Huntley Wood Quarry,
Staffordshire

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the 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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1.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Introduction

1.1 This report assesses the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposals to develop Huntley Wood Quarry as a facility for outdoor recreation.

1.2 The applicant for the proposed development is the family run company Argoncroft Ltd. 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.

1.3 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. Minimal changes to the site are proposed in order to retain the natural environment that exists at the site.

1.4 Under the proposals, the site would be operated as three separate areas or Zones. Each Zone would be self sufficient and provide car parking, communal building with bunk accommodation, a kitchen and an activity room. Toilet and shower facilities would be provided in a separate building. Zone 1 would also provide a club house and small storage building. The proposals also include a temporary managers dwelling and a storage / office building located centrally within the site. Further details of the proposals for the site are included in section 3 of the planning supporting statement.

1.5 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is divided into seven main sub-sections:

- general introduction and summary of the methodology used;
- planning context, policy, relevant guidance and designations;
- landscape baseline study which includes a review of all existing landscape character assessments as well as a more detailed assessment of the landscape character of the application site and its context;
- visual baseline study which includes an assessment of the visibility of the existing site and the choice of representative viewpoints;
- study of the development proposals, including mitigation, to identify potential landscape and visual characteristics, effects and impact generators;
- assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors to the proposed development and the potential residual landscape and visual impacts likely to be generated after mitigation has been considered and their significance; and
- summary and conclusions.

Methodology

1.6 The format of this assessment 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).

1.7 A desktop study was undertaken including analysis of maps and 3D computer terrain models of existing landforms and proposed building masses to identify potential viewpoints and create perspective views. These viewpoints and any others identified during the fieldwork were then visited and assessed for their sensitivity to the proposed development.

1.8 The application site and surrounding areas were visited on 22nd September 2010, which included a review of the viewpoints used a previous LVIA carried out for the site in 2008. The photographs for the viewpoints were taken on 9th January 2008 and the fieldwork has not identified a significant change in the landscape character or visual amenity from these viewpoints and thus new photographs have not been considered necessary for this application. The weather conditions were acceptable for assessing all types of view.

1.9 Photographs were taken to illustrate views from a series of viewpoints (selected from the desk top assessment) using a Nikon D70 digital camera, set to a focal length which is the equivalent of a 50mm lens for a 35mm format camera. Panoramic views consisting of three or four photographic frames were merged together using Photovista software (v2.0).

1.10 The potential significance of landscape and visual impacts is determined by combining the magnitude of the potential impact and the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors to change, as shown in Table 1/1, below. Moderate/Substantial Impacts, and Substantial Impacts, (in bold on Table 1/1) are regarded as significant.

1.11 This process is not a quantitative process; there is not an absolute scoring system. Instead, the correlation of the two factors, although reflecting recognised features and methods of working outlined in this section, is in the end a matter of professional judgement.

Table 1/1
Principles of Assessing Significance of Landscape and Visual Impacts

Sensitivity / Magnitude	**Negligible**	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
Negligible	Negligible Impact	Negligible/ Slight Impact	Slight Impact	Slight/Moderate Impact
Low	Negligible/ Slight Impact	Slight Impact	Slight/ Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact
Medium	Slight Impact	Slight/ Moderate	Moderate Impact	**Moderate/ Substantial**

		Impact		**Impact**
High	Slight/ Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	**Moderate/ Substantial Impact**	**Substantial Impact**

1.12 Table 1/2, below, provides a brief definition of the full range of significance criteria. Both landscape and visual impacts can be adverse, beneficial or neutral in nature.

Table 1/2
Description of Significance Criteria for Landscape and Visual Impact

Level of Significance	Definition
No Impact	The proposed scheme has no effect on landscape or visual receptors.
Negligible	The proposed scheme is largely appropriate in its context. It would be very difficult to differentiate from its surroundings and would affect very few or no receptors.
Negligible/Slight	The proposed scheme would result in minimal change to the landscape which would be difficult to differentiate from its surroundings and would affect few receptors.
Slight	The proposed scheme would cause a barely perceptible impact, and would affect few receptors.
Slight/Moderate	The proposed scheme would cause few changes to the landscape, which would not be clearly noticeable, and would affect few receptors
Moderate	The proposed scheme would cause a noticeable difference to the landscape, and would affect several receptors. However, this change would not alter the essential character of the local landscape or that of the view.
Moderate/Substantial	The proposed scheme would cause a very noticeable difference to the landscape, and would affect several or many receptors. This change would therefore alter the character of the landscape in this locality, or the character of a view.
Substantial	The proposed scheme would change the character and/or appearance of the landscape for a long period of time or permanently. It would affect many receptors. This change would therefore alter the character of the landscape in this locality, or the character of a view.

Technical Difficulties

1.13 No technical difficulties were encountered in assessing the landscape and visual impacts of the proposals.

Landscape Baseline Study

Planning Context

1.14 The application site which covers a total area of some 68.4ha is centred on a worked out sand and gravel quarry which is in various states of regeneration including woodland, grassland and heathland, as well as bare ground, waterbodies and silt lagoons. However there is also an area of ancient

woodland around the north-east of the site and smaller areas of pasture and scrub to the west. The old quarry access road to the south-west would also be re-used as part of the proposals.

1.15 The most recent planning permission for the extension of operations for the winning of sand and gravel reserves (ref SM93/1169) was granted subject to a number of conditions. In particular condition 28 required a scheme for restoration to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Mineral and Waste Planning Authority, although this was never undertaken.

1.16 A planning application for a golf course afteruse was approved by the Local Planning Authority in 2008, although this scheme was dependent on the importation of inert waste to create the course fairways and greens. The importation of inert waste was the subject of a separate application which was subsequently refused by the Waste Planning Authority, Staffordshire County Council.

1.17 As a result, the golf course development did not proceed. The new owners of the site (Argoncroft) propose to develop the site as a facility for outdoor recreation. The use of the site as an outdoor recreation facility would provide the long term restoration for the site. The applicants proposals would make use of the natural environment that already exists at the site. The scheme would require minimal changes to the site and would enhance the nature conservation value and amenity value.

1.18 Table 1/3 provides a summary of the relevant landscape planning policies in relation to the proposed development. This includes reference to the following statutory documents which comprise part of the Development Plan for the application site:

- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (adopted May 2001)
- Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 (adopted May 2001)
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 1998);
- Waste Local Plan (adopted February 2002); and
- Minerals Local Plan (adopted December 1999).

Table 1/3
Local Landscape Planning Policies

Policy	Summary
Greenbelt (Local Plan N2, N7 and Structure Plan D5B)	Establishes a general presumption against inappropriate development in the green belt, including new buildings other than essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation that are of an appropriate scale. Development which would injure the visual amenity of the green belt by virtue of its siting, materials or design will not be permitted in locations which are within or visually conspicuous from the green belt.
Special Landscape Area (Local Plan N8)	This policy sets aims to prevent development which would materially detract from the high quality of the landscape within designated areas because of its siting, scale, design and materials, and associated traffic generation.

