

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**PROPOSAL : CHANGE OF USE OF DWELLING (C3) TO
SHOOTING LODGE AND PRIVATE FUNCTION
VENUE (SUI GENERIS)**

**ADDRESS : ASHCOMBE PARK, CHEADLE ROAD,
CHEDDLETON, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST13 7BE**

DATE : FEBRUARY 2021 JOB No.: 2014-1967

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INTRODUCTION

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application which seeks consent for the change of use from private dwelling (C3) to shooting lodge and private function venue at Ashcombe Park, Cheadle Road, Cheddleton. The planning application is made to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council by Sammons Architectural Ltd on behalf of JCM Group Holdings (UK) Ltd and relates to the red edge application site boundary defined by the submitted Location Plan (2014-1967-33).

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless materials considerations indicate otherwise. The Planning Statement will demonstrate that the proposals accord with the provisions of the relevant policies of the Development Plan, and moreover that there are other significant material considerations which indicate that planning permission ought to be granted. In addition, the statement will seek to demonstrate that there are no technical reasons which could hinder the grant of planning permission.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted application package which includes the following documents:-

- 1 APP form, relevant certificates and notices;
- Existing conditions Floor Plans 2014-1967-01C
- Existing conditions Site Plan 2014-1967-03
- Existing Conditions Hall Elevations 2014-1967-25
- Planning Proposal Site Plan 2014-1967-26F
- Planning Proposal Basement and Ground Floor Plans 2014-1967-27D
- Planning Proposal Intermediate and First Floor Plans 2014-1967-28D
- Planning Proposal Hall Elevations 2014-1967-30B
- Planning Proposal Location Plan 2014-1967-33
- Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken by Mel Morris Conservation (25th February 2021)
- Ashcombe Hall Historic Building Assessment and Statement of Significance undertaken by Mel Morris Conservation (January 2016)
- Addendum to Statement of Significance undertaken by Mel Morris Conservation (February 2021)
- Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment undertaken by Hamps Valley Ltd (19th March 2020)

APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

Ashcombe Park is a small country house which lies a short distance to the south of the larger village of Cheddleton. It comprises of a large residential dwelling, which is currently vacant and is generally in a poor state of repair. A number of associated farm and estate buildings lie further south.

There are two accesses into the property both provided by the main A520 which runs to the west. The main formal access runs past the Gate House and through the parkland which is lined with estate fencing and leads to the front (north eastern elevation) of the application building. The second less formal access lies to the south west of the building and is accessed through the layby off the A520. It passes through the estate buildings before terminating at the rear (south western) elevation of the building.

Ashcombe Park, which has been vacant since 2013 is an early 19th Century house with a park, lawns and walled gardens is Grade II* Listed. It is on land which was once a deer park associated with the 16th Century Botham Hall, which once stood on the site. The present stone face brick house was built for William Sneyd between 1807 and 1811 by James Trubshaw Junior. It incorporates a Tuscan porte cochere reputedly moved from Belmont, another Sneyd house with a parking forecourt to the front.

A stone paved terrace with a stone faced 19th century conservatory lies on the south western elevation of the building with steps leading down to a formal lawn which is distinguished by a central stone kerbed fountain pond. The lawn is edged with shrub borders and perimeter walks. To the south west of the application building lies the estate buildings comprising of a cottage, stables and coach house, dairy, pigsties and hay barn. Although superficially complete the buildings on the estate have suffered from decades of lack of repair with only the cottage currently occupied. A number of the home farm buildings have collapsed and remain semi-derelict. The walled kitchen garden which lies beyond this is also not in use.

For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes to change the use of Ashcombe Park from a private dwellinghouse (C3) to a shooting lodge and private function venue (Sui Generis). The application is submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council as a full application.

The shooting lodge is proposed to service the pheasant and partridge shooting activity already established within one of the applicant's other land holdings. The game birds are bought into the estate as day old chicks and reared in pens on site and grown on until full size before being released onto the estate.

