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Planning Statement

Retention of Biomass Boilers and Log Dryers

Tean Nurseries, Riverside Road, Upper Tean

October 2019

Project	Tean Nurseries, Riverside Road, Upper Tean
Client	Mr J Hassall
Reference	914
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Version	1.0

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1 Introduction

1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.

1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jon Imber, has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

1.3 This statement forms part of a detailed planning application.

2 Site and Planning History

2.1 Tean Nurseries is a family run wholesale business which grows and supplies shrubs, conifers and garden plants across the Midlands.

2.2 Tean Nurseries is located in a rural area approximately 0.6km south of the settlement of Upper Tean. It is accessed via a private driveway off Riverside Road.

2.3 Surrounding land is predominantly in agricultural use. The nearest residential property, other than the associated dwelling occupied by the applicant, lies approximately 160 metres to the south-east.

2.4 The application site is relatively flat. It sits within a wider landscape context of undulating countryside. The site is enclosed by mature hedgerows which provide a high degree of screening.

2.5 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following photograph.



Figure 1 - Aerial photograph of site

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 As well as supplying a wide range of plants to its customers, the nursery also delivers logs to residential and commercial clients.

3.2 In order to be used as firewood, logs must be dried. In open air conditions, this process can take up to 18 months, making the operation land intensive.

3.3 In order to expedite the drying process, the applicant has installed two cabins heated by biomass boilers. The cabins dry logs in around three weeks, significantly reducing

the amount of space required and increasing the turnover of this element of the business.

3.4 The first cabin was installed on the site in February 2014. This proved a success, and was joined by the second unit in September 2016.

3.5 The supplier of the boilers advised the applicant that planning permission was not required for their installation on the site. The applicant now realises that this is not the case and as such seeks retrospective planning permission to regularise the situation.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It explains that in the context of decision taking, this means approving proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless:

- the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

4.2 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that "*Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*"

4.3 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that planning should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. It also encourages the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014)

4.4 *"**R1 – Rural Diversification***

All development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages 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, facilitates 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 any sites designated for their nature conservation, 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.

Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved,

development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.

Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

Priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings."

4.5 "***SD2 - Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy***

The District will strive to meet part of its future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources (which could be through a variety of technologies, for example wind power, solar energy, biomass etc), in line with current evidence which identifies the feasibility of these forms of energy across the District. This will be achieved by supporting small- and large- scale stand alone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes, subject to the following considerations:

- the degree to which the scale and nature of a proposal impacts on the landscape, particularly having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment and impact on the Peak District National Park (taking into account both individual and cumulative effects of similar proposals);

- the degree to which the developer has demonstrated any environmental/economic/social benefits of a scheme as well as how any environmental or social impacts have been minimised (e.g. visual, noise or smell);

- the impact on designated sites of European, national and local biodiversity and geological importance in accordance with policy NE1;

- the impact on the amenity of residents and other interests of acknowledged importance, including the historic environment;

- the degree to which individual proposals reflect current local evidence regarding the feasibility of different types of renewable or low-carbon energy at different locations across the District.

5 Planning Considerations

5.1 The application site lies outside of the Upper Tean settlement boundary. Policy R1 of the Core Strategy is therefore relevant.

5.2 Policy R1 is broadly supportive of new economic development in the countryside, subject to it having no adverse effect upon the character and environmental quality of its surroundings or the amenities enjoyed by neighbouring land users.

5.3 Furthermore, Paragraph 83 of the National Planning Policy Framework supports business and enterprise in rural areas. It is clear, therefore, that the Government accepts this type of development can be appropriate in the countryside.

5.4 Log drying on a commercial scale is a land intensive use which tends to dictate a countryside as opposed to urban location. Furthermore forestry and associated uses tend to be synonymous with rural areas. The drying of logs on the site is therefore considered to be a use appropriate within the countryside.

5.5 The proposals utilise renewable biomass to provide the heat energy required to dry the logs. The proposals therefore contribute towards the Council's aspiration to

meet part of its energy needs through renewables as set out in Policy SD2 of the Core Strategy.

5.6 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy expresses a preference for the re-use of existing buildings, but does not rule out the provision of new buildings or structures as an alternative. There are no suitable existing buildings on the site that could be converted, and as such there is no alternative but to provide new structures in this instance.

5.7 The boilers and cabins are confined entirely within the existing yard and do not encroach into the surrounding countryside. The development is viewed in the context of existing built development at the nursery. On approach from the north the cabins are largely obscured by the boundary hedgerow and intervening prefabricated building, and the boiler flues are viewed against the backdrop of the applicant's dwelling. The site is well screened from the south and is well screened across the frontage by a dense mature hedgerow. The boilers and cabins are not therefore unduly prominent and do not harm the character or appearance of their rural surroundings.

5.8 The boilers are operated only during working hours at the nursery, meaning that they run for no more than 10 to 12 hours per day. They are extremely quite and are not readily audible beyond the site perimeter. The boilers have been operating on site for over 12 months without giving rise to complaints. Their retention on the site will not therefore adversely affect the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby dwellings.

5.9 There is adequate space remaining in the yard for parking and turning and servicing. Cut timber is delivered to the site in 10 ton loads and dry logs are delivered to clients rather than collected from the site. The proposals therefore have minimal impact in

terms of trip generation and do not prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

5.10 The development therefore fully accords with Policies R1 and SD2 of the Core Strategy.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The application proposes the retention of two biomass boilers and log drying cabins at an established nursery.

6.2 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy and Paragraph 83 of the NPPF establish the principle of new development in rural areas to support the rural economy. It is therefore clear that the Council and the Government accept that such development can be appropriate in the countryside.

6.3 The boilers and cabins bolster the rural economy and contribute towards the Council's aspiration of utilising renewables. The cabins and boilers are sensitively sited and are not prominent within their rural surroundings. They do not harm the character or appearance of the countryside.

6.4 The development does not harm the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings and does not prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

6.5 The boilers and cabins therefore constitute sustainable development which accords with Policies R1 and SD2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the

National Planning Policy Framework. In accordance with the presumption in favour of such development established by Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the significant weight attached to economic development prescribed by Paragraph 80, it is therefore respectfully requested that the application be approved.