Policy	Summary
Nature Conservation (Local Plan N12, N14, N15)	Proposals for development likely to have an adverse effect on a grade 1 county site of biological importance (SBI) or a regionally important geological/geomorphological site will only be approved if it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site. Where development is to be approved that could have adverse effect on a site of nature conservation value, appropriate measures shall be required to conserve the site's interest and provide replacement habitats or features where damage is unavoidable.
Trees (Local Plan N20, N21 and Structure Plan NC13)	Applications for development will need to make provision for retention and safeguarding of existing trees and planting of new trees. Development must not cause loss or directly or indirectly damage sites of ancient woodland unless it can be demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the value of the ancient woodland. Management of existing woodlands and trees should be improved.
Recreation (Local Plan R7, R8 and Structure Plan T4, E11A)	Recreation development will be encouraged in the countryside provided the scale, use, design and arrangement are compatible with these areas and adequate parking and access arrangements are made. Major new developments should be accessible by a range of means of transport, including public transport and cycling. The retention and development of a network of well signposted and maintained public rights of way or concessionary routes will be encouraged.
Landscape Character (Structure Plan NC1, NC2)	Development should be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character of the countryside.

Designations

1.19 The application site does not form part of any national statutory landscape designation such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Park.

1.20 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (*op cit*) identifies that the site is located within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt, as shown on Drawing HW/6. Also there is an area of ancient woodland and Grade 1 SBI to the north-east of the site and a "Biodiversity Alert" site in the south of the site.

1.21 There are a number of scheduled ancient monuments within the local area including a double-moated site located approximately 2.3km to the north-west of the proposed development; a bowl barrow situated 2.8km to the south-east of the proposed development; and the earthworks remains of a moated site, which is located 3.0km to the south.

1.22 The central historic part of Cheadle, situated over 1km to the north-east and Upper Tean situated over 1km to the south-east are designated as Conservation Areas.

1.23 Cecilly Brook Nature Reserve is situated in the town of Cheadle and located 1.9km to the north-east of the proposed development.

Landscape Baseline

1.24 Landscape assessment, as opposed to visual assessment, deals with the fabric, character and quality of the landscape. The landscape fabric consists of the elements that make up the landscape, such as landform, land use and cultural factors. The way these elements fit together in terms of proportion, pattern, scale, etc., gives rise to a particular landscape character. Changes to the fabric and character of a particular landscape may affect the perceived value of that landscape, giving rise to changes in its quality.

1.25 Potential landscape receptors can therefore include elements of the physical landscape that may be directly affected by the development such as: topographic, geological and drainage features; woodland, tree and hedgerow cover; land-use; field boundaries and artefacts[1].

1.26 This section of the assessment aims to assess the character and quality of the landscape in and around the application area by carrying out a subjective assessment, and by also examining particular factors objectively, in accordance with the guidelines defined by Countryside Agency (*op .cit)*.

1.27 Countryside Agency (*op. cit*.) guidelines make a clear distinction between the characterisation process (in which the attributes of the landscape are described) and the judgement making process. This sub-section of the assessment deals with the characterisation process and later sub-sections of this report make judgements about the potential effects of the proposals based upon the characterisation.

Existing Landscape Appraisals of the Application Site and its Surroundings

1.28 The Countryside Agency guidelines describe how Landscape Character Assessment can be applied at different scales, from the national to the parish level. Assessments are ideally prepared at different scales that should fit together as a nested series or hierarchy of landscape character types and/or areas, such that each level of assessment adds more detail to the one above. The three main levels are: national and regional scale; local authority scale; and local scale. This assessment uses and presents a summary of the relevant published assessments at national, regional and local authority scales. These wider character assessments are then used to provide the context for the local scale landscape assessment for the application site.

Countryside Agency's Character Areas

1.29 The application site and surrounding area is located within Countryside Agency's Character Area 64 *"Potteries and Churnet Valley"*. Key characteristics of this area are:

- *Strongly dissected hills and small plateau, rising up to the Pennines and cut by major river valleys;*

1 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition), paragraph 6.13

- *Strong contrast between remote uplands, urban areas, sheltered wooded valleys and hillside pastures;*
- *Prominent Millstone Grit and Coal Measures ridges;*
- *Sprawling industrial towns of the Potteries forming a major conurbation;*
- *Extensive former industrial and extractive sites, many now reclaimed, intermixed with settlements and open land;*
- *Open moorland and rough grazing on higher ground;*
- *Rural settlement pattern of sheltered villages on low ground with hamlets, scattered farmsteads and cottages elsewhere; and*
- *Brick and sandstone older buildings with tile and slate roofs.*

1.30 Countryside Agency's Character Area 68 "*Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands*" is situated adjacent to the south of the application site.

Local Authority Landscape Assessment

1.31 The Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 "Planning for Landscape Change" identifies the application site to be within an area of "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys"* and is bordered to the south by *"Settled plateau farmland slopes"* and to the north by *"Ancient plateau farmland".*

1.32 Characteristic landscape features of "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys*" are:

- *Steeply sloping landform with incised valleys;*
- *Broadleaved and conifer woodland;*
- *Stone walls and buildings;*
- *Small sunken enclosed lanes;*
- *Low intensity pastoral farming;*

1.33 Incongruous landscape features of "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys"* are:

- *Past and present sand and gravel quarrying;*
- *Industrial sites;*
- *Stockproof fencing; and*
- *Busy main roads.*

1.34 The landscape quality of "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys"* is described as *"currently limited by a decline in the condition of some of the characteristic landscape features described above and, to a lesser extent, the introduction of some incongruous features and the loss of some of the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type. This landscape type is locally sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change."*

1.35 It was also identified that "*New woodland planting would be of particular value as a major component of the restoration of sand and gravel quarries, and the strategic siting of new native woodland could be very valuable in reducing the effects of fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodland. Design of woodlands both to landform and field pattern needs to be considered as appropriate. Both edge details and internal designs of*

woodlands are important and the scale of any planting should vary to reflect the scale of the landscape."

Landscape Appraisal of the Application Site and its Surroundings

1.36 Countryside Agency guidance (*op. cit.)* recommends that the characterisation process should be based on an assessment of natural factors, cultural and social factors and aesthetic and perceptual factors. These factors have been examined for the application site's surroundings and the existing site as it stands today.

Natural Characteristics

1.37 The existing topography of the worked out parts of the application site varies as follows:

- The main central area which has been worked out and is enclosed by steep side slopes, varies in elevation between a series of terraces at 200m AOD in the west, 208m AOD associated with a central plateau area and 184m AOD associated with a large waterbody in the south-east;
- The quarry rim varies between 230m-235m AOD in the north-west, 210m AOD in the north-east, to 175m AOD in the south-east and 215m AOD in the south-west; and
- There are also a number of geological fissures within the site which are to be assessed and subject to remedial works as necessary to remove any potential hazards.

1.38 The topography of the surrounding local landscape can be summarised as follows:

- to the north the land drops away to the river valley at elevations of 145m AOD approximately 1km away, before rising up to higher ground such as around Cheadle Park at 233m AOD at approximately 2km away;
- to the east the land drops away to the river valley at elevations of 135m to 145m AOD approximately 0.4km away before rising up to higher ground such as around Gorstyhill at 230m AOD at approximately 1.5km away;
- to the south the land falls away to elevations of 160m AOD to 145m AOD to a valley associated with a small watercourse at 0.4km away, before rising up to higher ground between Grange Farm and Hilltop Farm at 203m AOD at approximately 1km away; and
- to the west the land rises gently to 253m AOD at St Thomas's Trees at approximately 2km away.

