From:	Steve Massey
To:	Curley, Jane
Cc:	Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject:	SMD/2020/0243 - Moneystone Quarry, Oakamoor - screening request for change of use of buildings
Date:	09 June 2020 14:19:26

Jane

This application (SMD/2020/0243) is a screening request in relation to proposed change of use of existing buildings formerly used as quarry laboratories etc made under planning application SMD/2019/0716, adjacent to and as an extension of the core development of erection of a high quality leisure development etc granted outline planning permission under reference SMD/2016/0378.

The original core development under the 2016 outline permission is a "Schedule 2 development" for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as it comprises a holiday village and associated developments outside urban areas and exceeds 0.5ha in site area (Paragraph 12(c) of the table at Schedule 2 to the Regs).

The currently proposed development (change of use of existing buildings) is itself a "Schedule 2 development" under Paragraph 13(b)(ii) of the same table, in that it comprises a change to or extension of an already authorised development listed in Paragraphs 1 to 12 of column 1 of that table and the change or extension itself, proposed under SMD/2019/0716, also exceeds the 0.5ha threshold in the corresponding part of column 2 of the table. Therefore this change of use proposal is automatically Schedule 2 development under Paragraph 13(b)(ii), and in accordance with the Regs we need to carry out screening to consider whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment and consequently whether an Environmental Impact Assessment should be required.

In considering this, we are required to have regard to the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regs. We should also take account of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment, and in particular in this case the Annex on Indicative Screening Thresholds (which are anyway not exceeded by the current change of use application – a factor pointing towards a conclusion that Environmental Impact assessment may not be required). My application of these factors and comments are confined to matters relating to potential impact on trees, woodlands, landscape and visual impact.

In terms of the Schedule 3 "Characteristics of development", the change of use proposal is a small site in comparison with the overall leisure park scheme, and largely comprises existing buildings and hardstanding. Its location, design/appearance and use would be directly related to the wider leisure park already approved. There are a few small trees, self-set scrub and conifers on the application site which may be affected, but generally impact on existing landscape features would not be of great significance.

The potential environmental impacts of the overall leisure park were addressed in an Environmental Statement (the "2016 ES") submitted with the outline planning application under the then-current Environmental Impact Regulations 2011; the 2016 ES was taken into account in

determining that application, which was approved. The 2016 ES used as its baseline the previously approved Restoration Plan for Moneystone Quarry, which was somewhat ambivalent with regard to the existing laboratory buildings and 2 small ponds to their south-west, denoting these within an area of "Land under ownership of Sibelco" with no existing or proposed landscape/habitat treatments identified. Part of the existing car park to the north-east of the buildings, within the current SMD/2019/0716 application site, lies outside this "Land under ownership of Sibelco" and was denoted in the restoration plan to become "open grassland". However, the minor departure from this which would arise from now retaining the car park as part of the current change of use application SMD/2019/0716, thus comprising omission of an intended small area of grassland from the restoration plan which formed the baseline for the 2016 ES, is not in itself considered to constitute any potentially new or additional significant impact such that the current change of use application as a change or extension to the previously approved scheme would lead to significant adverse effects on the environment.

The existing buildings, their retention, change of use, minor extensions, and alterations to external appearance – together with retention of existing car park areas – would all be viewed in the context of the approved leisure park development. The current application site is surrounded on three sides by the wider leisure park site and existing solar panel arrays, and on the fourth by existing mature woodland, and is/would remain a relatively well-screened part of the overall scheme as viewed from external viewpoints due to a combination of topography and existing vegetation. Such screening would be increased further by implementation and establishment of the comprehensive new landscaping scheme already proposed as part of the main site development.

Although landscape and visual impacts would need to be taken into account as material considerations in the normal assessment and determination of the planning application, it is considered that such impacts would not be of such adverse significance as to require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

In terms of the Schedule 3 "Location of development" the change of use site boundary is not within any designated sensitive area. In the context of the existing and approved land uses in the immediate vicinity, the proposed change of use scheme would have negligible new or additional effects on landscape structure/features or on visual impact. Such issues were already taken into account for the wider core development in the 2016 ES and found to be acceptable; the current proposal as a change or extension to the already approved scheme would not result in significant environmental effects on landscape or visual impact, and the absorption capacity of the natural environment in relation to landscape and visual issues is considered sufficient to avoid significant adverse effects.

The application site boundary for the change of use proposal is at one point adjacent to and otherwise in close proximity to a registered ancient semi-natural woodland site, which of course is a notable designation reflecting the status of such sites as being irreplaceable habitats, with national and local planning policies specifically aimed at preventing loss of or significant harm to ancient woodlands. However, whilst the potential impacts on the ancient woodland must be taken into account in determining the application, this is routine planning process, and since any impacts on the ancient woodland are considered in this case unlikely to be significantly harmful

this does not in itself lead to a conclusion that a full Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

No landscapes of historic, cultural or archaeological importance would be affected by the change of use extension to the overall leisure park site. Whilst a Conservation Area was designated in nearby Oakamoor village in 2016, the proposed change of use application site has no visual connection with the Conservation Area and is therefore not seen from and would not affect the setting of the Conservation Area.

In terms of Schedule 3 "Types and characteristics of the potential impact" the magnitude of the visual effects of the change of use proposal would be small, and very localised in extent such that these are unlikely to be noticeable from outside the leisure park site. From inside the site, the visual effects ae unlikely to be adverse. In cumulation with the already approved development, the proposed change of use is considered unlikely to lead to any significant additional or increased landscape and visual impacts. Under the normal planning process, there would be opportunity to secure additional new landscaping specific to the current change of use application site, which would further reduce any landscape or visual impacts.

Therefore with regard to potential impact on trees, woodlands, landscape and visual impact, whilst these are factors to be properly taken into account in determining the current application, I do not consider that the potential adverse effects on these material considerations arising from the development as changed or extended by the current application SMD/2019/0716 are likely to be of such significance as to conclude that this proposal should be an Environmental Impact Assessment development. Accordingly I advise that in relation to these matters, an Environmental Impact assessment is not required.

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