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Huntley Wood Quarry, Staffordshire

Planning Application & Supporting Statement

Change of Use of Huntley Wood Quarry to an Outdoor Recreation Facility Including Camping Facilities, Activity and Accommodation Huts, Managers Accommodation and associated Storage Buildings.

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CONTENTS

APPENDICES

DRAWINGS

Drawing HW/1	**Site Location Plan**
Drawing HW/2	**Application Site - Existing Layout**
Drawing HW/3	**Proposed Site Layout**
Drawing HW/3a	**Proposed Zone Layout**
Drawing HW/3b	**Building Layout Zone 1**
Drawing HW/3c	**Building Layout Zone 2**
Drawing HW/3d	**Building Layout Zone 3**
Drawing HW/3e	**Management Zone**
Drawing HW/4	**Areas of Soil Spreading**
Drawing HW/5	**Areas of Soil Grass Seeding**
Drawing HW/6	**LVIA Viewpoints**
Drawing HW/7	**Viewpoints 1 & 2**
Drawing HW/8	**Viewpoint 3**
Drawing HW/9	**Viewpoint 4**
Drawing HW/10	**Viewpoints 5 & 6**
Drawing HW/11	**Viewpoints 7 & 8**
Drawing HW/12	**Viewpoints 9 & 10**

Drawing 001	**Communal Building Providing Bunk Accommodation, Kitchen and Activity Space**
Drawing 002	**Male and Female Toilet Block**
Drawing 003	**Zone 1 Female and Disabled Toilet Block**
Drawing 004	**Zone 1 Male Toilet Block**
Drawing 005	**Temporary Managers Accommodation**
Drawing 006	**Zone 1 Store Hut**
Drawing 008	**Outdoor Teaching Area**
Drawing 1076.1B	**Zone 1 Club House**
Drawing 1076.2A	**Store and Managers Office**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Huntley Wood Quarry is a former sand and gravel quarry where mineral extraction ceased a number of years ago. During mineral extraction a number of areas of the site were restored and since the closure of the quarry some areas of the site have regenerated naturally. However large open areas of remain as unvegetated ground. The absence of site management since the closure of the quarry has resulted in areas becoming colonised by non native invasive plant species, with ground level vegetation becoming overgrown compromising the ecological value of the site.

Previous proposals to restore the site to a golf course were granted permission, although the infilling required to create the course was refused planning consent, leaving the site in need of a final long term restoration scheme.

The new owners of the site are Argoncroft Ltd a family run company who intend to use the site as a facility for outdoor recreation. This planning application therefore seeks the change of use of the site as a former quarry to an outdoor recreation facility. SLR Consulting Ltd (referred to herein as SLR) have been commissioned as agent for this planning application.

The aim of the applicant is to transform Huntley Wood into an outdoor recreation facility, providing facilities for local and national groups to camp or bunk at the site and pursue various outdoor activities whilst enjoying the natural surroundings that the site provides. The site would be used by a wide range of groups such as schools and colleges for educational trips, Scout and Guide groups, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, healing retreats, survival schools and fitness activities such as mountain biking and cross country running. The site has also been identified as suitable to meet the requirements for role-play and historical re-enactments which is currently a niche market with an undersupply of suitable sites. To preserve the natural amenity of the site and surrounding area the proposals do not involve the use of the site for motor sports or other such activities that may result in noise that would affect the amenity of local residents.

The site is in serious need of a long term sustainable after use. The site provides a remote natural environment comprising a mosaic of habitats due the presence of woodland, water bodies, and low level vegetation. However, due to the current lack of woodland management and presence of invasive plant species such as rhododendron these habitats are being increasingly compromised.

In addition, the remote nature of the site has meant that a number of antisocial activities such as dirt biking and fly tipping have taken place at the site. These uses of the site are detrimental to local resident's amenity, have caused significant damage to the quarry itself, and require a large amount of police time. Since 2000 the police have recorded 104 incidents related to the quarry and have confirmed that dealing with the issues at the quarry is absorbing a significant amount of police time. Further information regarding police involvement at the site is provided in Appendix A.

A previous planning application for a golf course at the site was granted planning consent by the District Council. However the proposals required the importation of inert soil to form the course fairways, and planning permission for the importation of the soil was refused by the County Council. Consequently, the golf course development for the site did not proceed and the site was then sold to Argoncroft.

The importation of inert soils proposed by the previous applicant was not viewed favourably by local residents, and Argoncroft's proposals would not require inert soils or waste to be imported to establish the recreational facility.

The site is located within the Green Belt and also within a Special Landscape Area. The applicants proposals have due regard to these designations and so include the minimal amount of built development to facilitate the recreational use of the site.

Due to the extensive nature of the site, it is proposed that site be operated in 3 separate Zones in order to make best use of the space. Each Zone would provide a small area for camping along with a small building providing toilet and shower facilities. To facilitate the year round use of the site, the applicant proposes to construct small single storey log cabins in discreet areas of the site to provide bunk accommodation, cooking facilities, and indoor activity rooms for use during wet weather. A small Club house and store building is also proposed in one Zone.

A temporary manager's dwelling and storage / office building would be located centrally within the site. The site would be in use all year round and so it would be necessary for the site manager to be present to provide assistance to visitors and maintenance workers, and also in case of an emergency and to ensure continual security of facilities. Since the applicants acquired the site there have already been a number of incidents of damage and vandalism to the site and property.

2.0 SITE SETTING AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 General Location

The proposals involve the change of use of the former sand and gravel quarry at Huntley Wood to an outdoor recreation facility. This use of the site would provide for the long term after use of the former mineral working.

Situated within Staffordshire, the application site is located in a largely rural area with a few individual residential properties and settlements interspersed throughout the area.

The nearest residential settlements to the site include Cheadle located to the north east, and Blythe Bridge located to the south west, and Upper Tean to the South East. These settlements are remote from the application site, each being more than separated by numerous fields and mature vegetation. The location of the application site within the context of the surrounding area is shown on Drawing HW/1.

The nearest cities and areas of larger urban development in the area include Stoke-on-Trent approximately 7km to the west; Newcastle-under-Lyme some 13km to the west of the site and Stafford approximately 20km south of the site. Derby is approximately 35km to the east of the site.

A number of individual residential dwellings, farmhouses, agricultural units and small settlements are distributed sparsely throughout the rural area surrounding the site.

Coneygreave Farm is located approximately 250 metres to the south of the site boundary. High Coneygreave Farm is located adjacent to the south west of the application site. A further agricultural unit is located along the western side of Draycott Cross Road 110 metres west of the site boundary.

A small number of agricultural buildings and approximately 3 farmhouses associated with agricultural operations in the area are located further west past Draycott Cross, approximately 350 metres west of the site boundary.

The land immediately north of the site comprises of open countryside and farmland. A number of individual and small clusters of properties are present in this area. The closest residential properties to the site in this area include Harplow and Litley. These properties are accessed from Harplow Lane which connects to Draycott Cross Lane. The application site is screened from these properties by a thick band of mature ancient woodland.

Further north is an area of industrial development which forms part of the urban area of Cheadle. Draycott Cross Road runs through the industrial area in a northerly direction before leading into Cheadle. This industrial area forms the south-westerly part of Cheadle and comprises a range of industrial units.

Harplow Lane continues in an easterly direction and provides access to the settlement of Huntley which is located approximately 200 metres to the east of the site boundary.

The quarry is largely surrounded by a belt of woodland which screens views into the site. A thick belt of woodland along the north and eastern edge of the site has been classified as ancient woodland. Woodland along the southern edge of the site comprises of coniferous trees.

The land immediately adjoining the site boundary is divided into fields and used for farming. Field boundaries are marked with hedgerows and hedgerow trees which form part of the character of the area.

The main strategic road in the vicinity is the A50 which runs in a roughly east to west direction 2km south of the site. Vehicles accessing the site can turn off the A50 and A521 and travel through Draycott in the Moors to access the site. The site can also be accessed from the north via roads leading from the A521.

With regards to the topography of the area, the land in the vicinity of the application site is undulating, with the application site located on a ridge of land. The land drops away to the north and east down to 135-145mAOD before rising to higher ground at around 230mAOD approximately 2km away. To the south the land falls away down to around 150mAOD, whilst to the west the land rises gently to around 250mAOD approximately 2km away. Much of the former quarry site is screened from surrounding locations by the rim of the quarry and by the presence of scrub and woodland. The location of the site and the context of the wider area is shown on Drawing HW/1

2.2 The Application Site

The application site covers a total area of some 68.4ha and comprises the former Huntley Wood Quarry. The application site includes the former sand and gravel workings within the quarry basin, and mature woodland around the periphery of the site. Access into the site is gained by following Coneygreaves Lane from Draycott Cross which passes along the southern edge of the site. The site entrance is located along the southern side of the site.

The disused sand and gravel working forms much of the application site and covers an area of 32.8ha. The floor of the disused quarry is situated significantly below the surrounding ground level and sand and gravel remains exposed in some areas.

The sides of the quarry rise up to the surrounding ground level and are relatively steep. In some areas the quarry side slopes have been colonised with naturally regenerating grass or woodland which has been supplemented by additional woodland planting carried out during the operation of the quarry.

Along the northern edge of the quarry, the side slopes rise up approximately 20 metres from the quarry base to meet with original ground level where some 14.2ha of ancient woodland is present. This woodland is situated around the edge of the quarry on natural ground. This band of woodland varies in thickness between 80metres and 200metres wide.

Along the southern perimeter of the site, the quarry side slopes rise only 10 metres to meet the existing ground level. A band of woodland covering an area of some 16.3ha is present along the southern edge of the site. This woodland is situated on land gently sloping downwards in a southerly direction and is in part designated as a Biodiversity Action Site. The width of this band of woodland varies along its length, between 50 – 250 metres wide. This band of woodland screens the site from the view of land situated at a lower elevation to the south of the site.

Two depressions situated within the former quarry have become filled with water. Other areas have been planted with trees and shrubs. Today, the site is dominated by post-mineral extraction habitats including bare sand and gravel, mixed woodland plantation, natural broad-leaved woodland and scrub development, standing open water, and some acidic grassland/heathland.

The central area of the site previously used for the processing and stocking of sand and gravel has not been colonised by plant species due to the lack of soil nutrient and free draining nature of the sand quarry base present in this area. The same can be said for areas of the quarry that have been worked most recently. In particular there is limited vegetation cover at the western end of the quarry. The owners have recently removed material from soil stockpiles at the western end of the site and respread this soil over a large part of the bare sand and gravel in the centre of the site with the intention of grass seeding this area to supplement any natural regeneration and green growth.

A basic network of tracks remain from the previous use of the site. The gravel tracks facilitate the movement of vehicles around much of the quarry base and woodland areas.

Access to the site is gained via Coneygreaves Lane, an access road used by the previous quarry operation. This Lane joins Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road at a cross roads to the west of the application site. . The Lane is surfaced from Draycott Cross up to the site entrance and has recently been improved by the applicants by the removal of fly tipping and encroaching vegetation Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road provides access to A class roads to the north and south of the site.

There is currently little built development remaining within the quarry. Plant, equipment and storage sheds used for the quarrying operation has been decommissioned and removed from the site. The layout of the existing layout of the application site is shown on Drawing HW/2.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

The applicant for the proposed development is Argoncroft Ltd, a family company run by husband-and-wife Jonathan Ely and Emma King. The company was set up specifically for the purchase and development of Huntley Wood Quarry as a facility for outdoor recreation, which makes use of the natural environment that exists at the site.

The aim of the company is to transform Huntley Wood into an outdoor recreation facility, by enhancing the natural environment that exists at the site. The facility would provide facilities for local and national groups to camp or bunk on the site in order to enjoy the surroundings and pursue various outdoor activities.

This section of the planning statement outlines the uses for the site including the types of activity that would take place and the facilities necessary to support the recreational use of the site.

3.2 Recreational Activity

The unique topography and characteristics of the site along with the expansive area it encompasses means that the facility could be used for a variety activities. The applicant would promote the site for use to a number of potential markets including;

- Schools and educational establishments visiting the site to learn about geography, geology, nature conservation and ecology.
- Wildlife, Nature Conservation and Ecology interest groups for bird watching etc
- The Scout and Guide Association
- Duke of Edinburgh Scheme
- Historical re-enactment groups
- Role play re-enactment groups
- Living history groups
- Archery Courses
- Healing and therapy retreats
- Literary conventions and festivals
- Interactive Theatre Management Training Courses
- Management Training Courses
- Fitness Farms
- Bush Craft and Survival Schools
- Horse Riding
- Mountain Biking
- Cross Country Running
- Orienteering

The site would not be used for motorsports such as quad biking, dirt biking or off-road driving.

The size of groups visiting the site and the duration of their stay would vary from group to group. Some visits may only be one day in duration, whilst school visits and outward bound courses could take place during the week (Monday to Friday). Other visitor groups such as re-enactment groups are more likely to use the site at weekends.

3.3 Zoning

The site covers an area of some 68.4 hectares and as such it is unlikely that the entire site would be used by one group at any one time. The applicants therefore propose to operate the site as thee separate Zones. Each Zone would be a different size to accommodate various size and types of groups. Dividing the site into Zones allows the site to be used simultaneously by various groups that would require exclusive, undisturbed use of an area.