1.39 Table 1, the derivation of landscape character types and sub-types, of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent's "Planning for Landscape Change" (*op cit*) identified the dominant solid geology as Palaeozoic and Triassic sandstones, with principal acid sands with some stagnogley soils. Heathland would be the characteristic semi-natural vegetation and the main farming activity would be mainly stock-rearing with regular and irregular, small to medium, hedged and walled field pattern amongst heavily wooded valleys.

1.40 Full details of the ecological context of the application area are described in the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) which is appended to the planning supporting statement. Drawing 3 shows the site and its surroundings, and identifies the area of proposed disturbance. The existing vegetation and land cover of the application site varies as follows:

- The main central area which has been worked out, includes 10.3ha of sandy and gravely bare ground and 22.5ha of various stages of natural regeneration grassland, gorse and broom scrub and birch woodland, with patches of Rhododendron and also areas of tree and shrub planting which has been carried out by the mineral operator. There are two rectangular waterbodies of less than 1ha and 3ha within the site;
- Beyond the quarry rim to the north and east there is 14.2ha mixed broadleaved (ancient) woodland and to the south 16.3ha of woodland and grassland with a small 0.5ha fishing pond and south-west a small 0.8ha field; and
- The old quarry site management area and tarmac access road which leads from the site entrance to the public highway, Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road covers approximately 0.5ha.

1.41 The vegetation and land cover in the local area can be summarised as generally agricultural land in all directions, which consists of neatly clipped hedgerows or fencing, numerous scattered hedgerow trees and occasional plantations/woodland. Arable farming is carried out where gradients allow access by machinery, with permanent pastures and woodland typically on the steeper slopes.

Cultural and Social Factors

1.42 The application site includes an area of historic mineral workings which ceased operation in 2004. There is currently little built development remaining within the quarry. Plant, equipment and storage sheds used for the quarrying operation have been decommissioned and removed from the site. Coneygreave Lane provides access to the site from Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road and is surfaced for it's length. The Lane has recently been improved by by the removal of fly tipping and encroaching vegetation.

1.43 Although there is some natural regeneration and restoration work completed around the side slopes, the visual character is generally of an abandoned state due to the regular, engineered topography and areas of bare ground with trespass, vandalism and the unauthorised use of motor vehicles.

1.44 There are several (active/disused) quarries located to the east of the application site and a disused opencast working is located to the north.

1.45 There are a number of residential buildings, farmsteads and settlements in the local area, including the following:

- Cheadle at approximately 0.5km to the north-east;
- Huntley House and village of Mobberley are situated approximately 0.2km to the east of the proposed development area;
- Teanford and the village of Upper Tean at approximately 1km to the south-east;

- Totmonslow and Draycott in the Moors at approximately 1km to the south; and
- Boundary at approximately 1km to the north-west.

1.46 Coneygreaves Farm is located approximately 250 metres to the south of the site boundary. High Coneygreave Fram 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.

1.47 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.

1.48 A number of individual and small clusters of properties are present immediately north of the site. The closest residential properties to the site in this area include Harplow and Litley.

1.49 There are a number of public highways in the local area, including the following:

- A minor road which passes around the northern and eastern boundary of the site;
- The A522 lies to 0.55km to the east of the site and connects Cheadle with Upper Tean;
- The A50 road which runs roughly from east to west is situated approximately 2km to the south of the application site; and
- The Cheadle Road at approximately 0.1km from the west of the site.

1.50 There is a public right of way that crosses the northern part of the site, running through the woodland around to the south-east and connects the site, via other public rights of way, with Huntley House in the east and Harplow Lane to the north.

1.51 Several public rights of way exist within the vicinity of the application site:

- connection between Cheadle Road with Huntley Lane and runs along the application site's southern boundary;
- connection between Harplow Lane with Cheadle to the north-east;
- connection between Huntley Lane with Cheadle to the north-east;
- Breach Lane towards Huntley Lane to the south-east;
- connection between Totmonslow and Hollow farm to the south; and
- from the Cheadle Road to the village of Boundary.

1.52 The Staffordshire Moorlands walks, a national trail, is situated at 1.5km to the north-west.

Aesthetic & Perceptual Aspects

1.53 The Table 1/4 summarises the main aesthetic characteristics of the application site and its surroundings, according to the categories identified within The Countryside Agency's latest guidance[2].

[2] 'Landscape Character Assessment' – Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) – Box 5.1

Table 1/4
Aesthetic Attributes of the Landscape within and around the Application Site

Aesthetic Factors	
Scale	The application site and surrounding areas are of medium to large scale due to the size of the redundant excavation, undulating topography and agricultural field patterns. Several areas of woodland and pasture fields associated with the valleys are of a smaller scale.
Enclosure	The application site mainly consists of recently disused mineral workings which are enclosed, to varying degrees, although once beyond the quarry rim the rolling topography and farmland is more open and exposed.
Diversity	The application site is diverse due to topography and vegetation cover, although the surrounding farmland areas are typically simpler with localised areas of diversity associated with roads, scattered farmsteads and buildings.
Texture	The application site is smooth to rough, depending on the degree of natural regeneration or other vegetation. The surrounding farmland areas are generally smooth to textured.
Form and Line	The application site is typically sloping and angular associated with the quarry workings, although the waterbodies and plateau terracing are more horizontal. The surrounding farmland is rolling to horizontal in form with straight and angular lines from neatly clipped hedgerows, roads, scattered farmsteads and buildings.
Colour	Areas of abandoned and regenerating mineral extraction are colourful to muted, depending on the degree of vegetation cover. In the surrounding farmland in the winter, the brown and red tinged ploughed fields and dark greens of the trees and woodlands would be muted and contrast strongly with the brighter greens of the permanent pastures. In summer, the landscape would be generally more colourful due to varying light, dark and yellow green hues. Waterbodies, roads, scattered farmsteads and buildings would be more constant monochrome colour.
Balance	The application site is typically discordant to chaotic associated with the recently disused workings. The surrounding farmland consists of balanced relationship of agricultural fields with scattered trees, hedgerows and woodland. Distribution of farmsteads, properties and connecting roads are more discordant to chaotic.
Movement	The recently disused mineral workings and woodland within the site, as well as the surrounding farmland are typically calm to still, depending on weather conditions and occasional use by machinery or other vehicles. Main roads in the local area are busy, although other minor “B” roads in the area are calm and occasionally busy.
Pattern	The worked out areas of the site are typically random, which contrasts with the more regular pattern of surrounding farmland.

Landscape Dynamics

1.54 The application site includes an area of disused sand and gravel quarry. There is no permitted restoration scheme in place although the terms of the current planning consent requires a beneficial afteruse to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority prior to implementation. Although a golf course afteruse for the site has been approved, this is unlikely to be implemented since a planning application for the importation of waste to create a suitable

landform was refused planning consent by the County Council as the Waste and Minerals Planning Authority.