The proposed shooting lodge would provide for 10 guns with a maximum capacity of 20 overnight guests. Accommodation would comprise of 3 reception rooms, dining room, library, catering kitchen, conservatory, ensuite bedroom, guest kitchen, entrance hall w.c's, boot room, store, laundry, maintenance building at ground floor with 10 guest bedrooms and 2 staff bedrooms provided on the mezzanine and first floor area. The development would be for exclusive use by people using the shooting lodge. The accommodation will be fully serviced with a catering staff brought in to provide fine dining meals and a full catering kitchen. Shooting parties will be taken in a gun bus to the existing shooting ground at Consall Wood, which is a continuation of the Ashcombe Park Estate and will then be ferried back to the Hall. The change of use requires the highest standards of care and detail for this luxury brand and its existing reputation.

It is anticipated that approximately 40 shoots will be carried out during the season which starts in September and finishes in February. Outside these months the building will be used by the applicant and his family for socialising and private events .

The formal access leading from the Gate House would be sole entrance and exit for guests whilst day to day service vehicles will use the existing farm access. In order to facilitate the above a number of minor internal and external alterations are proposed:-

External alterations

- Existing driveway to be cleared of overgrown grass and returned to its original width with kerbs made good if necessary. Drive surfaced to be renewed with limestone hoggin;
- Restoration and enlargement of large sweeping carriage forecourt to the Tuscan entrance portico;
- Removal of modern block walls, steps and concrete blockwork pool house and restoration of retaining wall and land levels re-graded;

- Creation of new access track linking the existing hall driveway to the farm/shoot track network at the southern side of the property;
- Extension of existing hard standing on western side of courtyard to form additional parking area;
- Restoration of 1850 lightwell, handrail and railings to service courtyard;
- Formation of path along the north western elevation of the building for maintenance purposes

Internal Alterations - Ground Floor

- Removal of modern kitchen fittings, inserted 20th century partitions and restoration of the original proportions to the servants hall room, installation of a fibrous plaster mould cornice to match; (G7 and G8);
- Alterations to kitchen service wing to form bedroom, re-instatement of doorway, removal of existing terazzo floor, replacement with new insulated concrete floor over open cellar below and altered access into the cottage to form en-suite bathroom, (G30 & 29)
- Removal of section of wall and insertion of steel beam to form catering kitchen (G35 & G36)
- Insertion of a partition into the octagonal room to form gentleman's toilet with suspended ceiling (G10);
- Removal of a section of inserted partition (G6)
- Restoration of panelling to dining room (G11)
- Reinstatement of a partition wall to create boot room and removal of existing terrazzo floor and replacement with new insulated concrete floor over open cellar below (G31);
- Partition wall upgraded acoustically (G28)

Internal Alterations Intermediate and First Floor

- Removal of linen cupboards and reconfiguration of internal partitions to form guest suite (I2, I4, I5, I6, I7, I8, I9, I10, I11);
- Blocking up of doorways to F19 and F20 to form ensuite bathrooms;
- Blocking up doorway and removal of walls and doors to form ensuite bathroom (F15)
- Angled lobby altered at low level to form new doorway to provide ensuite bathroom (F14)
- Existing attic stair access and lightwell to be combined to form larger storeroom (F22/F23)
- Insertion of internal partition to form two shower rooms, creation of two new doorways for access from bedrooms and raised void to be formed (F11 and F12);
- Blocking up of doorway (F5);

- Removal of internal partitions to form bedroom(F6, F7 and F8)

The lodge would be the hub supporting a commercial operation that is anticipated will employ a game keeper, 5 beaters, 5 loaders along with 2 chefs, 2 waiting on staff, 3 cleaners, 1 manager, 2 overnight staff when guests are on site. The development will be managed by the Pointon family with JCM Group Holdings (UK) Ltd providing maintenance.

PLANNING HISTORY

Whilst there are a number of recorded planning applications within the wider estate holding none relate specifically to Ashcombe Park or its immediate cartilage.

PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that "where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the Development Plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise".

In this instance the Development Plan for the area is the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan which was adopted by the Council in September 2020. It sets out the overall vision, objectives, and policies for the future development of the district. The following policies are considered to be the most relevant:-

Spatial Objectives

S07 - To support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District's residents and visitors.