The business model for the site is such that advance bookings would be taken from commercial groups hiring part of the site at full commercial rates. Such bookings would allow the applicant to hire parts of the site to 'not for profit' groups such as schools and community groups at rates lower that are commercially viable. If the site was operated as a single Zone, it would be necessary to take bookings from commercial groups only to ensure the viability of the business venture. The wide variation in the size of groups with a requirement for sites such as Huntley Wood makes it advantageous to have Zones of differing sizes, so that large, medium and small events can be hosted in a Zone which is of a suitable size and with enough facilities to accommodate their needs while still being affordable.

Each Zone would benefit from having its own facilities and car parking and so would be self sufficient. The facilities in each Zone would consist of one or more Communal building to provide bunk accommodation, a kitchen and an activity room. A separate building would provide toilet / shower facilities. The buildings in each Zone have been designed to be the minimum necessary to support the recreation activities at the site. They have been sympathetically designed to fit in with their surroundings and would be built as small, single storey log cabins.

Buildings have been grouped together in small clusters to reduce the impact of the built development at the site and provide flexibility to accept group bookings of various sizes. Drawing HW/3 shows the overall layout of the proposed facility whilst drawing HW/3a shows the extent of each Zone within the site.

The proposed Zone boundaries have been designed to make use of existing landscape features, including large hills and bodies of water which have remained following the quarrying operations at Huntley Wood. Because of these features and the large distances involved it will be impossible for groups participating in activities at the main facilities in each Zone to see or hear groups at the main facilities of any of the other Zones, thus ensuring each group can enjoy undisturbed use of their area. In addition, the size of the land and scale of the natural barriers between Zones means that it is extremely unlikely that members of a group based at the facilities on one Zone would range far enough to cross into the next, or even to come close to visitors using the neighbouring Zone.

Further information regarding the site layout and necessity for the facilities is included within Appendix I: Building Justification.

Zone 1 would be the largest Zone and would cover an area of 27.5ha in the north west of the site. This area would comprise 3 small Communal buildings to provide indoor bunk accommodation, kitchen facilities and activity rooms for up to 72 visitors. Open field and forest camping would be provided typically for 150 people, however this area could accommodate 500 campers during the small number of large events held each year. As the largest area, Zone 1 would benefit from an additional small storage cabin and Club house adjacent to camping and Communal buildings. These buildings would be located in a cluster towards the northern end of Zone 1. A small toilet block would be located in the southern area of Zone 1 due to the size of the area.

Zone 2 would cover an area of 24.5ha in the north eastern section of the site and would provide bunk accommodation for up to 48 visitors and typically 100 campers but could accommodate 200 campers during the small number of large events held each year.

Zone 3 would be the smallest covering an area of 12.5ha in the southern area of the site. Zone 3 would provide bunk accommodation for 24 visitors and typically would provide camping space for up to 50 campers but could accommodate up to 100 campers during larger events.

The existing tracks would be used to provide access to each Zone, and the topography of the site forms a natural boundary for the Zones. The extent of each Zone would be marked with coloured stakes.

The central area of the site would be used to locate a temporary managers dwelling and storage / office building.

3.4 Essential Facilities to Support Recreational Use

The applicants intend that the site be used all year round, and so it would be necessary to provide indoor accommodation, cooking and activity space. This space would also be used in the summer months to allow use of the site to visitors of a wider physical ability and age range. Without basic indoor accommodation and activity space, use of the site would be limited to summer months and day visits only and would fundamentally affect the viability of the site as a recreation facility.

It is recognised that Huntley Wood is located within the open countryside in an area designated as Green Belt and Area of Special Landscape Value. To respect these designations the buildings proposed would be single storey, small scale and constructed as log cabins to blend in with natural setting of the site. The buildings have been located sensitively within the site so as to not affect the visual amenity of the site.

The number of buildings would be tailored to the size of each Zone and table 3/1 below provides a detailed breakdown of the buildings that would be erected in each Zone and the useable floor space they would provide.

Table 3/1
Facility Summary

Building Description	Floor Area (m^2)
Zone 1	
Communal Building (3x @81m^2 building)	243
Club House	101
Storage	22
Male Toilet Block	27
Female Toilet Block	27
Combined Male / Female Toilet Block	27
Services Building	22
Total	**469**
Zone 2	
Communal Building(2x @81m^2 building)	162
Combined Male / Female Toilet Block	27
Total	**189**
Zone 3	
Communal Building (1x @81m^2 building)	81
Combined Male / Female Toilet Block	27
Total	**108**
Managers Zone	
Managers Dwelling	112
Storage Building with office in eaves	67
Total	**179**
Total Floor Area	**945**

The total floor space accounts for a total of 945m^2 across the entire site which is some 68.4 hectares. The built development would therefore cover less than 0.15% of the site and so can clearly be seen to represent a very small element of the entire site.

Buildings such as the Communal buildings, toilet blocks and storage building would be provided by a single supplier, would be constructed as log cabins, and would have similar external appearance. The location of all proposed buildings within the site is shown on Drawing HW/3. The location and layout of the buildings in each Zone is shown in more detail on Drawings HW/3b, c, d, e. A description of each building proposed is provided below.

The applicant also proposes to install five gates around the site boundary to provide pedestrian access to the site. These gates would local residents who have walked the site for a number of years to continue to do so, for the benefit of the local amenity. The gates would be located where existing footpaths meet the site boundary as shown on Drawing HW/7. These gates would be locked for safety whilst maintenance work such as tree felling is taking place.

3.4.1 Communal Building

A single design has been produced for the Communal Buildings proposed for each Zone. The Communal building would comprise of three rooms, a bunk room providing 12 beds, kitchen / dining area, and activity room providing a total useable floor space of 81m^2. During the winter months groups may be permitted to use the activity room as additional Bunk

space. During winter months the Communal building would therefore provide a maximum of 24 beds.

The external dimension of each Communal building would be 8m x 15.85m. Each Communal building would be constructed on a concrete slab to provide a level and stable base. The concrete base would be 9.2m x 17.5m in size. The maximum height of the single storey building from ground level to the roof ridge would be 3.65m. The external appearance and internal layout of the Communal building is shown in Drawing 001.

The applicant is keen to ensure that the site and facilities are suitable for use by visitors of varying physical ability age. Every room in the Communal building would therefore have suitable disabled access.

This building design would be replicated for use across the site. It is proposed that 3 Communal buildings would be located in Zone 1, 2 Communal buildings in Zone 2 and 1 Communal building in Zone 3.

The communal building, toilets and separate storage buildings would constructed using thick logs which provide for the robust and high quality design and construction. To preserve energy and ensure suitability during winter months the cabins would have double glazed doors and windows with a suspended pine or similar sustainable wood clad ceiling and cavity above for insulation. Sustainable sources of wood would be used in the construction of these buildings.

The communal and toilet building walls would be fully insulated walls behind interior cladding. The cladding would be formed using pine or similar sustainable sources of wood. In some areas of the toilet block, tiles would be used in place of wood cladding. All the buildings will be on concrete slab foundations to allow use of energy efficient under-floor heating. These buildings would be muted natural wood colour to help the buildings blend in with their surroundings. The roof on these buildings will be felt.

Images indicative of the proposed communal building, storage and toilet buildings are included in Appendix F.

3.4.2 Building Containing both Male / Female Toilet and Shower Facilities

A single building measuring 8m x 3.95m would be used to provide male and female toilet and shower facilities. The male and female facilities would each occupy 50% of the building.

The female facilities would provide 1 shower, 3 stalls and basins. The male facilities would provide 1 shower, 3 stalls and 3 urinals. 2 sinks for pot / hand washing would be provided at either end of the building. The roof of the building would be pitched with a single ridge. The roof would extend 1.2 metres at the each end of the building to cover the sinks located on the outside of the building. The maximum height of the building would be 3.65m from ground level to the roof ridge.

The external appearance and internal layout of the male / female toilet block is shown on Drawing 002.

3.4.3 Separate Male and Female Toilet / Shower Facilities

The size of Zone 1 will require additional toilet / shower facilities due to the greater number of visitors. As a result male and female toilet and shower facilities would be provided in separate buildings.

The female toilet / shower block would be located in the northern part of Zone 1 adjacent to the cluster of Communal building. The building would be 8m x 3.95m and 3.65m in height from ground level to the roof ridge. The building would provide five stalls and hand basins along with two showers. A unisex disabled toilet would be located in the same building with its own dedicated entrance. Two sinks would be located on the outside of the building for pot washing.

The male toilet / shower facilities would be provided in a separate building, adjacent to, and of the same dimensions as the female toilet block. Facilities provided would include five stalls and hand basins, four urinals and two showers. Two sinks would be located on the outside of the building for pot washing.

The external appearance and internal layout of these facilities is shown on Drawing 003 & 004.

3.4.4 Temporary Manager's Dwelling

The dwelling would be located centrally within the site to allow the manager ease of access to all areas of the site. In accordance with national planning policy, the dwelling would be of a temporary nature being of a timber frame construction on a concrete base. The application seeks permission for the temporary managers dwelling for a temporary period of five years.

The building would provide basic living accommodation for the site manager and their family. Living accommodation would briefly comprise:

- Master bedroom with ensuite shower room,
- Secondary / children's bedroom;
- Bathroom
- Study
- Kitchen and utility room
- Lounge area

The dwelling would be 20m x 6.8m and would yield a useable floor area of 112m^2. The dwelling would be of a log cabin style in external appearance. Drawing 005 shows the external of the manager's temporary dwelling.

The dwelling is considered necessary since the site manager would be required onsite 24 hours a day as a point of contact for visitors incase of emergency during their stay. The manager's office and dwelling would be located centrally to enable fast access to all areas of the site. Huntley Wood is a large site with varied terrain with numerous access tracks running to several areas of the site. It would be necessary for the site manager to attend to any maintenance issues or emergencies immediately and directing visitors or emergency services. Visitors unfamiliar with the site may have difficulty navigating and directing emergency services to an incident which could lead to a delay in attending such an emergency. It would also be necessary for the manager to open the site entrance gates which may be locked at night to stop trespass and vandalism.

The site manager would also need to be present onsite to carry out maintenance and manage specialist contractors carrying out specialist maintenance work that would take place around the year.

It is also necessary to provide security for the facility and assistance to visitors. Evidence is provided below regarding the nuisance and vandalism problems on site from unauthorised access and the involvement of the police on the site over a period of years.

Since the site would be operated as 3 separate Zones, the site would at times accommodate 3 separate groups. Due to the mixture of visitors to the site during weekday and weekend events, it is likely that activities, setting up for events or clearing up will be taking place in several Zones every day. It is not uncommon for campsites to have a live–in manager to be present in case of emergencies.

The size and scale of the site is such that ongoing maintenance and management would be required. Some of these maintenance duties would be carried out by the manager, whilst others would require their presence to oversee specialist contractors.

There is considered to be a clear justification for a temporary dwelling on the site, in accordance with the guidance in Annex A of PPS7:Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, as:

There is a clearly established need due to the size of the site, the need for 24 hour management and assistance to visitors, and the existing problems with security.

As part of this application the applicants have indicated a significant investment in buildings, and indeed have acquired the site with the sole intention of developing an outdoor recreational facility.

Clear evidence that the planned enterprise has been prepared on a sound financial basis has been provided by the submitted business plan included in Appendix B.

The development is extremely well screened and has a good standard of access. The proposed temporary dwelling would be located centrally within the site in a completely screened location.

High Coneygreaves Farm was previously associated with the quarry operation at Huntley Wood. However, this dwelling was sold separately to the quarry a number of years ago and so no existing buildings are available for use by the applicant.

3.4.5 Storage and Services Building

A small log cabin style building would be erected in Zone 1 alongside the cluster of other buildings proposed for this area. The storage building would be 6m x 4.02m in plan with a double door entrance on one side of the building to allow ease of access to store equipment. The building would be single storey and a maximum height of 3.65m high from ground level to roof ridge. A building of the same design would be located within a naturally existing clearing in the woodland close to the site entrance and would serve as a hut to contain meters, electricity transformers and other services entering the site considered dangerous and should be secured appropriately. The detailed design of the store hut is shown on Drawing 006.

3.4.6 Club House

It is proposed that a Club house be constructed amongst the buildings in Zone 1. The Club house would serve as a meeting point for groups using Zone 1 and would be a bespoke building constructed using a classic oak frame, clad with wooden panelling and would provide the appearance of a period structure with chimney. It is intended that the building would be provided by Border Oak who are a quality supplier of such structures as evidenced by their website.

The building would be roughly 'L' shape with maximum dimensions of 11.35m x 11.9m. The exact dimensions are shown on Drawing 1076.1B. Images indicative of the club house are included in appendix F

3.4.7 Store and Office Building

It is proposed that a building would be constructed next to the managers dwelling to provide store facilities for machinery and equipment to be used in the maintenance and management of the site. The ground floor would provide an open space to store larger pieces of equipment such as a tractor or trailer etc. Three double doors would be located along the front elevation of the building. A small WC would be located on the ground floor and would be accessed from the side of the building.

This single storey building would be slightly taller being 6.1m high from ground to roof ridge. This is so that the manager's office can be located within the eaves of the building. As the office would be located in the building eaves, the useable floor space of the office would be smaller than the storage area below. Timber stairs fitted to the exterior of the building would provide access to the first floor office. Locating both the office and storage in the same building reduces the building footprint and height compared with a typical two storey building whilst also reducing costs.

The building would be constructed with an oak frame and clad with timber panelling to give the appearance of being an older period building. Again the intended supplier is Border Oak.