1.55 In the absence of this development, it is assumed that an ecological based scheme would be the likely restoration scheme for the site. This would utilise natural processes such that birch and gorse scrub would continue to colonise the remaining open areas forming dense stands and gradually restricting the already limited ground flora. The existing areas of scrub and woodland would also continue to mature to form a silver birch dominated canopy with other species of trees through previous planting or regeneration providing variation in species composition, age and vegetation structure. Acid grassland would still be present in small patches in the more open areas of woodland and where scrub development is kept in check by grazing rabbits. The unchecked growth of Rhododendron would continue to be a problem and would eventually cover or dominate the majority of the site. With the exception of the fishing pond all the other ponds are likely to gradually suffer from the accumulation of silts entering these water bodies from surface run-off carrying high loadings of sand with the marginal vegetation succeeding to more swamp type communities.

1.56 In addition to the ecological conditions described above, the site would continue to exhibit the worked-out topography characteristics and also potentially existing levels of vandalism and trespass.

1.57 Therefore, whilst the baseline for this assessment acknowledges the site's current condition, it also acknowledges that the landscape in the local area is transient and would be subject to varying degrees of positive and negative change as a result of the existing planning permission, depending on the nature of the final restoration scheme.

Landscape Classification & Evaluation

1.58 The application site is mainly associated with recently disused mineral workings, which although there is some natural regeneration and restoration work completed around the side slopes the character is of a largely abandoned/derelict state. Overall the character of the majority of the site would therefore be of "abandoned mineral workings set amongst mature woodland and pastoral farming".

1.59 In this respect the site is 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.*), although it would be considered to be an incongruous element.

1.60 Eventually over very long timescales, the natural development of woodland may disguise the worked out character of the site and rendering the site less incongruous. The steep-sided, vertical to sloping and angular topography would nevertheless remain.

Potential for Landscape Enhancement

1.61 As discussed above, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent's Planning for Landscape Change (*op. cit.*), identified that the restoration of sand and gravel

quarries within "*Dissected sandstone cloughes and valleys*" should include new native woodland planting to reduce the effects of fragmentation and isolation of ancient woodland, with a particular emphasis on edge details and internal designs.

Conclusions on the Landscape Appraisal

1.62 This section has assessed the character and quality of the landscape in and around the application site by carrying out an objective and subjective assessment.

1.63 The application site includes recently disused mineral workings, areas of ancient woodland and other establishing habitats. Whilst there is some natural regeneration and restoration work completed around the side slopes, the appearance is of a largely abandoned/derelict state. Overall the character of the majority of the site would therefore be of "abandoned mineral workings set amongst mature woodland and pastoral farming".

1.64 In the long-term if left to natural regeneration, the site may become more assimilated into its surroundings in terms of developing a more continuous woodland cover, however the steep-sided, vertical to sloping and angular topography would remain.

Visual Baseline

1.65 Visual impact assessment relates to "*changes that arise in the composition of the available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to peoples' responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity*" (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Second Edition, op .cit.).

1.66 Potential visual receptors can include the public or community at large, residents, visitors and other groups of viewers as well as the visual amenity of people affected[3].

1.67 Initially it is necessary to define the extent of visibility both within and outside the application site. Viewpoints are then selected to represent views from the most commonly used locations in and around the application site, and the existing views from each of these points are briefly described with the aid of photographs.

Visibility of the Application site

1.68 The visibility of the application site was initially assessed by reviewing 3D computer modelling work for the site. An initial study of the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map was made to identify potential viewpoints based on the following criteria:

- proximity to the site;
- high concentrations of viewers, such as settlements, local recreational facilities, etc.;

[3] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition), paragraph 6.3

- views from designated areas, private properties, footpaths and other receptors; and
- views illustrating the visual character of the surrounding area

1.69 Photographs and fieldwork analysis of views of the application site were then undertaken from the surrounding landscape. The object was to determine which locations offer the clearest views of the application site and are most accessible to the public, as well as illustrating the general range of views possible.

1.70 The site is located within a well wooded and undulating location and little of the main worked out site is visible from outside of its boundaries. The edges of the site, beyond the quarry rim however are visible over greater distances.

1.71 The visibility of the application site is therefore restricted to varying degrees by:

- the topography of the adjacent land, where most views are either at a similar elevation or lower and due to the proposed height of structures of one storey, there would be limited or no visibility of the proposals;
- existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows which provide full or partial screening of the vertical elements from the various locations within the surrounding landscape; and
- farmsteads and other buildings which provide full or partial screening of vertical elements.

Viewpoints

1.72 Viewpoints[4] are selected on the basis of which points provide the clearest views of the application site and are also the most accessible to the public. Viewpoints may also represent views from areas which are not commonly used by the public, or which would provide less clear views of the proposals. Viewpoints may also represent areas which may be perceived to be sensitive to the visual impact of the proposals due to their nature or proximity, but which in reality have restricted views of the site. Drawing HW/6 illustrates the viewpoint locations for this assessment.

Table 1/5
List of Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Description	Drawing No.
Viewpoint 1	Public right of way to the north of the site	HW/7
Viewpoint 2	Public right of way to the east of the site	HW/7
Viewpoint 3	Public right of way to the east of the site on the edge of Huntley.	HW/8
Viewpoint 4	Public right of way by Coneygreave	HW/9
Viewpoint 5	Public right of way on minor road next to The Breach	HW/10
Viewpoint 6	Public right of way on elevated ground to the south-west	HW/10

[4] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition) Paragraph 6.29

Viewpoint 7	Public right of way to the south of the site by the site entrance	HW/11
Viewpoint 8	Cheadle Road by Lyndhurst	HW/11
Viewpoint 9	Delphouse Road by Boundary	HW/12
Viewpoint 10	Edge of Cheadle	HW/12

Potential for Visual Enhancement

1.73 The potential for visual enhancement of the application site is closely-related to the potential for landscape enhancement as described above, such as new native woodland planting/revegetation of the worked out void.

Conclusions of the Visual Assessment

1.74 This section has assessed the visibility of the site which is located within a heavily wooded and undulating area where little of the main worked out site can be seen from outside of its boundaries. The edges of the site, beyond the quarry rim however are visible over greater distances.

1.75 Representative viewpoints have been selected to represent views from the most commonly used locations in the surrounding area and potential visual receptors.

1.76 Opportunities for visual enhancement have been identified and these are closely related to the opportunities for landscape enhancement.

Landscape and Visual Implications of the Proposals

Summary of Proposals

1.77 The extent and nature of the proposals is described in Section 3 of the planning supporting statement.

1.78 The proposed change of use of the site to an outdoor recreation facility, including camping facilities, activity and accommodation huts, managers accommodation and associated storage buildings and establishment of car parking areas have all been examined in detail due to their specific landscape and visual implications.

Potential Landscape and Visual Elements of the Proposals

1.79 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, kitchen facilities, and indoor activity rooms for use during wet weather. A small club house and store building is also proposed in Zone 1.

1.80 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.