S08 - To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.

SS1 Development Principles - In its general approach the Council expects development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. Development proposals will be considered in the context of the District

wide Spatial Strategy and with regard to both its direct and indirect cumulative impact over the longer term. New development will make effective use of land and the best use of previously developed land and buildings.

SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy - The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages. These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy - This policy specifically relates to the Churnet Valley and supports:-

- The provision of short stay and long stay visitor accommodation;
- The expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities;
- Measures to enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley;
- Measures to remediate and restore derelict land, buildings and features including appropriate re-development of sites;
- Actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the valley, including maintenance, buffering and connection of designated sites and actions to mitigate climate change;
- Measures that support and integrate the heritage transport infrastructure of the valley, sympathetically with enhancing and developing links to strategic footpaths, cycle and horse riding routes;
- Measures to improve connectivity and accessibility to and within the Churnet Valley by sustainable transport means having regard to the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area. Strong sustainable development and environmental management principles should also be demonstrated. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximise opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.

The policy also requires development to be in accordance with the Churnet Valley Master Plan SPD. The content of this policy has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this document and is referred to below where appropriate.

DC1 Design Considerations - In particular new development, amongst other things should protect the amenity of the area including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution.

E4 Tourism and cultural development - States that new tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported having regard to the Area Strategies in policies SS5 to SS10 and the Churnet Valley Strategy Policy SS11. In addition, new tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations including within the Green Belt development may be supported where a rural location can be justified. New accommodation, attractions and facilities should:-

- Support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities; and
- All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.

DC2 The Historic Environment - States that the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment. Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF. All applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate. Where development is likely to affect archaeology, both designated and undesignated, the Council, requires the submission of a desk based assessment and where appropriate, field surveys and trench evaluation by a qualified professional. Where the loss of significance is unavoidable recording should take place and this should be added to the HER. The Council will continue its proactive approach to heritage assets at risk and welcomes development proposals which would result in the sympathetic reuse of these assets in line with NPPF policy. The Council will promote development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests

of acknowledged importance through the use of Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements, Archaeological Assessments, Characterisation Studies and Masterplanning.

DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting - The Council will protect and where possible enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion in the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or setting of a settlement, supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which conserve or enhance biodiversity qualities, encourage opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques, and ensure that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.

T1 Sustainable Access and Travel - States that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and helps deliver the priorities of the Integrated Transport Strategy, where this is consistent with other policies.

NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources - States that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The golden thread running throughout the Framework is the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11) whereby developments which correctly balance the requirements of economic, social and environmental issues should be granted planning permission unless there are strong reasons that permission should not be granted.

Sustainable development is broadly defined in Paragraph 8 of the Framework as having three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental.

Section 6 of the Framework is concerned with building a strong, competitive economy, with specific guidance in relation to the supporting a prosperous rural economy. Paragraph 84 within the section states: "Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport."

Section 9 Paragraph 109 outlines that with regard to transport that “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe”.

Section 13 Protecting Green Belt land requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF seeks to protect the openness of the Green Belt and sets out the forms of development in the Green Belt which are not considered to be inappropriate and these are listed in paragraphs 145 and 146.

Section 15 states that the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment should be achieved through the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value, recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, minimising impacts on and providing new gains for biodiversity, preventing new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk, and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land where appropriate.

Section 16 which deals with the conservation and enhancement of the historic environments states that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt where in accordance with Local Plan Policy SS10 strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. It says that tourist opportunities will be enhanced in this area by supporting sustainable tourist development in the Churnet Valley in accordance policy SS11. The first issue to assess therefore is whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Whilst the NPPF confirms that there is a presumption against new build development paragraphs 145 and 146 go on to list a number of exceptions, which include:

- "limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development" ;
- "the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction (provided that they preserve openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt); and
- "material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds).

The proposed conversion of the Hall to form a shooting lodge is considered to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt on account of the proposals amounting to the redevelopment of a previously site and that it constitutes the reuse of a permanent and substantial building within the Green Belt.