Drawing 1076.2A shows the external appearance and internal layout of the store / office building. Images indicative of the storage building are included in Appendix F.

3.4.8 Outdoor Teaching Area

It is anticipated that Zone 1 would be used by groups of several hundred people during a limited number of times during the year. In order for very large groups to be able to gather together and adequately see/hear demonstrations and instructions it is proposed that amphitheatre be constructed using the natural topography of the site for people to congregate. Since this is only required in the summer months when particularly large groups are present on the site, we propose to make it an outdoor area.

An outdoor area of this nature would increase the appeal of the facilities to varied sectors of the market such as companies specialising in outdoor theatre productions and it is hoped that local amateur dramatic groups would be encouraged to use this part of the site in combination with the other buildings for changing rooms.

The amphitheatre would be constructed in an 'L' Shape in the north eastern corner of Zone 1. The amphitheatre would be constructed as a series of steps 0.5 metres high each up to a maximum height of 2 metres. Each step would be constructed using railway sleepers or similar to retain soil which would be seeded with grass. The amphitheatre would be constructed against the existing sand bank in this areas of the site. This sand bank has previously been used by nesting sand martins. However ecological surveys of this area have shown that sand martins no longer use the sand embankment and it is of little ecological value. The design for amphitheatre is shown in Drawing 008.

3.4.9 Location of Buildings

The recreation and leisure use of land within the Green Belt such as that proposed at Huntley Wood is generally considered appropriate by national planning policy and subsequently any regional and local policy. However, all buildings associated with this land

use must be the minimum amount of essential facilities required to support the recreational use and must be fully justified on a business basis in terms of their existence, size and location.

Appendix I of this document provides a detailed justification for the proposed buildings which would provide the facilities essential to the viability of the site as an outdoor recreational facility as business. It would be necessary to operate Huntley Wood as a business to cover the costs associated with woodland and ecological management, and providing and maintaining access tracks and perimeter fencing in addition to facilities such as toilets, and accommodation.

To ensure that the business is viable, it is necessary to consider the target market for Huntley Wood. The applicant aims to attract a number of markets including commercial groups that run outdoor events for profit, as well as schools, community groups and general campers.

The business model for the site is such that advance bookings would be taken from commercial groups hiring part of the site at full commercial rates. Such bookings would allow the applicant to hire parts of the site to 'not for profit' groups such as schools and community groups at rates lower that are commercially viable. If the site was operated as a single Zone, it would be necessary to take bookings from commercial groups only to ensure the viability of the business venture.

A large proportion of the outdoor event market involves events with historical themes, for example re-enactment, living history and role playing events. These groups have many of the same requirements as other outdoor activity groups, with additional requirements which arise from the historical nature of their events. In particular they require the following surroundings and facilities to make a venue attractive to them:

- A secluded, rural location with a good mix of outdoor space, both open ground and woodland, uninterrupted by modern features such as cars, houses, roads, factories, modern buildings, machinery or equipment, as these sorts of anachronisms are detrimental to the atmosphere of the event;
- Uninterrupted, exclusive access to the area they have hired, to enable them to run (and their participants to enjoy) their event undisturbed;
- High standard, modern toilet and shower facilities; and
- Indoor space to shelter from the elements and indoor accommodation for those involved with running the event or, in the case of smaller events, for all participants, particularly during the winter months.

A site offering these features, particularly in a central location in England with good transport links, can be expected to draw a significant proportion of this expanding, national market, and thus draw significant amounts of business to the area as well as providing an excellent facility for more local groups. However, none of these features will detract from other uses of the site, and in fact are likely to increase its desirability to all users; for example, organisers of healing or yoga retreats will appreciate the lack of modern interruptions to the peaceful, rural nature of the site, while many school and youth groups, particularly those working with vulnerable people, require exclusive access to a site for security reasons.

Market research carried out by the applicant as part of the business plan has indicated that the visitors including commercial groups, schools and community groups would require the facilities described above to enable the use of the site and overnight occupation. Further information is included in the business plan in Appendix B of this document.

These are the over-riding principles considered when designing the facilities at Huntley Wood, and to ensure that the site appeals to the widest possible market to ensure the success of the business, while also providing an excellent, affordable resource for community organisations.

The positions of the various buildings are indicated on Drawing HW/3 and the schematics of each Zone are shown individually in Drawings HW/3b,c,d,e. The location of the buildings is such that all of the buildings on Zone 1 and Zone 2 are completely screened from the surrounding countryside by the lie of the land, being within the bowl created by the former quarrying operations, and cannot be seen from outside the site. Zone 3 slopes in part away from the bowl but the location of the buildings has been chosen partially due to the large number of trees which screen it from view; there is a dense pine plantation immediately behind this location with many trees over three times the height of the proposed structures.

The wide variation in sizes of groups who are in the market for sites such as Huntley Wood makes it advantageous to have Zones of differing sizes, to that large, medium and small events can be hosted on a Zone which is of a suitable size and with enough facilities to accommodate their needs while still being affordable to them. Operating the site as three separate Zones allows the site to be used by several groups simultaneously, making the best use of the land. The number of buildings in each Zone would be commensurate with the Zones size. By providing camping areas, the requirement for built development is kept to a minimum. The size of each camping area is in keeping with the area of the Zone.

Buildings providing accommodation and space for eating and gathering generally are considered necessary to facilitate the year round use of the site. Camping is not a desirable form of accommodation for the vast majority of people during the colder winter months, meaning that groups wishing to use Huntley Wood in the cooler part of the year would only be able to do so if there were suitable buildings which provided sufficient accommodation for both organisers and participants. While participants may be willing to brave the elements to pursue activities for limited periods of time, indoor space for eating, sleeping and gathering to listen to important information in reasonable comfort is vital. Thus, in order to be an attractive venue all year round, and to be able to run profitably during the colder winter months, some indoor space is a necessity on all Zones at Huntley Wood.

Discussions with commercial groups that have expressed an interest in using the site have stated that indoor space (even during the warmer summer months) would be a necessity before placing a booking. Indoor space is considered necessary to provide shelter from the elements in the case of inclement weather, which can occur at any time of year. The availability of shelter is vital for encouraging participants to buy tickets for events. The second reason for requiring shelter is to provide accommodation for volunteers involved in organising and running the event. Many volunteers are reluctant to camp when working hard during the course of the event and therefore require basic indoor accommodation. Since these events cannot run smoothly and efficiently without such assistance, it is vital for event organisers to be able to guarantee their staff and volunteers a reasonable standard of accommodation.

Several groups have indicated to us that while they believe Huntley Wood to be a very suitable venue for their events, they will not consider hiring the facilities until some indoor accommodation is available. This necessity for buildings alongside camping space is borne out by the long experience of the Scouting organisation who always equip their sites with buildings for use as both bunk rooms and activity space. The scale of accommodation has been designed meet the requirements of the largest groups using the site. Accommodation has been split into several blocks to enable smaller groups to use each Zone and to allow the buildings to blend in with the surroundings. The location for the buildings would be in an attractive part of the site to make visitors stay enjoyable and also to allow quick access to

some of the more enjoyable parts of the site.

The proposed buildings within the site have been located to make the best use of the naturally screening at the site provided by the topography of the land and existing vegetation. Camping areas would be provided close to the accommodation building, to allow users of both to easily access the toilet and shower facilities. Ground conditions such as drainage and availability of firm stable ground, and minimising disturbance of woodland have also been taken into account when deciding the location for the buildings.

The proposed accommodation blocks on each Zone are single story wooden “log cabins” with low pitched roofs which will blend into the natural surroundings and cause minimum visual impact. The buildings cover the minimum area required to provide bunk accommodation, kitchen facilities and activity space. The accommodation building provides flexibility since the activity space can also be used for bunk accommodation. This means that the accommodation building can provide separate male and female bunk space within a single block when being used by schools etc.

Since the site would accommodate day and overnight visitors, toilet blocks would be necessary. The quantity of toilet and shower facilities would be provided in accordance with current guidelines for campsites and the buildings for these facilities have been sized accordingly.

The proposed buildings discussed above provide sufficient space for indoor bunk accommodation on each Zone, but for larger groups will not provide adequate facilities for indoor activities alongside the accommodation. Additional indoor space is necessary to allow larger groups to gather together in one space for lectures, demonstrations, workshops, etc, or to eat together whilst being protected from the elements. This is particularly important during the winter season, when inclement weather which would prevent outdoor gathering occurs more frequently. A clubhouse is proposed for Zone one only. Appendix F provides photographs of the type of buildings that would be used at the site.

The location for car parking has been designed to make best use of existing woodland clearings that are level and that are screened from the rest of the site but also to be located close to the camping areas.

It is anticipated that large groups would use Zone 1 during a limited number of times each year. To allow large groups to be able to gather together and adequately see/hear demonstrations and instructions it is proposed that amphitheatre be constructed using the natural topography of the site for people to congregate. Since this is only required in the summer months when particularly large groups are present on the site, we propose to make it an outdoor area.

An outdoor area of this nature will also help us appeal to varied sectors of the market such as companies specialising in outdoor theatre productions and we hope to encourage some of the local amateur dramatic groups to use this part of the site in combination with the other buildings for changing rooms etc.

The amphitheatre would use the existing topography of the land in Zone 1. The amphitheatre would be formed by creating steps each 0.5metres high using railway sleepers and would be constructed using the minimum amount of development required.

The amphitheatre would be located adjacent to the Zone 1 buildings to provide an outdoor teaching area which makes access easy from the accommodation blocks and club house and keeps all the built facilities in one localised area which is well screened from the rest of the site. This location takes advantage of the existing high bank of sand and rock to the east

of the buildings, into which the amphitheatre will blend, making it seem part of the natural hillside and helping it to blend into its surroundings.

The applicant requires a dwelling for an on-site manager is in order to facilitate the successful functioning of the business at Huntley Wood. This is for a number of reasons. The site would be used throughout the year

Since business will occur on all days of the week, and will usually involve overnight accommodation of visitors, it is necessary to have a manager on hand at all times to look after visitors and deal with any issues which arise. Anticipated issues visitors may have include any problems with infrastructure such as heating, lighting and plumbing; security problems, i.e. dealing with intruders onto the site; disputes between groups hiring different Zones; and health and safety issues.

Groups who have paid commercial rates for the hire of a venue rightly expect to have someone on-hand to deal with all such issues whenever they arise, which may be in the middle of the night. Individual campers, who do not have a group organiser on hand to deal with more minor issues can also reasonably expect to have a manager available to assist them at all times.

Secondly, we are informed by the local police that Huntley Wood has been a centre of antisocial activity for some time[1] and that dealing with this currently costs the local authority considerable sums of money. This antisocial behaviour has included incidents of vandalism, dumping, illegal use of the site for motor sports, and arson.

There will be a considerable amount of work related to the management of the land which will need to be undertaken at various times of year, including forestry and general maintenance.

In light of these issues we believe an on-site manager to be a vital necessity for the functioning of the business. In line with planning policy regarding dwellings in the green belt we have initially requested permission for temporary accommodation, with a view to applying for a permanent dwelling once the business is established.

Being a full-time dwelling, this building will need to be someone's home and may also need to house their family. The size of the proposed manager's dwelling provides just two bedrooms and falls well within that usually recommended for an agricultural or forestry workers dwelling, which is in the region of 140-150sqm. The size and specification of this dwelling is believed to be commensurate with its functional requirements and in keeping with the scale of the site.

The applicant has given consideration to the best possible location for the managers dwelling. The dwelling location must allow the swiftest possible response times to all areas of the site, particularly those where built facilities exist, to allow the manager to respond as promptly as possible in the case of any emergency, whether related to the health and safety of visitors or the security of unoccupied buildings, and to allow visitors, who may be restricted to walking on foot, to reach the manager's accommodation as swiftly as possible if they require the manager's assistance. At approximately 1 mile long and 0.8 of a mile wide, the distances at Huntley Wood present a significant problem in this regard and make a central location very necessary for the manager's dwelling.

The location of the manager's dwelling must allow easy access to the network of maintenance tracks, and allow the manager to gain vehicular access to any Zone on the site, both for undertaking maintenance of the land and buildings and in case of emergencies, without causing unnecessary disturbance to users of any other Zone.

The issues relating to the necessity, size, location and design for the buildings is considered in further detail in Appendix I of this document.

3.4.10 Other Recreational Facilities in the Area

In order to demonstrate the requirement for buildings within the proposed facility the applicants have undertaken a case study of Consall Scout Camp. Consall Scout Camp is located within Staffordshire Green Belt and provides 10.5 hectares of outdoor activity space with associated buildings within open fields and woodland setting.

Consall is operated as a Scout Camp and as such a different business model to that proposed for Huntley Wood. However the nature of the activities, functions and facilities proposed for Huntley Wood are similar. Consall is situated in a rural location and provides facilities for overnight residence both camping and bunk accommodation.

The site provides camping space and a number of wooden buildings situated in three clusters. The buildings provide:

- bunk accommodation,
- indoor activity space,
- kitchens,
- toilet / shower facilities,
- storage,
- shop and,
- wardens accommodation.

The first cluster of 6 buildings are located close to the site entrance, and a two storey building in this cluster provides indoor activity space. These buildings provide an approximate floorspace of 432m^2.

Two buildings are located in a second cluster in the eastern area of the site and provide indoor activity space and toilet / shower facilities. These buildings cover a total area of approximately 85m^2.