1.81 The new buildings are the minimum necessary to provide facilities for the quality of camp site proposed and would be located on hard-standing, would be single storey, small scale and timber framed log cabins, as follows:

- communal (accommodation and indoor activity) buildings to be 8m x 15.85m and constructed on a concrete slab to provide a level and stable base (9.2m x 17.5m). The maximum height of the single storey building from ground level to the roof ridge would be 3.65m and would be located at elevations of approximately 200m AOD in Zone 1, 182m AOD in Zone 2 and 194m AOD in Zone 3;
- toilet and shower facilities to be located in a separate building of dimensions 8m x 3.95m and 3.65m maximum height, based at an elevation of approximately 200m AOD in Zone 1, 187m AOD in Zone 2 and 194m AOD in Zone 3. The size of Zone 1 will require additional toilet / shower facilities due to the greater number of visitors;
- club house in Zone 1, would be based at an elevation of approximately 200m AOD. The dimensions of this building would be 11.35m x 11.9m and no more than 5.85m high to the ridge of the roof and 7m high to the top of the chimney which is the highest part of the building.;
- storage building to be 4m x 6m and no more than 3.65m high, based at an elevation of approximately 200m AOD in Zone 1 only;
- the manager's temporary dwelling would be located within the Management Zone at the centre of the site, to be 20m x 6.8m and no more than 4m high, based at an elevation of approximately 207m AOD;
- storage and site office building to be within the restricted Zone, to be 8.35m x 5m and no more than 6.1m high, based at an elevation of approximately 207m AOD; and
- a services distribution building installed on site close to the entrance along the main access road would be 4m x 6m and no more than 3.65m high, based at an elevation of approximately 202m AOD.

1.82 The proposed development would also involve the introduction of up to 300 tents in three concentrated areas of the site known as Zones 1, 2 and 3. Zones 1 and 2 would be on open grassland and at elevations of 202 -204m AOD and 186m AOD whilst Zone 3 would be within woodland and at elevations of 188 to 208m AOD. The extent of each Zone would be marked with coloured stakes.

1.83 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 landscape and visual terms.

1.84 Works for the initial phase of the scheme will be carried out in Zone 1 due to close proximity to the access road. The ground in Zone 1 comprises of bare sand and gravel, this area will receive 200mm of topsoil from existing on site stockpiles. In Zone 2 it is proposed that the camping area would be located

south of the lake. Selected areas of Zone 3 propose the thinning of trees, providing glade areas for camping.

1.85 The car park in Zone 1 (located at 200m AOD) would provide 200 spaces, Zone 2 car parking (located at 184-192m AOD) would provide 70 spaces and 35 cars would be provided in Zone 3 (located at 198-200m AOD).

1.86 Due to the nature of the proposed activities on site, it is possible that traffic flow may be occasionally high over a short period of time, such as start or finish of activities or events. 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. If several vehicles were to arrive at the same time or in a short time frame sufficient space would be available for vehicles to queue along the site access road. The potential visual impact of queuing traffic is discussed in relation to viewpoint 7 below.

1.87 The final camp site layout includes additional and compensatory planting and habitat and provision for long-term management of the site as a whole.

Timescales of Potential Impacts

1.88 It is expected that the building works for buildings and general improvements around the site would take approximately 2-3 months from start to finish.

1.89 Landscaping works, such as tree clearance would be undertaken in campaigns and at a suitable time of the year to avoid disturbance to wildlife habitats (for example outside bird nesting season).

1.90 The proposed after use of the site as a camp site would then be established on a permanent basis, although the application seeks permission for the managers dwelling for a temporary period of five years.

1.91 The site would be used by a wide range of local and national groups to camp or bunk at the site and pursue various outdoor activities whilst enjoying the natural surroundings. 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. Consequently the duration of timescales of use and potential impacts are difficult to define and likely to be vary from no presence on site other than manager's occupation through to full capacity events, and a range of use and activity in-between. The site would be used all year round.

Potential Indirect Impacts

1.92 The main indirect impact would be from traffic generated from the development, as this would have a potential visual impact for other users of the local highway network, and a general impact on the scenic quality of local views.

1.93 As discussed in Section 7, the use of the site for recreational events would give rise to varying levels of vehicle movements. Site traffic would comprise mainly of cars and commercial delivery vehicles and thus similar to other road users.

Lighting

1.94 Lighting would be provided within the car park and surrounding the buildings. This would be designed to enable good visibility for those users with poor eyesight whilst also adding to the security of the facilities. All lighting would be designed to avoid light pollution and it is proposed to deal with a detailed lighting scheme as part of a planning condition.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

1.95 All areas of disturbance would be kept to a minimum through the site. All routes in and out will be clearly delineated and fenced at the commencement of construction works.

1.96 The recreational after use would provide the principal medium and long-term mitigation measures, by establishing revenue to cover management costs, such as:

- The ancient woodland would be managed according to best practice and a woodland management plan to be prepared. For example, the removal and control of invasive Rhododendron; and
- Where possible heathland and acid grassland habitats will be encouraged through management actions on the existing resources that may be present in these areas.

1.97 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 noisy bad neighbour uses.

1.98 It is unlikely that the entire site would be used by one group at any one time and it is proposed to operate the site as three separate Zones, thus reducing the concentration of use in any particular area. The Zones are of different sizes to accommodate various size groups. Each Zone would benefit from having its own facilities and car parking and so would be self sufficient.

1.99 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.

Predicted Residual Landscape Impacts

1.100 Following the assessment of the baseline and potential elements of the development likely to cause change to that baseline, a detailed assessment of the possible sensitivity and magnitude of those changes can be made.

Landscape Sensitivity

1.101 Sensitivity is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible, according to the degree to which a particular landscape or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character.

1.102 The sensitivity of the existing landscape resource is based on the following factors:

- the value placed on the landscape;
- compatibility of the proposed development with the existing land-uses and landscape character;
- condition of the landscape;
- contribution of the landscape within the site to the overall landscape character;
- the scope for mitigation of the proposed development; and
- degree to which landscape elements and characteristics can be replaced or substituted.

1.103 It has been identified that different parts of the site would have different sensitivities to the proposed development, influenced largely by the historic quarrying activity and the presence of ancient woodland. Table 1/6[5] illustrates how the above criteria have been appraised to gain an understanding of the sensitivity of the application site both as a whole and as individual parts.

1.104 Overall the landscape of the application site is considered to have a medium to low sensitivity to the landscape changes arising from the proposed development.

