noise and fumes from the workshop, and this is clearly not a positive element to the make-up of the Countryside's character and appearance in the Churnet Valley. The removal of the current operation will eliminate this harmful impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

5.4 The existing operation also has an impact on residential amenity. All of the heavy vehicles associated with the operation travel through Consall village. Their travel and manoeuvring impacts on residential amenity. Whilst the village is not large, there are enough dwellings in the middle of the village affected by traffic noise, particularly the rumbling of empty lorries and fumes to collectively result in a level of disturbance that is objectionable. The private lane to the site has a junction with Consall Road in the centre of the village, and it is at this point where lorries will be braking to turn at right-angles to go up the lane. Conversely, as they leave the site, lorries will be accelerating away from the junction. The existing operation is therefore clearly harmful to the local environment, and contrary to Local Plan Policy DC3. The proposal will significantly improve the living conditions of a large section of the Consall community.

5.5 The application site is located in a rural area served by rural roads and lanes. The proposal generates a significant amount of heavy traffic which is not compatible with nature of the local road network. The proposal will ease traffic flows by the removal of these vehicles.

5.6 Lastly, is the case that is very personal to the applicant. The application is supported by a letter from the applicant's Doctor. This clearly illustrates the poor health of the applicant and the need for her to receive regular treatment at home. Her Doctor makes the point that these procedures require a sterile environment, and may at times require a carer to stay. The current chalet is not well equipped to satisfy these requirements. The proposed dwelling provides a Treatment Room and additional accommodation for a carer to stay.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The application recognises that the proposal is not included in the categories that are considered to be acceptable against Green Belt policy. The proposal requires a case to be made of “very special circumstances”. These are set out in the above paragraph. The VSC relate to Green Belt aims, to the character and appearance of the countryside, the level of residential amenity, highway safety and personal circumstances. Combined, these are considered to make a strong case to allow the erection of a dwelling on the application site.
6.2 The proposal will benefit one of the principal aims of the Green Belt, will bring about a cleaner, quieter and more attractive countryside, a better living environment for residents and car users and a more comfortable life for the applicant. For these reasons, it is requested that the Council grant the proposal planning permission.
6.3 Albeit in a small way, the proposed development will assist in delivering the Council's commitment for housing.

7.0 Design and Access Matters

Use
The application proposes the development of the site for residential purposes.

Amount
The application proposes the erection of a single dwelling.

Scale
The application proposes the erection of a one and a half storey, three-bedroom house.

Landscaping
There is tree and shrub planting and a landscaped berm on the site which is likely to be retained.

Appearance
The proposed design will deliver a traditional design using traditional materials.

Access
The proposed development would be served by the existing vehicular access point off Consall Road.