Along the western side of the Consall Scout Camp is a large camping field with five buildings providing activity space, storage and toilet facilities covering a combined area of approximately of 204m^2.

The approximate floor space provided by all the buildings at Consall Scout Camp is some 721m^2.

Consall Scout Camp covers an area of approximately 10.5 hectares which is much smaller than Huntley Wood which comprises of approximately 68.4 hectares of woodland and open land. Due to the size of the site, Consall is operated as a single site and smaller areas cannot be hired by groups who require exclusive use of an area. Huntley Wood would be operated as 3 distinct Zones, each being hired to a separate group, in effect making each Zone its own site.

The floor space created by all the buildings at Consall is some 721m^2 whilst the facilities at Huntley Wood would cover a slightly larger area of 945m^2. However the site area of Huntley

Wood is six to seven times larger than Consall. And so the intensity of the development footprint is much less at Huntley Wood than that at Consall.

The built development at Consall covers some development some 0.7% of the site area, whilst at Huntley Wood, the proposed buildings would cover less than 0.15% of the site. It is clear therefore that the built development has been carried out at a density of five times greater at Consall than is proposed Huntley Wood. The built development proposed at Huntley Wood has been strictly limited by the applicant to preserve the natural character of the site. The small ground coverage proposed by the applicant demonstrates that only the minimum amount of built development has been applied for by the applicant.

Full details of this case study, providing details of the buildings and layout at Consall Scout Camp, are provided in Appendix C.

3.4.11 Soil Spreading

Whilst some areas of the site have been restored by the mineral operator and others parts have regenerated naturally, a large area of the quarry base in Zone 1 comprises of exposed sand and gravel. To make this area useable for camping and outdoor activities it is proposed the area be soiled and seeded with a suitable grass seed mix recommended by an ecologist indicative of locally native grass species.

To provide a suitable growing medium for the grass seed it is proposed that soil from onsite stockpiles be spread over the area to form a layer approximately 200 mm thick. The soil stockpiles are located in Zone 1 and a dozer would be used to spread out the material.

Drawing HW/4 shows the location of the soil stockpiles and the area where soil spreading would take place.

Some soil spreading has already been undertaken with the aim of trying to place grass seed before the end of the year to allow new grass to become established during the Spring months of 2011. Having taken advise from a qualified ecologist prior to commencing this work the it was considered that the soil spreading and seeding would not have an impact on the ecological setting and would improve the appearance of the site. It was also considered that the soil spreading was likely to have been required as part of the quarry restoration scheme for the site not previously completed by the previous owners of the site. The Planning Authority considered that these works required planning permission and required these works to be stopped. The soil spreading works have therefore ceased. Soil spreading to form a layer approximately 200mm thick for seeding would be completed should planning consent be granted.

Following completion of the soil spreading, a stress tolerant grass mix known as Emorsgate EG22c or equivalent would be placed at a rate of 100kg per acre to provide a suitable grass for camping and activities to take place. To improve and enhance the nature conservation aspect of the site, a wild flower seed mix would be sown in a 3 metre wide strip around the edge of camping and activity area. It is proposed that Emorsgate EM7 or equivalent would be spread at a rate of 16kg per acre. In other areas of Zone 1 a 50:50 mix of Emorsgate EG22c and EL1 or equivalent would be sown at a rate of 16kg per acre. These seed mixes have been recommended by an ecologist and further details are included in the report in Appendix E of this planning statement.

Drawing HW/5 provides details of the types of grass and wild flower seed mix that would be sown in various areas of the site. Grass seeding would also be undertaken in Zone 2 as shown on Drawing HW/5 however it would not be necessary to spread soil in this area prior to seeding.

The ecological impact of the construction and operation phases of the development has been considered in an ecological impact assessment (EcIA) included in Appendix D. The EcIA consider the current ecological baseline and the future value of the land without the development proposals. The assessment then considers the potential impact of the development proposals taking place. Since the development proposals would result in disturbance in a limited number of areas and would provide active future management and enhancement of habitats there are considered to be significant ecological benefits from the current application. Without this development and management the EcIA considers that existing habitats would be compromised as a result of overgrown ground level vegetation. The development proposals would result in a net improvement to the ecological assets at the site.

A small berm of soil would be placed along either side of the access road in zone 1 and car park to provide some screening of these features. The berms would run along both sides of the road and would be maximum of 1metre high and 3metres wide at the base. The berms would be formed using soil, sand and gravel from onsite stockpiles and would be seeded with grass and trees.

3.4.12 Drainage

To facilitate the use of Zone 1 for camping and activities it would be necessary to excavate some small drainage channels around the edge of Zone 1. Surface water in the open area of zone one currently drains in a north west and south east direction. Water draining in a north west direction collects in a significant existing ditch before soaking away naturally. Surface water draining in a south easterly direction drains into a small pond which then feeds into the larger pond situated along the southern site boundary via a pipe. It is proposed that a small surface drain would be excavated along the western and southern edge of camping area in Zone 1 to direct water to these existing features. It is proposed that these drains would be open with sloped sides seeded with grass to provide additional ecological habitats.

3.4.13 Woodland Management

General

A large portion of the site is covered by woodland, and a review of the condition of this woodland has been undertaken by the applicant's ecologist and woodland manager. In some areas of the site, trees were planted to provide screening during the operation and restoration of the site. In some areas of the site, trees have been planted close together and light to the woodland floor is restricted by the tree canopy and this severely limits growth of woodland floor vegetation. As part of the management the site the applicant proposes to carry out selective felling of trees to provide more light to the woodland floor and to remove dead and dangerous trees.

Tree felling would be carried out as part of the general woodland management for the site, and to ensure safety and promote the new growth of trees and ground level vegetation. A tree survey has been undertaken to consider the implication of tree felling prior this work taking place. Tree felling would be carried out by a competent contractor during the winter months to avoid disturbance to nesting birds.

A woodland management and ecological management plan is included in Appendix E of this report. The management plan sets out how the site would be managed over a five year period.

A tree survey has been carried out to assess the ecological value of the trees that would be felled allow building construction and woodland camping. The locations for buildings and

camping have been chosen strategically to minimise the impact of the works. In many areas, the number of trees to be felled would be minimal and the ecological value of the trees would be low. In areas of the proposed woodland camping, selective thinning of woodland would be carried out. Tree planting carried out as part of the partial quarry restoration was carried out at a high planting density to allow for some trees to die naturally. However many trees have flourished and it is considered that woodland thinning would allow ground vegetation and the remaining trees to flourish as a result of the increased light, water and soil nutrients available. A copy of the tree survey is included in Appendix E.

Car Parking

Car parking would be provided in each Zone to enable cars to be parked close to the Zone they are using. One car park would be provided in each Zone and Drawing HW/3 shows the location of car parks around the site.

The car park in Zone 1 would provide 200 spaces, Zone 2 car parking 70 spaces and 35 cars in Zone 3. Car parking would be provided in existing areas of exposed sand and gravel around the site. No hard surfacing is proposed for the car parking areas. These areas would be retained as bare sand and gravel. A limited amount of sand and gravel from on site stockpiles would be used to improve the surface of the areas proposed for car parking in Zones 2 and 3. The areas proposed for car parking in Zone 2 and 3 already comprise of bare sand and gravel or rough scrub grass. However these areas would benefit from some minor improvements to the ground surface.

3.5 Socio-Economics

Socio-economics can be described as the relationship between the economic activity resulting from a new development and the effect on the social life of the local community.

The purpose of a socio economics is to consider the positive and negative effects resulting from a new development on the day to day life of communities in the surrounding area. Impacts arising from a new development can be both positive and negative. This section does not comprise of a socio economic impact assessment but gives consideration to the aspects of socio economics that the proposed development may affect.

The consideration of socio economic would include the following aspects.

- Population
- Land Use
- Employment
- Economic Activity
- Local Services
- Regeneration
- Crime

The land surrounding the site is predominantly rural with urban centres such as Cheadle present to the north and numerous villages scattered throughout the area. The development would attract a number of day visitors to the site from the local area. Events would also attract visitors from outside the area who would stay overnight using the bunk accommodation and camping facilities available within the site. The development is not anticipated to attract new residents to the area since any employment opportunities would be filled using local residents.

The land use of the site is a dormant quarry. The site provides some ecological value for local flora and fauna but provides no local amenity. The site is used illegally by dirt bikers

and this has causes a nuisance to local residents and has the potential to damage sensitive habitats.

With regards to employment, the development would provide a range of opportunities during the initial construction phase and later during the operation of the site. During construction, local builders and tradesmen would be required to construct concrete bases for buildings and provide the necessary infrastructure. Buildings would be formed by timber frame, and again local builders would be required to erect the buildings. Service engineers would be employed to connect the electricity and water supply in various areas of the site.

Woodland covers a large area of the site and it would be necessary to employ a number of local tree surgeons and arboriculturalists to carryout selective thinning of the woodland. This work would improve the ecological value of the woodland and remove any dead or dangerous trees.

Earthworks contractors from the local area would be employed prior to starting the recreational use of the site to complete soil spreading in Zone 1 and also to maintain and repair the gravel access track and car parking areas present at the site. A landscaping firm would be employed to carry out grass seeding in Zones 1 and 2. A fencing contractor would be instructed to repair and replace damaged fencing in order to adequately secure the site boundary to improve security and stop trespass at the site.

Not only would the above operations create additional demand and work for local workers, the development of the site would require local services and building materials.

The operation of the site would create a range of indirect local employment opportunities. Local building services would be required to maintain buildings, services, fencing and access roads at the site. Woodland management would also be ongoing requiring the services of tree surgeons and ecologist services.

Direct employment opportunities would be created by providing a range of activities at the site. Nature conservation experts would be required to carry out nature walks. Other opportunities exist for cleaners, and litter picking after events etc.

In addition existing companies providing courses in archery and management skills for example could utilise the site to provide additional courses and expand their revenue. Opportunities also exist for local catering firms, marquee hire and other services that could be offered to groups using the site.

It is anticipated that visitors to the site would increase expenditure in the local area. Visitors from outside the area are likely to use local shops to buy food and drink during their stay at Huntley Wood. Visitors may also use local pubs and restaurants on their way to or from the site before or after an event or activity. Organisers would also require food and other supplies in the run up an event whilst setting up is taking place and also during the event. Organisers are likely to source supplies locally as this is most straight forward and would support local producers and suppliers which the applicants are keen to promote.

A report produced by Baker Associates in 2007 measured the economic impact of the Glastonbury Festival. The events and activities proposed at Huntley Wood would be much smaller than the Glastonbury Festival, attracting a maximum of 800 visitors on only a small number of weekends each year and attracting on average smaller number throughout the year. Unlike Glastonbury which operates for only one week per year Huntley wood would operate all year round.

However, the study is of particular note, since visitors to Huntley Wood would reside on site during their visit to take part in activities and also for their overnight accommodation and this is similar to the nature of the stay for visitors attending the Glastonbury Festival.

The study by Baker associates found that the offsite expenditure of attendees of the event was on average £149.13. The offsite expenditure of visitors to the festival included predominantly food and drink from local shops and supermarkets, other shopping which includes shopping for non food goods and travel and transport.

The activities proposed at Huntley Wood would be of a different nature and much smaller in scale, although operating throughout the year. Nevertheless the Baker report provides an indication of potential expenditure of each event attendee and the potential positive impact that the recreational use of Huntley Wood could have on the local businesses. Huntley Wood currently lies dormant and so provides no economic benefit to the local area. The applicant has received enquiries from companies already wishing to book Huntley Wood for next year. If these bookings alone were to be accepted this would generate some £2m for the local area in terms of local trade at shops, producers and services.

The use of the site would deliver the regeneration of the disused quarry, which attracts dirt bikers. This use of the site result in disturbance and damage to the nature conservation assets at the site creates noise and damages the amenity of local residents. The remote nature of the site means that fires and fly tipping are common place.

As a result, the police are called out to the site regularly by local residents. The police are currently also required to patrol the site on a regular basis to prevent anti social behaviour. Since 2000 the police have responded to 104 incidents at the site as a result of nuisance vehicles, trespass, noise nuisance and one or two incidents where stolen vehicles have been abandoned at the site. A number of Section 59 Warnings have also been issued by the police to warning users that their vehicles can be seized where the use of vehicle contravenes the Road Traffic Act or is causing an annoyance or harm. A copy of an e-mail from the Police confirming these points and providing additional information is included as Appendix A.

Consequently a large amount of police time has been spent responding to incidents at the unoccupied site. It is anticipated by the Police that the use of the site could result in a decrease in the amount of police time spent monitoring activities and addressing incidents at the site. The local police are supportive of the recreational use of the site. This is because the occupation of the site would deter trespass, vandalism and theft. With regards to other local services, it is not anticipated that the use of the site would result in an increase on demand of services such as education facilities and hospitals.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the planning policy framework against which the proposals should be considered. The adopted framework comprises of policy at National, County and Local level, following the revocation of Regional level policy documents.

Section 54A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 provides that planning applications shall be determined in accordance with the relevant development plan, providing that the plan is approved, adopted, relevant and up to date, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within the Staffordshire countryside, in an area of Green Belt and so consideration is given to PPG 2 which sets out the national planning policy framework for development within the Green Belt. The site is also located within a Special landscape Area. The application is for the change of use of a former mineral working, and so the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Planning Policy is most relevant with some consideration also being given to the Minerals Local Plan. The proposals do not include the importation of waste to facilitate the recreational use of the site, and so policy in the Waste Local Plan has not been considered.