[5] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition), paragraphs 7.16 and 7.17

Table 5/6
Sensitivity of the Landscape to the Proposals

Landscape Element	Description	Sensitivity
Ability to Accommodate Changes of Types Proposed	The ancient woodland has limited ability to accommodate change, whereas the previously worked out areas, where the majority of activity is proposed, and the unworked areas around the periphery of the site would be more able to accommodate change.	Medium to Low
Quality and Condition	The ancient woodland is of a high quality and condition, although Rhododendron has colonised areas, which is affecting the overall condition. It is assumed that this would continue in the absence of this development. The previously worked out areas, where the majority of activity is proposed, still has somewhat of an industrial character, with evidence of trespass and vandalism and is lacking in mature landscape features and therefore overall is of a lower landscape quality and condition. The unworked areas around the periphery of the site are more mature.	Medium to Low
Value	The site is not covered by any national landscape designations, but is within a Special Landscape Area and within Green Belt. Parts of the site are designated as a Grade 1 SBI and Ancient Woodland.	Medium
Contribution to Character	With the exception of the areas of natural regeneration and completed restoration planting, the character of the worked out areas, remains in a largely abandoned/derelict state and is an incongruous element amongst pastoral farming and mature woodland.	Medium
Ability to Replace or Substitute Elements	The ancient woodland habitat has limited ability for replacement, in particular ground flora and soils biodiversity. However any trees or other secondary natural regeneration to be removed either within or outwith the worked out areas could be replaced as part of the development.	Medium
Overall Landscape Sensitivity to the Proposed Development		Medium to Low

Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

1.105 The magnitude of landscape impacts, which are categorised as high, medium, low or negligible, depends upon the following factors[6]:

- the scale or degree of change to the existing landscape resource;
- the nature of the change caused by the proposals (for example, beneficial or adverse); and
- the timescale or phasing of the proposals.

1.106 The magnitude of change is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible.

Predicted Residual Landscape Impacts

1.107 The baseline landscape assessment identified the important elements and character of the local landscape. The predicted landscape changes to the application site and its surroundings which would occur as a result of the proposals are discussed below, according to changes to: natural characteristics; cultural and social factors; aesthetic and perceptual factors; and changes in classification and evaluation.

1.108 The construction phases of the development represent short to medium term impacts, whereas the final recreational after use scheme represents the principal medium to long-term landscape impact.

Changes in Natural Characteristics

1.109 As described in Table 3/1, of the planning statement, the total floor space of all the buildings combined accounts for a total of 0.09 ha across the entire 68.4 ha application site. The built development would therefore cover less than 0.15% of the site and so can clearly be seen to represent very small element of the entire site. Car parking which covers approximately 1.2ha in each Zone would be provided within existing areas of exposed sand and gravel. Access tracks around the site would be provided by maintaining and using the existing tracks remaining from the quarry activity.

1.110 The three Zones would occupy 64.5ha in total The 3 existing waterbodies on the site total 4ha and would be retained and used as part of the recreational afteruse.

1.111 Thus the majority of the site and existing habitats 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.

1.112 All habitats would be managed, for example preventing the reversion of selected areas of heathland and grassland to scrub or woodland. Lowland Heathland is identified as priority habitats in the national and local Biodiversity Action Plans, but requires constant human intervention/management.

6 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition) Paragraphs 7.18 and 7.23

1.113 The remaining parts of the ancient woodland and Huntley Wood SBI that are unaffected by the proposed development would be managed according to best practice and a woodland management plan to be prepared.

1.114 By undertaking nature conservation management within the site as a whole the negative effects of temporary disturbance would be compensated and have the potential to generate long-term residual positive ecological effects.

Changes in Cultural and Social Factors

1.115 There would be no direct changes to designated cultural heritage assets or recreational features such as public rights of way or highways.

1.116 Vehicular access to the site would be via the existing, redundant quarry entrance to the south of the site, which connects with Cheadle Road / Draycott Cross Road by Coneygreaves Lane.

1.117 The recreational afteruse would introduce new facilities for local and national groups to camp or bunk on the site in order to enjoy the surroundings and pursue various outdoor activities, and would therefore be of a beneficial nature in this respect. This use of the site would also provide employment in the local area and put a stop to trespass and illegal motorcycling at the site.

Changes in Aesthetic & Perceptual Aspects

1.118 The construction stages would generate localised changes to aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the application site to varying degrees, by for example introducing more movement and disturbance associated with plant and machinery during working hours.

1.119 The recreational afteruse stages of the development would also generate limited changes to aesthetic and perceptual aspects, to varying degrees, for example with the introduction of colourful tents for a limited period and the movement of people and vehicles.

Changes in Classification and Evaluation

1.120 The construction stages would temporarily alter the local landscape character type of the application site from “abandoned mineral workings” set amongst “mature woodland and pastoral farming” to “abandoned mineral workings with active construction work set amongst mature woodland and pastoral farming”.

1.121 The recreational after use stages of the development would subsequently ensure permanent alteration of the site to “outdoor recreational facility amongst mature woodland and pastoral farming”.

1.122 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.

Magnitude of Landscape Impacts

1.123 The overall magnitude of landscape impacts during construction phases would be low and adverse, due to their much localised nature and limited duration.

1.124 The overall magnitude of landscape impact following final recreational afteruse would be low and beneficial, as although there would be some new buildings and other potentially negative effects of temporary disturbance, these would be small scale and enable the potential use of the site by a range of interested groups, along with associated ongoing habitat management within the site as a whole, with the potential to generate long-term residual positive ecological effects, whilst also assisting the prevention of further trespass and vandalism.

Summary of Residual Landscape Impacts

1.125 The magnitude of landscape impact of the proposals during construction would be low, but adverse. Most of the site would be undisturbed and some of the proposed disturbance would take place with existing areas of bare ground.

1.126 Following establishment of the final recreational afteruse, the magnitude of landscape impact would be low and beneficial. The entire site would be managed to enhance recreational and ecological potential.

1.127 Overall these changes would not alter the essential character of the local landscape and would be 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.*).

Predicted Residual Visual Impacts

Sensitivity of Viewpoints

1.128 The list of identified viewpoints set out in Table 1/7 below also includes a brief assessment of their sensitivity, categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. Sensitivity depends on the following factors[7]:

- the location and context of the viewpoint;
- the number of viewers who commonly use the viewpoint. Some viewpoints are commonly used by the public, such as formal viewing platforms, picnic areas or recreational rights of way. Other viewpoints may be difficult to gain access to;
- the nature of the viewpoint. Residential properties are sensitive to visual impacts as the residents experience the impacts on a regular and prolonged basis. Public footpaths can also be sensitive, since the users' attention is often focused on the landscape. By contrast, views from

[7] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Second Edition) Paragraphs 7.31 and 7.35

outdoor sport facilities, transport routes or places of work are less sensitive;

• movement of viewers at the viewpoint. More transitory views, for example from a motorway, are generally less sensitive than views experienced from residential properties and footpaths; and

• the cultural significance of the viewpoint, including its appearance in guidebooks and tourist maps, or cultural and historical associations.

Table 1/7
Sensitivity of Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Description	Sensitivity
Viewpoint 1	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way to the north of the site, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 2	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way to the east of the site, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 3	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way to the east of the site on the edge of small hamlet of Huntley, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt.	High
Viewpoint 4	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way by isolated farmstead of Coneygreave, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 5	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way on minor road next to isolated properties by The Breach, within Special Landscape Area on the edge of Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 6	Represents views obtained by users of the public right of way on elevated ground to the south-west, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 7	Represents views obtained by users of the Public right of way to the south of the site by the site entrance, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 8	Represents views obtained by users of the Cheadle Road by isolated property at Lyndhurst, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium
Viewpoint 9	Represents views obtained by users of the Delphouse Road by residential properties at Boundary, within Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high
Viewpoint 10	Represents views obtained by residents on the edge of Cheadle, Special Landscape Area and Green Belt	Medium to high

1.129 The potential visual effects of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape and in particular the views from identified viewpoints, have been assessed with the aid of plans and site assessment, and are described in detail below.

