

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0481
Valid 12/08/2021

BREEZE HOUSE
SUNNYHILLS ROAD
LEEK

**PROPOSED CREATION OF
FIRST FLOOR OFFICE SPACE
WITH GROUND FLOOR
TOILET BLOCK TO FACTORY,
INTERNAL ALTERATIONS
AND FACADE AMENDMENTS.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity
Parking provision and the impact on highway safety
The impact on flood risk

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is within the development boundary of Leek and lies on an industrial estate on the south-west edge of the town. The site comprises a large brick and metal-sheeted warehouse building with associated offices which appears to be occupied by a garden timber structure provider. It is the closest plot on the industrial estate to the main A52 road (Newcastle Road) which leads out of the town towards Stoke-on-Trent. This runs along the north-west boundary of the site and there is residential development to the other side of this, further to the north. Sunnyhills Road runs along the north-east boundary and provides the access to the site, leading to the staff and visitor car park in the north part of the site. The main warehouses are in the south part of the site. There are other industrial buildings to the south-east of the site and to the other side of Sunnyhills Road to the north-east. To the south-west side is open land in the Green Belt comprising a tree belt and a field leading to the River Churnet a short distance away. The site is in Flood Zone 3, the zone of highest flooding probability.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a first-floor extension above a flat-roofed single-storey projection containing offices, on the north-east elevation of the building, facing Sunnyhills Road. The new storey would also have a flat-roof and amended plans show the extension would be finished in goosewing grey vertical cladding with the existing lower storey, currently in brick, finished in a white/cream render. The new floor would accommodate additional offices for the company on site and there is also a meeting room, toilets and kitchen shown on the floor plans. The application is also for a single-storey flat-roofed extension (of an existing flat-roofed projection) on the north-west elevation, facing Newcastle Road, which would be finished in timber and

would comprise toilets. Two parking spaces would be taken up by this extension. In total, 135 sq.m of office floorspace would be added to the existing 300 sq.m of offices at the warehouse/factory site. The forms state the proposed development is not linked to any changes in staff numbers.

The plans were amended to replace the materials on the existing single-storey wing with extension above which was entirely to be covered with timber boarding but changed to a part vertical cladding/ part render mix.

The plans were further amended on 8.10.21 which replaced the timber boarding on the upper floor with goosewing grey metal panels.

The application includes a Flood Risk Assessment.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS5 Leek Strategy

E1 New Employment Development

TCR3 Retailing and other town centre uses outside of town centres

SD5 Flood Risk

DC1 – Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 6 (Economy), 7 (Town Centres), 12 (Design) and 14 (Climate Change).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

No recent or relevant planning applications.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 5.10.21

Neighbour consultation period ends: 5.10.21

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

Local Highways Authority

No objection as although two parking spaces would be lost, there would still be sufficient parking spaces to serve the premises including additional office floorspace proposed.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions.

SCC Flood Team

No objection raised. There will be no significant change to the impermeable area and so little change to the surface water runoff generated by the site.

Severn Trent Water

No objection subject to a standard drainage condition.

OFFICER COMMENTS

With regard to the principle of the development, policies in the Local Plan resist new office development outside of the town centres in order to protect the viability and vitality of town centres. However, the office floorspace proposed appears to be additional office floorspace for the company at the site and would be ancillary to it. The additional 135 sq.m of floorspace is not a significant amount and would not compromise the vitality and viability of the town centre. To have on-site offices ancillary to the company would assist with the operation of the industrial use on site and would also help prevent a potential increase in vehicle movements which would not be the case if new office premises for the company were to be located in the town centre due to travel between the two sites. The provision of further offices on site would also therefore be a sustainable form of development given the location of the current company base.

With regard to the design of the extensions and their impact on the character and appearance of the area, although the site is visible from one of the main routes leading out of (and into) Leek (Newcastle Road), it appears more integral to the Sunnyhills Road industrial estate and the main access is off this road. The larger of the two extensions, at first floor level, would face the industrial estate road and not Newcastle Road. Flat-roofed extensions, especially comprising more than one floor, are normally resisted in the Council's Design Guide. However, the site is on an industrial estate where there is a mix of warehouses with no design merit and more modern factory buildings, some of which are large buildings with flat roofs. The flat-roofed building proposed would not be out of keeping with the area and the contemporary appearance by virtue of the goosewing grey metal sheets (on the upper half) and white/cream render mix of materials on the lower half would be in

keeping with the area which contains some contemporary designed new factory buildings with similar materials and colours. This replaces the timber materials on the upper half (on the first set of amendments) due to concerns about this choice of materials by the Council as it is contrary to the Council's Design Guide (2018). The single storey extension would be finished in timber but this is a small extension of an existing timber projection on the north elevation and is much less prominent and therefore acceptable.

The residential amenities of the area would not be affected as the nearest houses lie to the other side of the main road and separated from the buildings by a car park and road-side tree screening. The dwellings are sufficient distances away from the extensions to be affected by any overlooking or loss of light. The extensions would be used for offices and would not lead to any further scope for increased noise from industrial processes.

With regard to highway safety, despite the loss of two spaces, the resultant car parking provision would be well in excess of the parking standards based on the resultant size of the buildings and office floorspace. Furthermore, the development is not linked with any increase in staff numbers. The proposal would not lead to any pressure to park on surrounding roads (although the width of Sunnyhills Road would not make it unsafe to park on this road in events of any parking congestion in the on-site car parks) to the extent that highway safety is compromised.

Finally, with regard to flood risk due to the presence of the nearby river, the extensions would either be above existing parts of the building or on an existing yard area and the development would therefore not increase the risk of flooding in the area. There is no great risk to the site itself, as the ground floor extension would be toilets and the proposed offices and meeting rooms are to be accommodated at first-floor level.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The principle of the extended office floorspace for the company on the site is acceptable in this location within an existing industrial estate within the development boundary of Leek and would not affect the vitality and viability of the town centre. The proposal as amended would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area or lead to any other environmental harms. The proposal complies with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 11.10.21

X *J. Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council