Following the adoption of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) planning authorities are required to prepare a new set of planning policy documents known widely as the Local Development Framework (LDF). In time, these documents will replace the adopted Local Plan documents. Consideration has been given to the emerging local development framework documents undergoing preparation. Until the new LDF documents are adopted, the local plan documents remain 'saved' and form the current Development Plan.

4.2 National Planning Policy

4.2.1 PPG 2 – Green Belt

The adopted Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Local Plan Proposals Map shows that the site is located within an area designated as Green Belt. National Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 was published in 1995 and sets out the governments overarching planning policy for development within such designated areas.

PPG 2 states that there are five ***purposes*** of including land in a Green Belt designation:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The purpose of the development is to provide outdoor recreation facilities making use of the unspoilt and the natural environment that at Huntley Wood. Consequently, the proposals seek to retain and enhance the landscape and nature conservation value of the site. As

described above, the use of the site would necessitate a small amount of built development. However, this development would be of a small scale in the context of the site. Buildings would have a minimal footprint accounting for less than 0.15% of the site and would be single storey and constructed using materials to blend in with the character of the site.

With this in mind, the proposed development would not contravene any of the five purposes of the Green Belt. The development would not encourage urban sprawl nor the merging of neighbouring towns. The facility would be low key and would not encroach on the countryside nor affect the setting of historic towns. The development would facilitate the regeneration, enhancement and positive use of a disused quarry which is currently the subject of unpermitted nuisance uses such as dirt biking.

PPG 2 states that areas defined as Green Belt should play a positive role in fulfilling the following ***objectives***:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- to secure nature conservation interest; and
- to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.

It is considered that the applicant's proposals are very much in keeping with the objectives of the applicant for the use of land within the Green Belt.

The objective of the outdoor recreation facility would be to provide access to the open countryside for visitors from the local and wider area. It is proposed that the recreation use of the site would enable visitors from local schools, nature groups and other organisations to enjoy the natural environment provided by the site. The proposed facilities such as the camping and Communal buildings would enable visitors from the wider area to use the site.

The site has the benefit of mature woodland and vegetation around much of the perimeter which contributes to the attractive nature of the landscape. The proposed use of the site would enable the woodland and nature conservation already present at the site to be enhanced through the positive management of the site, which would retain and enhance the positive role this site plays on the local landscape.

Huntley Wood Quarry is currently unused and has been for a number of years. As a result the site has been the subject of fly tipping, trespass and nuisance uses such dirt biking which creates noise and affect the amenity of local residents. The proposed development would regenerate the site and would eradicate such bad neighbour uses and improve the amenity of the area.

Overall, the development would improve the nature conservation value and amenity of the site and would retain the forestry and related uses of the land in accordance with the aims of all the Green Belt objectives in PPG 2.

Section 3 of PPG 2 considers that, in general, the construction of buildings within the Green Belt would be considered inappropriate unless necessary in various special circumstances such as for use with forestry and agriculture, or outdoor sport and recreation which preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

The buildings proposed would facilitate the year round use of the site for outdoor recreation. The buildings proposed would provide limited bunk accommodation, kitchen facilities, indoor activity space and toilet / shower facilities. Limited storage facilities would be required along with a temporary managers dwelling.

Without these buildings, the use of the site would be limited to the short summer period and would be unviable for the applicant. The applicant has spoken to a number of schools and other organisations to ascertain interest in bookings for the site. The inquiries found that all schools and over 80% of other potential customers would require indoor space during their visit. It is considered that this business venture would be unviable without indoor space. The requirement for indoor space is reflected in the fact that Scouting campsites all have huts which are used for activities. Whilst the primary purpose of the site would be to provide outdoor recreational space, indoor activity space would be required for a period during all visits to the site.

It is considered that without these facilities, the recreational use of the site would not be achieved, since the basic facilities required by the potential attendees would not be in place. The recreational use of the site therefore relies on the ability to establish these facilities.

PPG 2 also considers the visual amenity of the Green Belt and that this amenity should not be 'injured' and should not be visually detrimental due to their siting, materials or design.

To attract visitors to the site, it is the applicant's wishes that the buildings do not impair the visual appearance and amenity of the site. Buildings would be log cabin style huts, located strategically within the site to make best use of natural landscaping and screening. With the exception of a storage / office, all buildings would be single storey. The buildings in Zone 1 and 2 are all located within the former quarry void and would therefore be extremely well screened from any external views. The proposed buildings in Zone 3 would be constructed on the quarry rim and would be well screened from the surrounding area by an area of densely planted mature woodland.

4.2.2 Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

The policies within the PPS 7 are applicable to the rural areas including country towns and villages and the wider largely undeveloped countryside.

PPS 7 outlines the government's objectives for rural areas, which include raising the quality of life and environment, promote sustainable patterns of development promoting the development of English regions.

The methods for delivering these objectives includes diversification of the economy in rural areas and promoting economic growth as well as providing appropriate leisure opportunities to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside.

This matter is discussed further in paragraph 34 of PPS 7 which recognises the importance of leisure and tourism facilities in sustaining the rural economy and states that local planning authorities should recognise through the Local Development Documents that tourism and leisure activities are vital to many rural economies. As well as sustaining many rural businesses, these industries are a significant source of employment and help to support the prosperity of country towns and villages.

Huntley Wood currently offers no form of amenity or employment. The proposed outdoor recreation facility would not only provide amenity for use by groups from the local and wider area, but also a number of direct and indirect economic benefits.

During the construction phase, the facility would require building products and services from the local area. The operation of the facility would provide two employment opportunities including a site manager and a maintenance worker. These positions would both provide full time employment with the site manager living onsite and the maintenance worker living off site. . A forestry consultant would also be employed to undertake work during the winter, whilst an Ecology Consultant would be employed for several days each month all year round.

The applicant would require local services such as an accountant and employ a company to undertake maintenance at the site. Materials and products used to operate and maintain the site would be sourced locally.

Local specialists would be employed as required to direct nature walks and ecology tours of the site for groups. It is anticipated that visitors to the site would utilise local services and shops such as grocers, food outlets, pubs and garages on their way to the site. Event organisers would also likely to require supplies sourced locally, including food, drink, marquee hire etc.

Paragraph 26 of PPS 7 echoes the aims of PPG 2 (Green Belt). This paragraph states that planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of Green Belt land. This should include facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities.

The development proposals include a temporary managers dwelling. Paragraph 10 of PPS 7 states that '*isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted. Where the special justification for an isolated new house relates to the essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, planning authorities should follow the advice in Annex A to this PPS.*

Paragraph 15 of Annex A acknowledges that there will be instances where special justification exists for new isolated dwellings associated with rural based enterprises. Such proposals would be assessed by the local planning authority using the same criteria as that for agricultural or forestry agricultural dwellings within annex A.

Paragraph 1 states that a new isolated residential developments may be justified where it is essential for full time workers to live at, or in their immediate vicinity of their place of work. It should be noted that the scale of the site, the existing vegetation and the size of the proposed dwelling would be such that the development would not be considered intrusive.

During the weekends, it is anticipated that groups using the site for re-enactment, role play and living history would hire parts of the site. During the mid week (typically Monday – Friday), a mixture of day and overnight visits by schools, scout and guide groups, nature groups and private companies may take place. The activities carried out by these groups would include nature walks, archery, management training as outlined in section 3.

Due to the expansive nature of the site, management and maintenance of the site would be ongoing throughout the year. Maintenance activities such as grass cutting, maintenance of roads, tracks and camping areas would take place during the summer months when occupancy rates are higher. Maintenance activities such as woodland management would take place during the winter. Maintenance of camping areas, buildings, and ecological aspects would take place around the year..Due to the size of the site and mature vegetation that is present, it is considered that maintenance may be required on a regular basis and several operations may be taking place at any one time.

The managers dwelling is considered necessary to provide a continuous presence at the site:

- In case of emergency during occupation of the site by visitors during day and night,
- To greet and direct visitors on arrival,
- Carry out certain inspection and maintenance duties,
- To provide access for employees,
- Provide access, supervise and inspect the work of contractors,
- The managers presence would be required on site during maintenance operations,
- To provide continuous security to stop trespass, vandalism and nuisance activities such as off-road motorcycling.

It would be necessary for the manager to undertake administration and occupy the office during typical office hours. The manager would take bookings and deal with queries and any paperwork involved with running the site. However, the manager would also need to be present at the site to carry out the manual functions described above and so it would not be possible for the manager to be based offsite during the working day. Basing the manager at the site would remove unnecessary car travel between the office and site which would otherwise have to be undertaken.

The role of site manager would be full-time and the temporary dwelling would be for the use of the manager only. As there are no existing buildings or dwellings on the site it is not possible to utilise an existing building for the purposes of establishing the managers dwelling.

Since the site would be occupied overnight by various groups it is considered necessary for the site manager to be present during the night in case of emergency. This is common practice at campsites around the UK and paragraph 4(ii) of annex A recognises the need for the presence of workers to deal quickly with emergencies. At times there may be up to 800 people present on the site and it is considered vital that there should be a full time management presence on site to provide emergency assistance, manage guests, and oversee security.

In accordance with paragraph 7 of the annex, the scale of the managers dwelling is suitable to accommodate the manager, their partner and a small family. The property is single storey, temporary in nature, and would include only two bedrooms. It is considered that the role of site manager would require a considerable amount of time on site, often outside of normal working hours, and as such this would be a full time role. As a result, the managers dwelling should be suitable to accommodate the manager and their family whilst being of a minimal scale. It is believed that the size and scale of the building is commensurate with the functions required of it. A temporary five year permission for the buildings is sought.

The location of the dwelling within the site has been chosen to provide a central point to allow quick access to all Zones of the site and provide a fast response to emergencies in any area of the site but still sufficiently remote so as not to impinge on visitor enjoyment of the site. This location can also be easily and quickly located by visitors. The location of the dwelling is screened by young woodland so would be screened from view of visitors using the site as well as the surrounding area and so would have no visual impact. This location would allow the site manager to hear any unauthorised use of vehicles at the site such as motor bikes, quad bikes taking place in any area of the site. The location of the dwelling is at a high point within the site and so a good location to receive wireless signals from alarms and CCTV used to ensure the security of the site against trespass, vandalism and arson, all of which have previously taken place at the site.

The location of the managers dwelling is currently occupied in parts by young woodland with open areas. The trees in this area are typically Birchwood with a trunk of less than 10cm circumference and therefore of low ecological value. Locating the dwelling and storage / office building in this area would result in minimal disturbance. PPG 17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.

National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 concerns the development of venues for recreational use and the foreword of the document considers that *'Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives'.*

The objectives of PPG 17 highlight that *the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation, and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of people who live in rural areas.*

Paragraph 26 of PPG 17 highlights the suitability of rural locations on the edge of towns for recreational facilities if they are likely to attract significant numbers of participants or spectator whilst smaller scale facilities would be acceptable where located adjacent to villages to meet the needs of the local community.

Paragraph 30 of the Statement provides that *Planning permission should be granted in Green Belts for proposals to establish or to modernise essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation where the openness of the Green Belt is maintained.* A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been carried out to assess the potential for the development to impact on the area. The scale of the built development in the proposals has been assessed, and it was found that the development would not result in any significant impacts on the local landscape or the openness of the Green Belt.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area includes:

- The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996 – 2011 (adopted 2001)
- The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted 1998)
- The Minerals Local Plan (adopted 1999)
- Documents in the emerging Local Development Framework

4.4 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996 – 2011

Following the adoption of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), policies within the Development Plan can be saved until superseded by the policies within the new Local Development Framework. This section discusses those 'saved' policies within the Structure Plan.

Structure Plan policy MW9 considers appropriate rehabilitation methods for mineral sites. The application site consists of a former mineral working, the proposal provides for the permanent restoration of the site by formally changing the site to a facility for outdoor recreation. The existing profile and vegetation would be retained with some minor amendments to improve and enhance the ecology of the site. The proposed use of the site would incorporate a number of small wooden cabins which would be small single storey

buildings built using materials to blend in with the site and wider surroundings. These buildings would not be visually intrusive and would not be visible from outside the site.

Section 5 of the Structure Plan considers General Development policies. Policy D2 requires that development should conserve and where possible improve the quality of life and the environment. It is considered that the development accords with the aims of the this policy, in that the location, design and scale of the necessary buildings is such that they would be sympathetic to the context of the surrounding area whilst providing a local amenity improving the quality of life of local residents and visitors from the wider area.

Chapter 6 of the Structure plan concerns employment in the area. Whilst the site is not designated as an employment site in any of the current development plans, the development would give rise to a limited number of employment opportunities. Policy D4 considers managing change in rural areas and requires the character, economic and social fabric of such areas to be maintained and improved by encouraging appropriate development which assists in diversifying the local economy and improves community facilities. The location of the development is such that it would not affect the openness of the countryside. The type of development is considered to be suitable not only for the site, but is also in keeping with the surrounding area.

As discussed above, the site is located within an area designated as Green Belt and Policy D5A of the Structure Plan states that Local Plans will maintain the general form and purposes of the Green Belt. The Structure Plan sets out five purposes of the Green Belt as outlined in National Planning Policy document PPG2. As set out above, it is considered that the proposed recreational use of the site would not detract from these aims.