Magnitude of Visual Impacts

1.130 For each of the viewpoints the potential magnitude of the residual visual impacts, taking into account the proposed mitigation, has been assessed.

The magnitude of visual impacts is mainly dependent upon the following factors[8]:

- what proportion of the existing view would change as a result of the development proposals?
- how many features or elements within the view would be changed?
- how appropriate are the proposals in the context of the existing views?
- how many viewers would be affected by the changes in the view?
- what is the timescale of the proposals? Also, is it continuous or intermittent? and
- what is the angle of the view in relation the main activity of the receptor?

1.131 The magnitude of change for all of the viewpoints was assessed with the aid of photographs, plans and 3D computer models and is described below.

Viewpoint 1 – Public Right of Way to the north of the site

1.132 The photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views of the existing abandoned quarry from Viewpoint 1 are screened by mature woodland and a rising ridgeline of approximately 17-18m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 211.8m AOD).

1.133 Potential views may increase in winter with the absence of foliage. Clearance of Rhododendron as part of the proposed woodland management would also increase filtered views through the woodland.

1.134 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD. The buildings in Zone 1 and 2 would generally be no higher than 3.65m with the only exception being the Club House which would be a single storey building with a chimney. In the Restricted Zone the maximum height of the house would be 3m and the store / office building 6.1m. The nearest of the proposed buildings at 272m away from this viewpoint. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be located beyond the southerly quarry rim at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.6m.

1.135 A review of the 3D model confirms that as a result of the topography (even without the influence of intervening vegetation) all of the buildings would be screened from this viewpoint.

1.136 Similarly the access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible. The only exception may be certain transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments which may result in an increase in the number of people or groups using the right of way or adjacent areas, although this is expected to be localised and limited in duration.

[8] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assess*men*t (Second Edition) Paragraph 7.36

1.137 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use for these viewpoints would be negligible and neutral.

Viewpoint 2 – Public Right of Way to the east of the site

1.138 The photographs from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views of the existing abandoned quarry from Viewpoint 2 are similarly screened by mature woodland and a relatively close rising ridgeline of approximately 2-4m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 192.9m AOD). The only noticeable feature being the yellow warning sign ("Deep Quarry Keep Out" and "private property-keep to public footpath") attached to a tree and the post and wire fence.

1.139 Potential views may increase in winter with the absence of foliage. Clearance of Rhododendron as part of the proposed woodland management would also increase filtered views through the woodland.

1.140 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m with the nearest of the proposed buildings at 293m away. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be much further way and located beyond the southerly quarry rim at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.65m.

1.141 A review of the 3D model confirmed theoretical visibility of the upper parts of the office and managers dwelling. However, these would occupy a small part of the view being located in a different direction to the main route of travel, be set amongst vegetation and with intervening woodland around the quarry rim, and the materials and styling of log cabin would further reduce the visual effect.

1.142 The access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities would also all be at a low level within the quarry and not visible. The only exception may be certain transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments which may result in an increase in the number of people or groups using the right of way or adjacent areas, although this is expected to be localised and limited in duration.

1.143 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use for these viewpoints would be negligible to low and adverse.

Viewpoint 3 - Public Right of Way to the east of the site on the edge of Huntley

1.144 The photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views of the existing abandoned quarry are screened by mature woodland and a rising ridgeline of over 30m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 157.9m AOD) at 180m away.

1.145 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between

200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m with the nearest of the proposed buildings would be 374m away. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be much further way and located beyond the southerly quarry rim at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.6m.

1.146 A review of the 3D model confirms that as a result of the topography (even without the influence of vegetation), all of the buildings would be screened from this viewpoint.

1.147 Similarly the access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible. The only exception may be certain transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments which may result in an increase in the number of people or groups using the right of way or adjacent areas, although this is expected to be localised and limited in duration.

1.148 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use would be negligible and neutral.

Viewpoint 4 – Public Right of Way by Coneygreave

1.149 The photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the north are screened by scrub, mature woodland and a rising ridgeline of approximately 36m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 168.9m AOD) and approximately 220-230m from the site.

1.150 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be located on the outside of southerly quarry rim, within mature woodland at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.6m. The nearest of the proposed buildings would be 310m away.

1.151 A review of the 3D model confirmed theoretical visibility of the upper parts of Zone 2 buildings, the office and managers dwelling. However, these would each occupy a small part of the view being located in a different direction to the main route of travel, be set amongst dense vegetation and with intervening woodland, and the materials and styling of log cabin would further reduce the visual effect.

1.152 The access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities for Zone 1 and 2 would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible, whilst Zone 3 would be on the outer southern side, but set amongst mature woodland. Any brightly coloured tents associated with Zone 3 are also unlikely to be conspicuous from this location.

1.153 As mentioned in previous viewpoints, certain transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments may result in an increase in the number of people or groups using the right of way or adjacent areas, although this is expected to be localised and limited in duration.

1.154 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use would be negligible to low and adverse.

Viewpoint 5, 6 and 8

1.155 For Viewpoint 5, located at the public right of way on minor road next to The Breach, the photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the north consist of rolling farmland, defined by hedgerows with extensive mature woodland on the distant, rising ridgeline of approximately 53m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 150m AOD) and approximately 580m from the site.

1.156 For Viewpoint 6 located on the public right of way on elevated ground to the south-east, the photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the north consist of rolling farmland, defined by hedgerows with extensive mature woodland on the distant, rising ridgeline of approximately 5m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 197.5m AOD) and approximately 1km from the site.

1.157 For Viewpoint 8, on Cheadle Road by Lyndhurst, the photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the north-east consist of rural road, bounded by clipped hedgerows and mature woodland on a rising ridgeline of approximately 11m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 205.9m AOD) and approximately 210m from the site.

1.158 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be located on the outside of southerly quarry rim, within mature woodland at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.6m. The nearest of the proposed buildings would be 788m away from Viewpoint 5, 1276m away from Viewpoint 6 and 602m away from Viewpoint 8.

1.159 A review of the 3D model confirmed theoretical visibility of the upper parts of Zone 2 and 3 buildings, the office and managers dwelling. However, these would each occupy a small part of the view, be set amongst dense vegetation and with intervening woodland (and in the case of Viewpoint 8 the roadside hedgerow), and the materials and styling of log cabin would further reduce the visual effect.

1.160 Similarly the access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities for Zone 1 and 2 would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible, whilst Zone 3 would be on the outer southern side, but set amongst mature woodland. Brightly coloured tents and any other transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments which will be localised and limited in duration are also unlikely to be noticeable from this viewpoint.

1.161 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use for all of these viewpoints would be negligible to low and adverse.

Viewpoint 7 – Public Right of Way to the south of the site by the site entrance

1.162 The photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the north-east consist of wooded track and farmland. The viewpoint is at 195.9m AOD and adjacent to the site. Other than an industrial pair of gates/entrance and safety sign, the existing abandoned quarry would not be visible.

1.163 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m, whereas Zone 3 would be located beyond the southerly quarry rim at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.65m. The nearest of the proposed buildings would be 162m away.