With regard to tourism

In addition to the Green Belt assessment, it is also necessary to consider whether the proposal for short stay accommodation on the site accords with the spatial policies in the Local Plan and the Churnet Valley Master Plan (CVMP) which generally support sustainable tourism.

As the site lies within the Churnet Valley policy SS11 is relevant. This policy refers to the Churnet Valley as being an area of sustainable development and offers support for short stay and long stay visitor accommodation. The Churnet Valley Master Plan supplements policy SS11 and provides the framework for achieving sustainable development to ensure that the potential of the Churnet Valley is realised, but not at the expense of what makes it special. It gives particular support for tourism related development including short stay and long stay visitor accommodation and also the restoration of derelict land, buildings and features including the appropriate re-development of sites. It also states that development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area.

The Council produced The Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (adopted in 2014) in order to develop the vision for the area and achieve the development aims for the Churnet Valley. The Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for future development in the area. It identifies opportunities and measures to help regenerate and manage this

important rural area based around sustainable tourism in a matter which is sensitive to and enhances its important heritage, landscape and ecology.

The application site is located within the Central Hub area of the Churnet Valley Masterplan which identifies the area as having high landscape value with more limited access and less recreational use. It goes on to state that it is more suited to countryside activities and minimal change. The key actions section of the report for this hub area identifies minimal development as conversion of existing buildings, development within settlements in line with adopted development plan policies, sensitive development to support and maintain existing facilities.

These aims are reinforced by Local Plan policy E4 which refers more generally to tourism and cultural development. This policy states that new tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported having regard to the Area Strategies in policies SS5 to SS10 and the Churnet Valley Strategy Policy SS11. In addition, new tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations including within the Green Belt development may be supported where a rural location can be justified. New accommodation, attractions and facilities should:-

- Support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities; and
- All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.

Whilst the application site is located outside the established settlement boundary of Cheddleton it does have a clear and functional relationship with it, Ashcombe Park representing one of the feature buildings of the village.

The application building has been vacant since the applicant purchased the site in 2014. Although superficially complete, the buildings on the estate have suffered from decades of lack of repair and maintenance which stems from the estate being broken up at the start of the 20th century. Whilst the applicant has embarked upon a long and painstaking schedule of repairs to the house,

including re-pointing, consolidation of stonework, repairs to sash windows and shutters the financial liability for undertaking such work is obviously significant . Without the income from a large estate to support the house, which is the historic way of generating income, there is no source of income to fund the repair liability and the prospect of further losses and deterioration of the listed buildings on the estate is sadly very real. The continued use of the house and the estate as a single dwelling for one family is clearly not sustainable and it is empirical that the building needs an alternative viable use. The income generated from the proposed use will be able to subsidise the repairs to the house as well as the running costs.

This application offers the opportunity to fully utilise and regenerate the site to provide a sympathetic and sustainable use that won't undermine or detract from the existing settlement area. Moreover, the increased use of the site would likely be of socio-economic benefit to existing village facilities.

Furthermore, significant weight should be given to the fact that the proposed development would relate to a popular rural activity that would by its very nature be undertaken in a rural location and furthermore would provide both employment and farm diversification.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should enable "the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings!; and "sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside".

The adjacent land is already owned by the applicant and being used for commercial shooting purposes and the proposed facility would therefore be seen as extension to this and would therefore be economically beneficial to the countryside and assist with the s sustainable growth of an existing business. The proposed development is low impact and considered to be in keeping with the aims and objectives of the Churnet Valley Master Plan and Local Plan Policy E4 and economic objectives of the NPPF.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area and openness of the Green Belt

The proposed use would be carried out entirely within the shell of the application building without any enlargement or extension required. Whilst some external works would be required to facilitate the use such as additional car parking, access track to link grounds to Parkland and extension of forecourt to accommodate the gun bus these are relatively minor in scale and would in some circumstances secure the removal of some later unsympathetic alterations. In addition by virtue

of their size, scale, form and nature they would have no impact upon the openness of the Green Belt or the purposes of including land within it.