Policy D5B considers built development in the Green Belt and follows the same objectives as PPG 2 outlining that the construction of new buildings may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as facilities essential for outdoor recreation and other uses compatible with the openness of the Green Belt.

As outlined above, the built development proposed is considered to be of a small scale and of a design compatible with the area. The built development would occupy less than 0.15% of the site and is considered the minimum necessary to support the various types of outdoor recreation proposed throughout the year. The proposed development would not be visible from outside of the site and would not affect the openness of the area.

Policy R1 in chapter 11 of the Structure Plan outlines some criteria for locating facilities for Recreation, Leisure and Culture.

Recreation and leisure developments should, where relevant:

(a) provide facilities in or close to population centres;
(b) provide relief for over-used and/or more remote recreational areas;
(c) minimise potential conflict with other activities and wildlife interests;
(d) contribute to the reclamation and reuse of derelict or despoiled land;
(e) relate to existing or extended open space/public access systems, including public paths;
(f) be accessible by a variety of means of public and private transport.

The proposed recreational use of the site would provide outdoor recreation facilities close to population centres of Cheadle, Leek and Stoke-on-Trent. Facilities that provide outdoor space for recreation in a natural environment along with accommodation and associated facilities are uncommon, and the proposals therefore provide a facility to serve a niche market as well as facilities for use by local users.

The proposals have been designed in a considerate manner to not affect the wildlife that has become established at the site. The development would utilise existing access roads through the site and areas of lower ecological value for the development in order to minimise disturbance. The use of the site would also allow woodland and ecological management to take place which would improve the value of the site for both flora and fauna. An ecological and woodland management plan has been included with this application.

The proposals would provide the long term restoration of a former sand and gravel quarry. Whilst the quarry has been partially restored there are still areas of bare sand and gravel. Under these proposals most of these areas would be covered with a thin layer of soil and planted with grass indicative of the local area. The ecological value of these areas would be enhanced by sowing wild flower and grass around the margins to encourage a variety of insect species to colonise the site.

Use of public transport and car sharing to visit the site would be encouraged by the applicant to reduce the traffic associated with the use of the site. The applicants also plan to liaise with local taxi firms and are investigating the use of a minibus to collect visitors from local train and bus stations in Cheadle and Blythe Bridge to encourage use of public transport.

Policy R3 Considers the recreational use of land within the countryside and so is of particular relevance. The policy specifies that development of recreation facilities in the countryside will be suitable provided that:

(a) they involve activities more suited to sites away from built up areas;
(b) they will not have unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment, natural and cultural heritage areas with countryside protection, or Green Belt policies;
(c) any traffic generated can be accommodated on the road system without undue adverse effects;
(d) the form, bulk and general design of the development, including any necessary new buildings, respect the character of the countryside;

The proposed recreational activities would make use of the woodland habitats and natural environment that the site affords. The activities proposed require large remote areas of the countryside, well screened from urban areas and rich in flora and fauna. The built development proposed has been designed to be sympathetic to and blend in with the surrounding land, and is the minimum amount required to facilitate the recreational activities at the site. The activities would not result in an unacceptable impact on the environment or Green Belt. The traffic associated with the recreational use of the site has been considered. The vehicle movements associated with the recreational use of the site would be lower than that associated with the previous proposals for a golf course that were considered appropriate by the county council and subsequently approved by the District Council. It is considered that the vehicle movements associated with the proposed development could adequately accommodated by the site access and surrounding highway network. These findings are discussed in further detail in section 7 of this planning statement.

4.5 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted 1998)

A number of the policies within the Local Plan have been saved for the interim period until the Local Development Framework documents are adopted. Those saved policies in the Local Plan relating to the development are considered in this section.

Chapter 2 outlines the purposes and objectives of the Green Belt designation in line with the Governments aims in national policy document PPG 2. Policy N2 states that there would be

a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt except in special circumstances such as essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation.

As outlined above, the proposed development would not contravene the objective of the Green Belt designation as set out in PPG 2 and which have been transposed into local planning policy.

Policy N8 considers the affects of development in areas designated as 'Special Landscape Areas'. The Staffordshire Structure Plan recognises the special character and qualities of the landscape of north-east Staffordshire. Regional planning guidance outlines that there would normally be a presumption against development which would adversely affect the general quality of the area.

Policy N8 states that development in Special Landscape Areas will not be granted planning consent where it detracts from the high quality of the landscape as a result of it's siting, scale, design, materials and traffic generation.

External changes to the appearance of the site as a result of the proposed development would be minimal. A small number of log cabins would be constructed to provide bunk accommodation and other basic facilities. The site is well screened from view and the buildings would be located sensitively in areas out of view, so as not to affect the visual amenity of the site and the surrounding area.

The buildings have been designed to be in keeping with the surrounding environment and would have the appearance of traditional cabins. The buildings would be located discretely within the site and would be virtually all single storey and so would have no visual impact.

The visual impact of the buildings, camping and recreational activities have been assessed from a number of key viewpoints. The LVIA concluded that the proposed change of use to an outdoor recreational facility would initially cause some landscape and visual effects through the physical disturbance during the construction phase although this would be over a short period in areas of the site already comprising of bare ground and limited ground level vegetation. The LVIA considered that in visual terms, the site is located within a heavily wooded and undulating area where little or none of the proposed development would be seen from outside of its boundaries.

The LVIA concluded that overall the proposed development would not generate any significant landscape and visual effects and would not be in conflict with the aims of local landscape planning policies such as green belt, special landscape area, trees, recreation and landscape character.

Chapter 5 (Employment) recognises that in the rural areas of the district, employment in both agriculture and quarrying has declined, but that there has been some growth in tourism-related jobs in the District. The use of the site for outdoor recreation would support a small number of rural employment opportunities such as forestry and ecological management, and grounds maintenance, and would return the currently disused site to a productive and sustainable long term after use.

Chapter 8 of the Local Plan considers Recreation and Tourism in the District. The aim of this section in the Plan is to conserve open space and promote leisure activities in the area. Policy R7 encourages recreational development in the countryside, provided that the scale, use, design, and arrangement are compatible within the area, and that adequate access and parking is in place.

The proposed use of the site would conserve and enhance the natural characteristics an ecological value of the site. The built development associated with the use of the site is low key and small scale in relation to the size of the site. The development would allow a number of recreational uses to take place in quiet and safe surroundings.

4.6 Minerals Local Plan (Adopted 1999)

The application site is a former sand and gravel mineral working, and so it is worthwhile referring the relevant saved policies within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Minerals Local Plan (MLP). No further mineral extraction at the site is proposed, however since the cessation of sand and gravel extraction, the site has been only partially restored. The objectives within the MLP include providing restoration and aftercare schemes which preserve and enhance the quality of the environment. As outlined above, the proposals would provide for the implementation of woodland and ecological management scheme at the site which would enhance the nature conservation aspects of the site. Ancient woodland is currently being compromised by invasive species such as rhododendron, whilst nuisance uses such as dirt biking takes place in the former quarry. The restoration of the site would enhance the ecological and nature conservation value of the site whilst also providing a new local amenity which would stop nuisance uses taking place.

4.7 Local Development Framework

In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is duty bound to prepare an new portfolio of planning policy documents known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will comprise a collection of documents including a Core Strategy, Site Specific Proposals and Policies, Area Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents. Once adopted these documents will replace the existing Development Plan Documents such as The Local Plan and Structure Plan.

The documents within the LDF are currently being prepared, this process involves a number of consultation stages during which stakeholders are engaged to inform the content, aims and objectives of the new planning policy documents.

Once adopted the Core Strategy provides the future development strategy for the district, and will replace the Local Plan to become the primary planning policy document determining where in the District future development in the District. Preparation of the Core Strategy is currently at an advanced stage in its preparation. A draft Core Strategy has been prepared and consultation completed during May 2009. Following the consultation a number of modifications are proposed before the document is adopted later this year.

Since the Core Strategy has not yet been adopted, limited weight should be given to the aims and objective and polices within the draft document. However it is worthwhile considering the content of the draft document as it provides an indication of the potential future direction for development in the area.

Spatial Objective SO7 sets out that the spatial objectives should support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District's residents and visitors. Spatial Objective SO9 sets out to protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources.

The underpinning aims of the Rural Policies in the Core Strategy states that the District should support the rural economy by attracting visitors and tourism as this is identified as an important component towards diversifying the rural economy.

It is considered that the proposed development meets the expectations of Policies SO7 and SO9 and those policies relating to Rural Diversification which require that appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area.

With regards to the Site Specific Allocations, the District have started to gather evidence for background on such issues as the need of housing. No consultations have taken place to date, and the first stakeholder consultation is expected in 2011.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

An assessment of the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposals to develop Huntley Wood Quarry as a facility for outdoor recreation has been carried out and a detailed copy of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is included in Appendix H.

The format of the LVIA has been is based on the principles produced by Countryside Agency's *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland*, (2002) and The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Second Edition (2002).

The LVIA assessed the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposed development, as has been described in Section 3 of this planning statement. This included a baseline study of the existing site and its surroundings, a study of the landscape and visual characteristics of the development and an assessment of the residual landscape and visual impacts likely to be generated after mitigation has been considered and their significance.

Simply leaving the abandoned quarry to an ecologically-based restoration scheme with natural regeneration and no intervention or development would require a very long time to develop sufficient woodland to the degree required to disguise the worked out profile of the site. Furthermore, unchecked growth of Rhododendron would lead to further degradation of the existing ancient woodland, as well as any subsequent woodland regeneration and the unchecked development of woodland itself would miss the opportunity for heathland creation, which is both a national and local Biodiversity Action Plan target habitat.

The proposed outdoor recreational facility would initially cause some adverse landscape and visual effects through the physical disturbance associated with the construction phase over a short period, although most of the site would be undisturbed and most of the proposed disturbance would take place within existing areas of bare ground. The majority of the site and existing habitats including the ancient woodland, would be unaffected by the main sources of disturbance and would be limited to temporary activities and pedestrian trafficking, such as orienteering or archery, etc, and overall would be managed for recreational and ecological enhancement.

The buildings, being of log cabin style would be sympathetic to the rural context and have been grouped together in small clusters to reduce the impact of the built development at the site. The proposed temporary dwelling would be located centrally within the site in an enclosed location.

Whilst these changes would introduce new landscape features to the area, the site would remain consistent with the key characteristics of the "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys*" defined by Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent's Planning for Landscape Change (*op. cit.*). The proposals would help to ameliorate an existing incongruous element (past sand and gravel quarrying) by establishing beneficial alternative uses and positive management of the range of habitats on the site.

In visual terms, the site is located within a heavily wooded and undulating area where little or none of the proposed development would be seen from outside of its boundaries.

Overall the proposed development would not generate any significant landscape and visual effects and would not be in conflict with the aims of local landscape planning policies such as green belt, special landscape area, trees, recreation and landscape character.

6.0 ECOLOGY

This section of the planning statement provides a summary of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) conducted by SLR Consulting Limited (SLR) to inform the planning submission for development of an outdoor recreation facility at the former Huntley Wood Quarry. The full EcIA is included in Appendix D.

The EcIA can be considered as having three main purposes:

- to provide an objective and transparent assessment of the ecological effects of a proposed development or activity;
- to permit objective and transparent determination of the consequences of the proposals in terms of national, regional and local policies relevant to nature conservation; and
- to demonstrate that a proposed development or activity will meet the legal requirements relating to habitats and species.

The EcIA describes the existing baseline conditions within the application site; including an evaluation of the habitats and species present within. The EcIA also identifies the potential ecological effects of the development and assesses the likely significance of identified impacts on the valued ecological receptors (VERs) both within the application site and within the Zone of influence surrounding the site.

Where a negative impact has been identified, suitable mitigation measures to prevent, reduce or offset the level of impact are provided within the EcIA and any residual effects.

The methodology for the EcIA comprised a baseline ecological data search. Data was collated through a combination of desk-based study and field survey consistent with current standard methodologies and published good practice guidelines.

Since the cessation of quarrying operations the site has been largely left abandoned. Today, the site is dominated by post-mineral extraction habitats that form a mosaic of bare substrates (consisting of sand and gravels), semi-natural and plantation woodland, scrub and open standing water. However, the site is subject to large amounts of disturbance caused by its informal use. In particular, large numbers of motorbikes have resulted in damage to open areas of the quarry floor, its sloping sides and many of the sand banks.

The construction and operation of the proposed outdoor recreation facility will comprise a small scale development within the former Huntley Wood Quarry that would result in some existing habitat being lost or disturbed due to the proposed soil spreading operations and limited number of new buildings proposed, whilst all other habitat areas would be retained. The implementation of a Conservation Management Plan for this site would provide opportunities to create and enhance areas of retained habitat of this to benefit both wildlife and the users of this site.

The site has been identified as being suitable to accommodate a range of breeding bird species. Sand martin in particular have historically utilised the exposed sand cliffs within the application site to excavate their burrows for breeding purposes. However, since 2006, the number breeding burrows would appear to have diminished from 34 burrows to only four recorded in April 2008 and no active nest sites in 2010.

The sand cliff previously used by sand martins suffers from high levels of disturbance caused by erosion and motorbikes and may be a contributory factor to the decline in the breeding population of sand martin at this site.