1.164 A review of the 3D model confirmed theoretical visibility of the upper parts of Zone 3 buildings and office / storage building. However, these would each occupy a small part of the view, be set amongst dense vegetation and with intervening woodland and the materials and styling of log cabin would further reduce the visual effect.

1.165 Similarly the access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities for Zone 1 and 2 would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible, whilst Zone 3 would be on the outer southern side, but set amongst mature woodland. Brightly coloured tents and any other transient activities such as orienteering, walking or enactments which will be localised and limited in duration are also unlikely to be noticeable from this viewpoint.

1.166 There is occasionally the potential for queuing traffic waiting to access the site at peak times to be visible from this viewpoint, although as discussed above, it is proposed to manage this via the use of arrangements within the site and consequently it is predicted that this would be infrequent and limited in duration/overall effect.

1.167 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use would be negligible to low and adverse.

Viewpoint 9 and 10

1.168 For Viewpoint 9 located at the Delphouse Road by Boundary, the photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the south-east consist of undulating valley with a waterbody surrounded by agricultural land with extensive mature woodland on the distant, rising ridgeline of approximately 21m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 208.9m AOD) and approximately 1.1km from the site.

1.169 For Viewpoint 10, east of Cheadle, the photograph from 2008 and field visit in 2010 indicate that views to the south-west consist of undulating farmland with extensive mature woodland on the distant, rising ridgeline of approximately 51m higher than the viewpoint (which is at 149.7m AOD) and approximately 585m from the site.

1.170 The new buildings within Zones 1 and 2 and the Management Zone would all be located within the quarry floor, beyond the ridge at elevations of between 200-207m AOD and would no higher than 6.1m with the nearest of the proposed buildings would be 1601m away from Viewpoint 9 and 1051m away

from Viewpoint 10. Within Zone 3 the buildings would be much further way and located beyond the southerly quarry rim at elevations of 194m AOD and no higher than 3.6m.

1.171 A review of the 3D model has confirmed that as a result of the topography (even without the influence of distance and vegetation), all of the buildings would be screened from this viewpoint.

1.172 Similarly the access roads, car parking and camping areas/activities would also be at a low level within the quarry and not visible and any other transient activities localised and limited in duration and/or inconspicuous.

1.173 Taking the above into account, the magnitude of visual change during construction and ongoing recreational use would be negligible and neutral.

Summary of Residual Visual Impacts

1.174 The magnitude of visual impact has been assessed by direct changes to specific viewpoints, as listed above.

1.175 The magnitude of change would be greatest along a relatively short section of public right of way adjacent to the site entrance where vehicles may occasionally be seen queuing to access the site at peak times and also elsewhere to the south where glimpsed views of occasional tents and/or the buildings in Zone 3 may be visible amongst the mature woodland. In such cases, the potential effects are unlikely to be greater than negligible to low and adverse.

Potential Significance of Landscape Impacts of the Proposals

1.176 Overall the application site would have a medium to low sensitivity to the development proposals. During construction the magnitude of landscape change would be low and adverse, whereas following recreational afteruse the magnitude of change would be low and beneficial.

1.177 The significance of landscape impacts would be no more than slight; the proposed development would cause a barely perceptible impact, and would affect few receptors.

1.178 Overall these changes would not alter the essential character of the local landscape and be 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.*). There would be no significant landscape impacts.

Potential Significance of Visual Impacts of the Proposals

1.179 The significance levels are summarised in Table 1/8 for all viewpoints. In the worst cases, the significance of visual effects would be no more than slight to moderate and adverse; the proposed scheme would cause few changes to the landscape, which would not be clearly noticeable, and would affect few receptors

Table 1/8
Significance Levels for all Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Impact
Viewpoint 1	Medium to high	Negligible and Neutral	Negligible to slight and neutral
Viewpoint 2	Medium to high	Negligible to low and Adverse	Negligible to slight and Adverse
Viewpoint 3	High	Negligible and Neutral	Negligible to slight and neutral
Viewpoint 4	Medium to high	Negligible to Low and adverse	Negligible to slight and adverse
Viewpoint 5	Medium to high	Negligible to Low and adverse	Negligible to slight and adverse
Viewpoint 6	Medium to high	Negligible to Low and adverse	Negligible to slight and adverse
Viewpoint 7	Medium to high	Negligible to Low and adverse	Negligible to slight and adverse
Viewpoint 8	Medium	Negligible to Low and adverse	Negligible to slight and adverse
Viewpoint 9	Medium to high	Negligible and Neutral	Negligible to slight and neutral
Viewpoint 10	Medium to high	Negligible and Neutral	Negligible to slight and neutral

Potential Impacts of the Development in relation to Landscape Planning Policies

1.180 As discussed above, local landscape planning policies have been identified as relevant to the proposed development. This sub-section considers the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development in relation to each policy.

1.181 Although the site is situated within the Green Belt, the proposed development would not be inappropriate as recreational uses are promoted within PPS 2. Furthermore the buildings are limited to essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and would be of an appropriate scale. The proposed buildings have been suitably designed to reflect its location with sensitive materials and siting. The proposed development would therefore not be in conflict with Local Plan Policy N2, N7 and Structure Plan D5B.

1.182 Although the site is situated within the Special Landscape Area, the proposed development would not significantly detract from or alter the high quality of the landscape surrounding the site because of its siting, scale, design and materials or associated traffic. The proposed development would therefore not be in conflict with Local Plan Policy N8.

1.183 The proposed development would retain and safeguard large areas of existing trees and no ancient woodland would be lost, although there would be small areas of woodland that would be cleared. A woodland management plan would be prepared in accordance with best practice guidelines. The proposed development would therefore not be in conflict with Local Plan Policy N20, N21 and Structure Plan Policy NC13.

1.184 The proposed development would establish a new recreational afteruse in the countryside. The scale, use, design and arrangement would be compatible with the surrounding rural area and adequate parking and access, including temporary diversion and subsequent reinstatement of an existing public right of way. The proposed development would therefore be not conflict with Local Plan Policy R7, R8 and Structure Plan Policies T4, E11A.

1.185 The proposed development would be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character of the countryside, in terms of habitat creation (including tree and shrub planting) and long-term woodland management. The proposed development would therefore not be in conflict with Structure Plan Policy NC1, NC2.

1.186 The potential effects upon the SBI and other areas of nature conservation interest are discussed in detail under section 7, in terms of Local Plan Policy N12, N14 and N15.

Conclusion

1.187 This section has assessed the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposed development, as has been described in Section 4. 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.

1.188 The application site is centred on a worked out sand and gravel quarry which is in various states of natural regeneration including woodland, grassland and heathland, as well as bare ground, waterbodies and silt lagoons. However there is also an area of ancient woodland around the north-east of the site and smaller areas of pasture and scrub to the west. The old quarry access road to the south-west would also be re-used as part of the proposals.

1.189 The option of simply leaving the abandoned quarry as an ecologically-based restoration scheme with natural regeneration and no further development would require a very long time to develop sufficient woodland to the degree required to disguise the worked out profile. 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.

1.190 The proposed change of use to a recreational afteruse 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 some 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.

1.191 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.

1.192 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.

1.193 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.