Notwithstanding the presence the application building has it sits down from the A520 and the topography and landscaping combine to camouflage the site to a significant degree. For these reasons the proposed development would not result in any adverse harm to the character and appearance of the application building and its wider setting including the valued characteristics of the open countryside. In this respect the proposal is considered to comply with Local Plan policy DC1 and DC3 as well as guidance contained within the NPPF in this respect.

Impact on residential amenity

National planning policy dictates that at the heart of its core principles, planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that development should be appropriate for its location taking into account cumulative effects through mitigation and reduction and limited the impact of light pollution. This is further re-iterated in Local Plan Policy DC1.

Given the rural setting, separation distance, intervening land uses and topography of the site it is not considered that the proposed development would be prejudicial to the residential amenity enjoyed by the occupiers of the adjacent dwellinghouses or detrimental to neighbouring land uses. Accordingly the proposal complies with Local Plan policy DC1 in this respect.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 108 of the NPPF requires plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Local Plan Policy T1 seeks to ensure development can be safely accessed and would not lead to an increase in on street parking to the detriment of the safe and efficient operation of the highway network.

The proposed shooting lodge would be for exclusive use only with no multiple shoots on any single day. The proposed number of guests would be limited to 20 at any one time with a maximum of 10 guns participating. Access for guests to the shooting lodge would be via the existing formal driveway which leads past the gate house off the main A520. All vehicular trips associated with the functioning and servicing of the shooting lodge would be made via the farm access which is located further along the A520.

It is not anticipated that vehicle movements would be substantially increased by the proposed development. It is likely that guests would arrive in pairs resulting in a total of 10 vehicle trips to and from the site. Once on site guests would be ferried from Ashcombe Park to the shoot site and back site via an internal access road.

In assessing the impact of the proposed development on the highway infrastructure regard should be had to the fallback position and the fact that the lawful use of the existing building as a large country house would generate an equivalent number of trips and vehicular movements. In addition the existing track could be used by agricultural vehicles in association with the adjacent estate buildings and parkland. On this basis it is considered that the proposed development would not adversely affect highway safety and therefore accords with the provisions of policy T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Arboriculture

A tree survey has been undertaken and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment carried out. The survey notes a total of 22 individual trees and three groups of trees. Of those surveyed all of them were of a standard that they should be considered during planning processes.

In order to access the wider parkland internally it is necessary to construct a short access track from the north western side of Ashcombe Park contiguous with the walled garden before joining the existing farm access. This is because the gun bus cannot navigate the existing access between Ashcombe Park and the farm cottage due to the presence of an arched opening which is too low.

The proposed access track would require the removal of four individual trees (T10, T11, T12 & T13) and one group (TG1) in order to provide the access track which links the curtilage of Ashcombe Park with the wider estate holding. Tree T10 is identified as a young Oak tree (category B) with a twin stem and deadwood, T11 is a young sycamore (category C) with a weak fork at its base, T12 a semi-mature Fir tree (category B) with a one sided crown due to group pressure whilst T13 is a young Oak (category C) with triple stem and deadwood. Removal of the

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4 individual trees would allow for the proposed road without disturbing any other RPA's. TG1 comprises of a group of 4 young oak trees (category C) which are in a fair condition.

The route of the proposed access track would extend into the root protection areas of two additional trees, T3 a Mature Ash (category B) which is in a poor physical and T22 a semi mature Yew tree (category A) in good physical condition.

Detailed consideration has been given to the point of access to the parkland from the curtilage and it is considered that this is the most feasible and would result in the least amount of disruption. Whilst the loss of the trees is regrettable it is not considered that the removal of the trees would change the view or the skyline from many angles now will it leave the remaining trees susceptible to wind throw. The encroachment into the RPA's of T3 and T22 is minor and can be sensitively undertaken as specified in the report.

Heritage

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that "applications for development which affect heritage assets, whether designated or non designated, are expected to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting".