During all site visits no reptile species were observed or evidence of reptiles using the site was found. Although large parts of the application site are considered to provide optimum habitat for the more widespread species of reptiles it is considered that if any population of reptile is present it is likely to be small and the site is unlikely to be important or critical for any particular species.

The EcIA considered that the development could result in a positive impact on the Huntley Wood SBI/ASNW since this area could be significantly enhanced through the implementation of a Conservation Management Plan.

The construction works have the potential to have significant effects on the great crested newts population at this site however the implementation of suitable mitigation measures should ensure the predicted impacts on these species is negligible and not significant.

Through careful consideration of the potential impacts of the construction and operation of the outdoor recreation facility and the implementation of suitable mitigation to minimise these effects it is considered that the impacts of this development on the VERs identified within the application site and within its Zone of influence are not likely to be significant and would be in compliance with legislation and planning policy.

7.0 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

This section considers the potential impact in transportation terms resulting from the operation of the former quarry as a recreational facility. The highways aspects of the development proposals are described, along with the highway network within the vicinity of the application site. The likely trip generation arising from the proposed development is discussed and compared to the traffic generation from previously development proposals for the site.

The site is a disused sand and gravel working. Mineral extraction operations ceased a number of years ago and the site has remained partially restored and unused for a number of years. As a result the site does not currently generate any traffic or vehicle movements. During the operation of the quarry, the access road and general road network previously handled large volumes of HGV traffic.

7.1 Existing Access and Highway Network

Coneygreaves Lane

The application site is accessed from the main highway network by Coneygreaves Lane, believed to be publicly owned but unadopted. The Lane proceeds east from the intersection of Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road for some 490 metres before reaching the site entrance. Beyond the site entrance the surfacing of Coneygreave Lane stops and the Lane turns into a dirt track. The site entrance is located along the southern side of the application site and is secured by large metal gates.

The Lane is surfaced and was in regular use during the operation of the quarry, being maintained by the quarry operator. Since the closure of the quarry, use of the Lane has reduced and maintenance rarely carried out. Consequently, the Lane has become overgrown by hedgerows and trees alongside the road, and clogged with leaf litter causing the Lane to narrow.

Maintenance work has been carried out by the applicants to clear leaf litter and overgrown vegetation to reveal the full width of the Lane and expose several vehicle passing places. The Lane is 4-5m wide along the majority of its length. In a small number of areas the Lane narrows to 3m wide and in these areas there are passing places to allow vehicles to pass. It is worthy of note that traffic resulting from the operation of Huntley Wood would be almost all car traffic and would be relatively light for a majority of the time. Traffic would be heavier during large events held on a small number of weekends each year. However, during such events, traffic would mostly flow in one direction as visitors enter the site at the beginning of an event and all leave at the end. The speed limit along the Lane is 20 mph. Signs showing the speed limit are located on either side of the road approximately 10 metres along the Lane.

The Lane provides access to the residential dwelling at Coneygreaves Farm and High Coneygreaves Farm and a number of gated fields on either side of the Lane. Further east of the site access the Lane becomes a narrow unsurfaced track and is not considered suitable for use by vehicles other than those with 4 wheel drive. The condition of the Lane after reaching the site entrance, and small number of properties it provides access too means that the Lane is used only by a small amount of traffic.

The first 20 metres of the carriageway is approximately 8 metres wide and surfaced with concrete. After the first 20 metres of carriageway, the Lane surface turns to tarmac, and the next 25m of the Lane is 5 metres wide and a small amount of additional passing space is

available on either side of the road. For the next 65m the surfaced road varies between 4 and 5 metres wide, however additional passing space is available along the side of the road. The next section of the Lane is some 50 metres long and despite narrowing to 4m wide in this area, a substantial passing place some 4metres wide is present. The next section of the Lane is 25m long and only 4m wide. Despite having no passing places, visibility is clear to further along the Lane allowing vehicles to wait for other vehicles to pass. The next section of the Lane is 40m long and 4m wide with a passing place some 2m wide. After passing the entrance to High Coneygreave Farm the road narrows to 4m wide for a length of 80metres where no passing places are available. However a clear view is preset along this stretch of the Lane which is just wide enough for two cars to pass whilst travelling in opposite directions. After this, the Lane widens and varies between 6-5 metres allow easy passing of cars travelling in either direction. A clear view of the site entrance is available for the final 100m length of Lane approaching the site gates. A limited amount of passing place is available in this area. The final 20m of the Lane widen to 5m with additional passing places in place.

A detailed description of the width of the Lane, illustrated with drawings and photographs is included as Appendix G

It is clear that the width of the Coneygreave Lane varies, however it is considered that the majority of the Lane is greater than 4m wide which allows two vehicles to pass and, in addition, generous passing places are available in many locations. In limited areas where the Lane narrows to 3-4m, visibility is sufficiently clear for drivers to assess whether to continue along the Lane or wait for oncoming vehicles to pass leaving the Lane clear for passage.

The applicant proposes to install a number of gates along the site boundary to provide pedestrian access for local residents who have used the site for walking for many years. The gates would be suitably located to connect to the existing footpaths in the area surrounding the site and the continuation of public access to the site would be beneficial to local residents. These gates would be locked for safety whilst maintenance work such as tree felling is taking place. Drawing HW/7 shows the location of the gates.

Coneygreave Lane Bellmouth Junction

Coneygreaves Lane rises gradually on approach to the junction. The junction bellmouth is of concrete construction and a STOP sign is present. The bellmouth access radii are kerbed and measure approximately 11m (south) and 18m (north). A white line road marking marks the point at which users of the Lane must give way to traffic before joining Cheadle Road and Draycott Cross Road.

The main carriageway is generally 6m wide, although widens to approximately 8m through the crossroads junction. The bellmouth junction and first 20m section of the carriageway appears to be surfaced with concrete with a small kerb on either side of the Lane. A central white line marked on the road surface denotes the presence of sufficient space to allow traffic to flow in opposite directions.

Visibility from the Lane is considered adequate in both directions. A wide verge accommodates visibility to the south and the straightness of Draycott Cross Road accommodates visibility to the north. Likewise, adequate visibility to oncoming traffic is available for vehicles turning right from Cheadle Road.

The Wider Highway Network

Draycott Cross Road leads north from the crossroads junction and joins the A521 Delphouse Road after some 2km. This section of carriageway is subject to national speed limits and is generally between 5m and 6m in width, with gradients of up to 13%. Visual inspections suggest the entire length of the road can adequately accommodate 2-way vehicle flow.

Draycott Cross Road joins the A521 Delphouse Road at a crossroads junction, with Brookhouse Road forming the second minor arm. Visibility from Draycott Cross Road is considered good to both the east and west. The junction is kerbed and the corner radii are sufficient to allow the full turning movements of HGVs both to and from Draycott Cross Road. Pedestrian footways and street lighting are provided at the junction.

Cheadle Road proceeds south from the site access Lane and joins Uttoxeter Road at Draycott after around 2km. Cheadle Road is generally 6m wide with soft verges and is subject to the national speed limits. The carriageway also narrows in places to around 4.5m, with the narrowest point located immediately to the north of the junction with Uttoxeter Road. Visual observations suggest that the majority of Cheadle Road is appropriate for two-way flow.

Cheadle Road joins Uttoxeter Road at a priority T-junction. Footways and street lighting are provided on Uttoxeter Road within the vicinity of the junction; no footways are provided on Cheadle Road. A bus lay-by is located on Uttoxeter Road immediately to the west of the junction; footways are provided at this point. The western radii is large and vehicles turning left into Cheadle Road do so at speed. The eastern radii is smaller but is sufficient for light vehicles turning left from Cheadle Road without impeding through traffic on Uttoxeter Road.

To the east of Draycott, Uttoxeter Road proceeds in the direction of Upper Tean and joins the A522. To the west, Uttoxeter Road provides access to the village of Blythe Bridge and the A50 (T). The initial section of carriageway through Draycott is approximately 7m wide and there is a scattering of development surrounding the road including a public house and post office. Proceeding west, the carriageway widens to around 10m including a 3m wide ghost island within the centre of the carriageway. The speed limit is 40mph with street lighting, and footways surround the road behind wide grass verges. Approximately 1km to the west of Cheadle Road, Uttoxeter Road widens to provide two Lanes in each direction. Continuing west, a roundabout junction provides access to the A50 (T) at a three-arm roundabout which is illuminated and of approximately 60m inscribed circle diameter (ICD). The A50 (T) is a dual carriageway and proceeds north-west to Stoke-on-Trent and south-east towards Uttoxeter.

Visitors to the site from the wider area are likely to gain access to the site from the south by travelling along the A50 which connects to the M1 and also the M6. To gain access to the site, visitors travelling along the A50 would travel to Blythe Bridge and join the A521 (Uttoxeter Road) towards the village of Draycott. Visitors would continue in an easterly direction through Draycott along Uttoxeter Road before turning in a northerly direction onto Cheadle Road. Vehicles may continue heading in a northerly direction along Cheadle Road until reaching the entrance to the access Lane. Visitors to the site from outside the area are likely to use motorways connecting with the A50 and then using the route described above. Access to the site can also be gained from the north using the A521 through Cheadle before joining Cheadle Road.

7.2 Future Trip Generation

The use of the site for events would give rise to varying levels of vehicle movements. This section describes the likely vehicle movements resulting from various types of activity taking place at the site, as well as the anticipated worst case scenario.

The site is considered to be suitable for a numerous events including:

- Educational visits to the site made by local schools or colleges,
- courses requiring outdoor space attended by a small groups,
- role play and re-enactment events involving groups of between 30 visitors up to 800 visitors.

Typically visits to the site by schools or for courses would involve a small number of vehicle movements such as 1-2 coaches or mini buses. Courses taking place at the site would attract visitors arriving at the site in a small number of cars or a mini bus.

The applicant has undertaken discussions with organisers of large role play and re-enactment events. The largest events could be attended by up to 800 visitors during a small number of occasions each year and this represents the worst case scenario in highways terms. Visitors for such events are likely to travel by car and from previous experience of previous events are likely to car share. Previous events have shown that 800 visitors generally necessitate car parking for 300 cars. This equates to an average of 2.6 visitors in each car (i.e. generally between 2 and 3 people in each car).

Larger events are usually held at weekends with visitors arriving gradually over a two day period on Thursday and Friday. Previous events have shown that approximately 300 visitors (115 cars) arrive on Thursday between 11am and 10pm and would result on average in 11 one way vehicle movements per hour. Vehicle movements would be one way since visitors would arrive at the site and stay until the end of the event several days later.

It is anticipated that the remaining 500 visitors (193 cars) arrive on Friday between 10am and 10pm. Vehicle movements resulting from the arrival of visitors on Fridays would be on average 16 one way movements per hour or one car every 3-4 minutes.

The departure of vehicles at the end of event is likely to take place over an eight hour period when all visitors are likely to leave the site. 300 cars leaving the site over an eight hour period would result on average in 38 one way movements per hour. This is the equivalent to one car every 1-2 minutes.

Visitors would arrive at the site throughout Thursday and Friday, and would leave during Sunday. Car journeys generated by the recreational use of the site would not impact upon peak traffic flows during the morning and afternoon rush hours of generally 0800-0900 and 1600-1800 hours.

Prior to large events it may be necessary for equipment to be delivered and set up. The vehicle movements associated with setting up such an event would comprise of a small number of vans, cars or light goods vehicles visiting the site. It is anticipated that the worst case scenario would involve some 10 light goods vehicles visiting the site on Tuesday or Wednesday prior to the event starting.

7.2.1 Queuing Capacity

Visitors arriving at the site would be greeted briefly on entering the site by an organiser of member of staff to receive instructions regarding the location for parking, camping, facilities and event information. It is likely that visitors would be greeted at a point inside the site, close to the site entrance. If several vehicles were to arrive at the same time, or in a short time frame, sufficient space is available for vehicles to queue along the internal site access road.

7.3 Previously Proposed Development

Since the cessation of mineral working at the site, the site has remained dormant and planning applications for other types of leisure use for the site have been considered by the planning authority.

During 2008 planning consent was granted by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to establish a golf course at the site. A separate application was submitted to Staffordshire County Council seeking planning permission to import inert soils to create a suitable landform on which to create the course. However the planning application for the importation of inert soil was refused planning permission and as a result the planning consent for the golf course was not implemented.

During the planning process for the golf course and importation of inert soil, an assessment of the traffic impacts for both operations was undertaken and discussions with the highway authority for these developments were undertaken to establish a suitable level of traffic at the site.

The planning application for the importation of inert fill material previously required some 360,000 cubic metres (circa 540,000 tonnes) of inert fill to be brought to the site over a two year period. The highway authority recommended that the infill proposal be approved, subject to a maximum of 120 HGV loads in any 24-hour period. Previous assessment work concluded that access to the application site from both the south (Cheadle Road) and the north (Draycott Cross Road) was suitable for HGVs. The planning application and proposals were considered by Staffordshire County Council Highways department and no objections to the scheme were raised, subject to conditions relating to HGV movements and vehicle routing.

In 2008 planning consent was granted by SMDC for the use of the site as a golf course, and this application considered the implications of car journeys resulting from visitors to the Golf Course. Proposals for the golf course would have generated around 273 two-way vehicle movements on weekdays and around 352 movements on weekends. The vast majority of traffic generated would be light vehicles.

An assessment of the surrounding highway network, including the junction of the site access Lane with Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road demonstrated that development traffic would not significantly add to baseline flows and future traffic levels would remain well within the capacity of the surrounding road links.