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that "when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight that should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 196 states that "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

In addition to the above the NPPF supports schemes that will significantly enhance heritage assets. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF states that "Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage assets , outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies. "

In accordance with national and local planning regulations a Heritage Impact Assessment and Statement of Significance has been undertaken by Mel Morris of Mel Morris Conservation. This

document provides clear and convincing justification for the proposed development and in the interests of brevity I do not intend to repeat the contents of the report here. It is however important to note that the report concludes that the major positive impacts far outweigh any minor negative impacts and the proposed scheme can be whole heartedly supported on best practice conservation grounds, it is a sensitive change of use, which retains both the function and form of an exceptional listed building in tact so that its significance can be fully appreciated." It goes to state that "the scheme does demonstrate significant public benefits. Most other uses would cause much greater harm and would require more alterations and subdivision. This use treats the building as very special guest accommodation., a residential use without sub-division. It has been carefully considered over the last 6 years in conjunction with the Councils Conservation Officer, to take into account multiple aspects of its significance (as identified with appropriate professional expertise) and is sustainable development which is entirely in the spirit of the NPPF and can be fully justified. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and paragraphs 196 and 202 of the NPPF.

Other matters

The proposed development would provide significant benefits to the local economy through the creation of new jobs and encouraging overnights stays within the Churnet Valley. It is anticipated that 1 full time and 5 part time jobs would be provided directly in relation to the shoot with a further 2 full time and further 10 part time being provided in relation to the use of the building as a shooting lodge (i.e. cleaning, administration, catering staff etc). Rural job creation would obviously make an important and valuable contribution to the local economy and such benefits are considered to be a significant material consideration which weighs heavily in favour of the proposal.

The proposed development would also serve to encourage new and repeat visitors to the Moorlands with the overnight accommodation helping to facilitate overnight stays and therefore greater opportunity to increase participation in activities within the local area and greater spend.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the proposal accords with current planning policy at national and local level. The conversion of the existing dwellinghouse into a shooting lodge is considered to constitute an appropriate and form of development within the Green Belt, which not only provides tourism and economic benefits through the expansion of an existing rural business and rural job creation, but

will ensure that the long term conservation and preservation and of this important Grade II heritage asset is secured. The proposed development would not materially harm the openness of the Green Belt nor would it adversely affect the character and appearance of the application site or its wider open countryside setting. The proposal would not result in an adverse harm to the Grade II* listed building or its setting nor would it be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of the amenity of surrounding residential dwellings or harm neighbouring land uses. Furthermore it would not result in the loss of highway safety or adversely impact upon any established ecological interests. In this respect it is considered that the proposal would comply with national and local plan policies specifically SS1, SS10, SS11, DC1, DC2, DC3, E4, NE1 and T1. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant full planning permission for the proposed development.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes to change the use of the existing dwellinghouse (C3) to a shooting lodge and private function venue (Sui Generis). The use of the building as a single dwellinghouse is no longer viable and this form of development is considered to be the most sympathetic use for the building given its condition and requirement for ongoing maintenance. Most other uses would cause much greater harm and would require more alterations and subdivision. This use treats the building as very special guest accommodation., a residential use without sub-division.

AMOUNT

The proposed development would provide a 10 bedroom accommodation (with 2 additional staff bedrooms) which would be let on an exclusive basis.

LAYOUT

The layout of the proposed development is shown on drawing number 2014-1967-26F

SCALE

The proposed development would be carried out within the shell of the existing building with no extensions required.

LANDSCAPING

The site is located within a rural setting and sits within a mature garden as such benefits from an established green infrastructure. The proposal seeks to maintain this. No additional landscaping is proposed as part of this proposal.

APPEARANCE

No external changes are proposed to the application building itself. Whilst some modifications will be required to the curtilage of the building to facilitate the proposed use (as outlined above) these will be minor.

ACCESS

The application proposes no changes to the existing access arrangements off the main A520. Guests will approach and leave the site from the formal access past the Gate House whilst the existing farm access will be used for service vehicles. The number of vehicles will be limited due to the relatively small scale nature of the proposal and it is not considered that vehicle trips would be materially greater or the proposed use than its existing use as a small country house. Adequate parking and manoeuvring facilities will be provided within the application site as shown on drawing number 2014-1967-26F.

The site is located within a sustainable edge of town location well located to existing local facilities and public transport links are easily accessible to the towns of Leek, Cheadle and the neighbouring city of Stoke on Trent.