Overall, it was considered that the golf course development would not have had a significant impact in terms of transportation and highways. The principle of a golf course at the former quarry, and the vehicle movements associated with traffic generated by visitors was considered satisfactory by the planning authority who resolved to grant planning consent.

7.4 Comparison of Current and Previous Development Proposals

The table below shows the number of vehicle movements that were deemed as being acceptable under the previous proposals for the site. Vehicle movements were deemed acceptable for previous proposals as a result of either discussions with the highway authority or planning consent being granted.

The table shows the absolute worst case scenario for vehicle movements at the site during large events, which would only take place several times a year. Vehicle movements arising from the previously approved golf course would occur most weekends of the year.

Table 6/1
Comparison of Vehicle Movements

Proposal	Vehicle Type	Movements per Day	
		Mid week	Weekend
Golf Course – Importation of Inert Fill	HGV	120	120
Golf Course – Visitors	Car	273	352
Argoncroft Recreational Use	Car	85	300

The summary table above shows that the vehicle movements resulting from the few large events held at the recreational facility would be less than the number of regular weekend vehicle movements in the previously approved golf course proposals. The 300 vehicle movements shown in the table above represent the worst case scenario and movements would generally be much less than this.

8.0 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Noise

It is not anticipated that the proposed use of the site would result in noise pollution or disturbance. The recreational uses proposed at Huntley Wood would not require the use of equipment or machinery that would create noise such as motorsport for example. Furthermore, the site is remote from noise sensitive receptors and activities would take place within a depression in the land created by the previous quarry operation.

Typically, the recreational activities at the site would include nature walks, archery, re-enactment and role play. The proposals for site include facilities for camping and overnight bunk accommodation in Communal buildings.

Activities and camping in Zone 1 and 2 would take place centrally within the former quarry. The bowl nature of the site and quarry sides provide natural noise attenuation, and would serve to contain noise within the site. Zone 3 is located along the south side of the site on the rim of the former quarry. This area is well screened by dense mature woodland and is the smallest Zone at the site and would therefore be occupied by a limited number of visitors.

Having considered the likely noise sources, profile of the site and proximity to noise sensitive receptors, it is considered that the use of the site is highly unlikely to result in noise disturbance, and is likely to result in an improvement due to cessation of illegal motorsport activities at the site.

8.2 Hydrology and Hydrogeological Environment

8.2.1 Hydrology

The site features 3 large unlined ponds, covering an area of approximately 4ha with the water level in each pond varying. The water levels in these ponds has been considered and several may be in hydraulic connection with the regional groundwater however the central pond at the site is likely to be an expression of a perched water above the regional levels. The site comprises a fairly level plateau which slopes slightly to the south west. The plateau is bounded to the east and north by a ridge which forms a watershed for surface water runoff. The land to the north-east of the ridge slopes to the north east and surface water would naturally drain this way ultimately draining to the unnamed tributary of Mobberley Brook via an unnamed watercourse located some 400m east of the site.

Due to the limited changes that would be made at the site it is not anticipated that the development would affect infiltration and runoff of surface water. The amount of impermeable surfacing across the site would be kept to an absolute minimum and would only consist of concrete slabs on which buildings would be constructed. Roof water drainage would be by means of soakaway. The existing footpaths, vehicle access tracks would be used and no impermeable surfacing is proposed. Car parking would be provided in Zone 1 using an existing area of exposed sand and gravel. Existing access tracks and car parking areas would be repaired and maintained by using gravel from onsite stockpiles. Car parking in Zone 2 and 3 would be provided in existing woodland clearings. The surface of these areas would be improved by placing a layer of sand and gravel from onsite stockpiles. This material would allow for the natural infiltration of surface water and would not impede surface water flow nor increase surface water runoff. The proposals would not therefore affect the rate of surface water runoff within the site.

The proposed buildings would be constructed on top of concrete bases. No other areas of hard standing are proposed. The concrete bases would cover less than 0.15% of the site and would only be used to provide a level and stable base on which buildings would be constructed.

8.3 Hydrogeology

The Environment Agency's Groundwater Vulnerability Map Sheet 17, Derbyshire shows the majority of the application area lies upon a Major Aquifer (Highly Permeable), i.e. the Sherwood Sandstone Group with soils of a high leaching potential. A Major Aquifer status is given to highly permeable formations usually with a known or probably presence of significant fracturing. They may be highly productive and able to support large abstractions for public supply or other purposes.

Soils with a high leaching potential are described as soils which are generally deep permeable coarse textured soils which readily transmit a wide range of pollutants because of their rapid drainage and low attenuation potential.

The Hydrogeological Map of England and Wales shows that deposits underlying the site are characterised as being an extensive and highly productive aquifer. The British Geological Survey report that the Triassic sandstones yield up to 125 l/s of good quality, hard to moderately hard water. It should be noted that there are three wells documented on the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 plan, within close proximity to the proposed development boundary.

Groundwater Quality

As set out above the proposed development is partially situated above a Major Aquifer classed as being Highly Vulnerable to pollutants. During the limited amount of earthworks and building construction for the recreation facility there would be no need to store significant amount of fuels, lubricants or other potential contaminants on site.

8.4 Flood Risk Assessment

National Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS 25) Development and Flood Risk, requires that planning applications for development at sites larger than 1 hectare should be accompanied by an appropriate assessment of Flood Risk. The Environment Agency Flood Mapping, indicates that the site lies within Flood Zone 1. This Zone is designated as having a Low Probability of flooding and is defined by the Environment Agency as *'land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year (<0.1%).'* The Environment Agency has indicated that there are no records of historic groundwater flooding in this area.

A small number of buildings would be constructed at the site on concrete bases. Built development and areas of hardstanding may generate increased volumes and rates of runoff compared with the baseline conditions. However, in the case of these proposals the total building footprint would be less than 945m^2 within a site of 68.4 hectares. These buildings would be spread throughout the site. Roof water drainage would be by means of soakaways.

There would be no new impermeable surfacing as a result of new roads, footpaths and car parking, since these areas would be accommodated for by using existing areas of bare soil or exposed sand and gravel. In Zones 2 and 3 sand and gravel from onsite stockpiles would be placed over the bare soil to reduce amount of mud created by traffic. The use of sand and gravel would not affect the infiltration of rain water in the ground and surface water in these areas would drain naturally through the ground in a similar fashion to green field areas.

There would be no increase in the surface water arising from the site, and it is anticipated that all surface water can be accommodated within the site through natural infiltration.

PPS 25 advises that sites located within Zone 1 'Low Risk' are suitable for all development types. The development proposals do not include the importation of fill material, changes to the topography of the site or creation of large areas of impermeable surfacing. The limited changes proposed at the site means that the development is considered to be at a *low risk of flooding* would have a *low magnitude of impact.* Therefore the overall risk is considered to be *low.*

9.0 CONCLUSION

Huntley Wood is a former sand and gravel quarry located near Cheadle in Staffordshire. Since mineral extraction ceased a number of years ago the site has remained partially restored by the quarry operator. The site comprises of large areas of open, unvegetated sand and gravel with a woodland belt present around much of the site boundary.

Following the closure of the quarry, proposals for a golf course at the site were put forward and received planning consent from the District Council. However a separate planning application to the County Council for the importation of material to form the golf course fairways was rejected. As a result, the proposed golf course development did not proceed and the site is still in need of a long term restoration scheme.

Subsequently, the site was sold to the current applicant, Argoncroft Ltd, a family run company who intend to use the site as a facility for outdoor recreation. Planning permission is therefore being sought for the change of use of the quarry to an outdoor recreational facility including camping facilities, activity and accommodation huts, manager's accommodation and associated storage buildings.

The application site covers a total area of some 68.4ha and comprises the former Huntley Wood Quarry. The application site includes the former sand and gravel workings within the quarry basin, and mature woodland around the periphery of the site. Access into the site is gained by following Coneygreaves Lane from Draycott Cross which passes along the southern edge of the site. The site entrance is located along the southern side of the site.

The applicant's aim is to transform Huntley Wood into an outdoor recreation facility, providing facilities for local and national groups to camp or bunk at the site and pursue various outdoor activities whilst enjoying the natural surroundings that the site provides. The site would be used by a wide range of groups such as schools and colleges for educational trips, Scout and Guide groups, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, healing retreats, survival schools and fitness activities such as mountain biking and cross country running. The site has also been identified as suitable to meet the requirements for role-play and historical re-enactments which is currently a niche market with an undersupply of suitable sites. To preserve the natural amenity of the site and surrounding area the proposals do not involve the use of the site for motor sports or other such activities that may result in noise that would affect the amenity of local residents.

The site is located within an area designated as Green Belt and also as a Special Landscape Area. The applicants proposals have due regard to these designations and include the minimal amount of built development required to facilitate the proposed recreational use of the site.

The site requires the implementation of a long term sustainable restoration scheme. The site provides a remote natural environment comprising a mosaic of ecological habitats due the presence of woodland, water bodies, and low level vegetation at the site. However, the lack of woodland management and presence of invasive plant species such as rhododendron these habitats are being increasingly compromised.

In addition, the remote nature of the site has meant that a number of antisocial activities such as dirt biking, fly tipping, vandalism and arson occur at the site. Such activities are detrimental to the amenity of local residents and have caused significant damage to the ecological habitats of the quarry, and require a large amount of police time.

The site covers a large area and as such it is unlikely that the entire site would be used by one group at any one time. The applicants therefore propose to operate the site as thee separate Zones to allow the site to be used simultaneously by various groups. The Zones vary in size to accommodate groups of various sizes.

To facilitate the year round use of the site, the applicant proposes to construct small single storey log cabins in discreet areas of the site to provide bunk accommodation, cooking facilities, and indoor activity rooms for use during wet weather. Each Zone would benefit from having its own facilities and car parking and so would be self sufficient. A small Club house and store building is also proposed in one Zone.

A temporary manager's dwelling and storage / office building would be located centrally within the site. Since the business would occur on all days of the week throughout the year and involve overnight accommodation for visitors it would be necessary to have a manager onsite at all times to deal with any issues which may arise such as problems with infrastructure, heating, lighting, security or emergencies.

The buildings in each Zone have been designed to be the minimum necessary to support the recreation activities at the site. They have been sympathetically designed to fit in with their surroundings and would be built as small, single storey log cabins.

The business model for the site is such that advance bookings would be taken from commercial groups hiring part of the site at full commercial rates. Such bookings would allow the applicant to hire parts of the site to 'not for profit' groups such as schools and community groups at rates lower that are commercially viable. This ensures that the site can be used by a wide range of visitors and benefits local user groups.

The proposed outdoor recreational facility would provide numerous economic benefits to the local area. When establishing the facility, the applicant would source various construction services from the local area. The facility would draw visitors to the area who would purchase food from local pubs, restaurants and shops. The applicant and event organisers would also use local services and hire local equipment. The site would require ongoing maintenance and would employ the services of woodland and ecology managers.

The implications of the proposals have been assessed in terms of ecology, landscape and visual impact, traffic and transport, noise, hydrology and flood risk. The impact of the development on ecological habitats and receptors at the site was found to be non significant should suitable mitigation measures be put in place.

The potential for the development to impact upon the landscape and visual amenity of the area has been considered. The development has been designed to blend in with the natural environment provided by the site. Buildings necessary to facilitate the recreational use of the site would be single storey log cabins or wooden clad. Much of the recreational facility (Zones 1 & 2) would be located within the base of the quarry and so screened from the view of the surrounding area. A small number of buildings and camping would take place in Zone 3, located along the southern rim of the former quarry. Buildings and activities in this Zone would be on a smaller scale than Zones 1 & 2 and would be screened from the surrounding area by mature dense woodland already present at the site. The overall landscape and visual assessment of the proposed development found that the proposed development would not generate any significant landscape and visual effects and would not be in conflict with the aims of local landscape planning policies such as green belt, special landscape area, trees, recreation and landscape character.

The traffic and transport implications of the proposed development have been considered. This included consideration of the local highway network, suitability of the site access for the

proposed use, and the likely worst case scenario for traffic movements generated during the largest events that would be held at the site.

The site would be accessed by Coneygreaves Lane, which joins Draycott Cross Road / Cheadle Lane. Coneygreaves Lane is seldom used as it provides access to only the application site, a small number of farms and access into a number of fields. Maintenance of Coneygreaves Lane has been carried out to reveal the full width of the carriageway, which, while narrow in some parts, is generally wide enough for two cars, and numerous passing places are present.

A small number of events would be held at the site each year that could be attended by up 800 visitors. These events have been used as the worst case scenario to consider the vehicle movements at the site. It was found that even during these events, the number of vehicle movements at the site would be fewer than the previously consented golf course at Huntley Wood.

The recreational activities that would take place would not produce significant amounts of noise. The activities would involve living history, role play, orienteering and educational visits by schools and activity groups such as scouts and guides. The activities at the site would not involve motorsports or other similar noisy activities. In addition the bowled topography of the site would contain any noise from the site which is remote from noise sensitive receptors.

The limited amount of built development means that the proposals would not affect the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site. Access tracks and parking areas around the site would be maintained using gravel and so would not affect the surface water runoff at the site.

These proposals provide the long term restoration of the site which has remained unused for a number of years. The dormant nature of the site has attracted antisocial behaviour and the proposals would bring such occurrences to an end and would return the former quarry to a beneficial use.