



# FOREFRONT

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## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Replacment building for childrens nursery at

Bee-Active Childcare, Knypersley Sports Club,

230 Tunstall Road, Knypersley, Stoke-on-Trent. ST8 7AQ

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This planning statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application to replace a changing room building at Knypersley Sports Club with a SAME size building for additional childcare space at an existing children's day nursery known as Bee Active.

The application is in detailed form. The existing building is single storey and provided changing room facilities. The building has fallen into disrepair and alternative sports changing facilities are provided elsewhere on the Sports Club site. The replacement building would be the same dimensions and shape.

The site lies very close to the existing children day nursey, Bee Active. It would allow that business to expand to provide additional early years provision.

The wider site is known as Knypersley Sports Club which provides community and sporting facilities. The applicant leases the existing nursery building and has a legal right to use the site accesses and car parking to the north of the application site.

The existing parking and manoeuvring facilities at the Sports Club site will be used for customers and staff.

## **2. SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site lies within the designated Green Belt, although it lies close to the village of Knypersley. The site is screened in views from the public highway by a boundary wall and trees/hedge.

The surrounding site is known as Knypersley Sports club and provides cricket pitches and bowling greens. The building also provides community facilities and services.

The southern part of the Sports Club includes a number of buildings, one of which is a two-storey building occupied by Bee Active childcare. Beyond this to the south are three smaller buildings, The one closest to the existing nursery is the subject of this planning application. It is a single storey building with a shallow pitched roof and openings in its eastern elevation.

The existing building is dilapidated and has not been used for approximately 5 years. It provided changing rooms which are now available elsewhere on the wider site.

The existing building has inadequate foundations and single skin walls, and is therefore unsuited to conversion for the intended use. The new building would provide additional capacity for the existing children's day nursery close by to the North East.

The new building would contain two separate rooms for different age children. Staff facilities, toilets and a sensory room would also be provided. Secure outside play space is also proposed to the east of the building, secured by new boundary treatment.

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

SMD/2004/0331 Changing rooms. Approved

No planning permission has been identified for the use of the existing building to the North east of the application site as a children's nursey. It is considered that the change of use probably did not require planning permission as a nursery falls within the same Use Class (Class E Commercial, Business and Services) as the use of the site as a whole as a community/sporting facility.

### **4. PLANNING POLICIES AND GUIDANCE:**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework: December 2024**

Para 153 Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

Para 96 To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and

Para 100

It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

#### **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014-2033**

### Policy SS1 Development Principles

The Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services: quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers.

### Policy SS2 Settlement Hierarchy

**Other Rural Areas** – this comprises the open countryside where development is normally unacceptable and green belt where further development is generally inappropriate. Within these areas there are some groups of houses and hamlets which are not identified as ‘smaller villages’ because of their predominantly open character and loose-knit nature. They also contain major developed areas which may be suitable for appropriate development or redevelopment.

### Policy SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

1. Sustain the rural economy by:

Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified.

### Policy DC1 Design Considerations

All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council’s Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:

1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
2. be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;

### Policy C1 Creating Sustainable Communities

In order to create sustainable communities at a local level the Council will:

1. Support proposals which protect, retain or enhance existing community facilities (including multi use and shared schemes) or provide new facilities. New facilities should preferably be located within defined built up areas where they are most accessible. In exceptional cases facilities may be located adjacent to these areas where it can be demonstrated that this is the only practical option and where a site is well related to the existing settlement.

### Policy NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

The Council will protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration.

This will be achieved by:

Requiring that existing woodlands, healthy trees and hedgerows are retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh their loss;

Requiring new developments to provide tree cover that secures a good level of sustainability through tree retention, planting and soft landscaping, including where possible the on site replacement of any trees that are removed with sufficient tree planting to replace or increase the canopy cover on-site as appropriate. Landscaping schemes will also be required to mitigate against negative landscape impact and complement the design of new development and make provision for future maintenance. Where it is not possible to secure this new or replacement tree planting within the site, the Council will work with applicants to ascertain if a suitable site(s) can be found off-site for replacement planting in the locality;

Resisting development that would directly or indirectly damage existing ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows.

The Council will refer to its adopted Tree Strategy in the consideration of proposals; and will in general seek to retain as many trees and as much hedgerow on site as possible.

### Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

The Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.

4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition, applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

## **5. PRINCIPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The site lies within the Green Belt. The plans propose a replacement building of the same size, so there will be no reduction in the openness of the Green Belt which is its most important attribute.

The new building will bring about an improvement in the present appearance of the site. No adverse impacts on interest of acknowledged importance will arise. An ecological statement accompanies this application.

The new building will enable an existing childcare facility to expand. Creating sustainable communities by ensuring that new development contributes to the creation of safe, livable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services and to sports, recreation and leisure facilities for all the population is a key principle of Government planning policy.

Community facilities such as village halls, village shops and post offices, schools, colleges, nurseries, places of worship, health services, sports and physical activity facilities, convenience stores, libraries, public houses and cultural facilities such as theatres and arts centres play an important role in community life in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The NPPF promotes the retention and development of local services and community facilities in rural areas.

The application site is located in the Open Countryside and Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that these rural areas will provide only for development that has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

Part (2) of policy SS10 seeks to sustain the rural economy by 'enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified'. The application site involves an expansion of an existing children's day nursery Bee Active which operates from an adjacent building.

## **6. CHILDCARE NEED**

The proposed development will increase childcare provision at the site. Bee Active provides childcare from 0730 to 17.30 Monday to Friday for ages birth to starting school age.

Staffordshire County Council produces an Annual Childcare Sufficiency Report. The 2022-3 report includes the following information.

- In 2020 there were 833,000 people living in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent).
- There are approximately 44,000 children aged birth to four years in the county.
- There has been a fall in the birth rate.
- Approximately 5% of each district's population are aged 0-4.

Demand for two-year-old places is made up of working families requiring childcare to enable them to work and Think2 places, providing 15 hours of funded education for those families on a low income (many who are also working). Approximately 27% of families in Staffordshire are eligible for Think2 places which equate to 15 hours of funded early education over 38 weeks a year (can be stretched up to 52). Families who are entitled are on low incomes and may not be able to afford to pay for additional hours or 'extras'. They often are unable to travel far and require provision within walking distance. It is essential that these families are able to secure a place to enable children to get the best start.

From April 2024 working families will be able to access 15 hours of funded childcare which will increase to 30 hours from September 2025. This is expected to create additional demand for two-year-old places and may result in a squeeze on three- and four-year-olds places.

All three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of funded early education for 38 weeks a year (can be stretched over longer period) from the term following their third birthday. Additionally, the majority of children are entitled to an additional 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year if both parents (or single parent and some other exceptional circumstances) are working. This means that there should be approximately one place available per child across the county.

A lack of childcare in the Staffs Moorlands Area was identified in September 2021 in a report by Sarah Atkins, Early years sufficiency & development consultant for Stafford & Staffordshire Moorlands.

## **7. CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE**

The building proposed will be identical in size to the building it replaces. Arguably it will have a positive impact on the present appearance of the site by providing a more attractive feature than the present dilapidated building.

The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the countryside due to the high level of tree and hedge screening and the low-key nature of the buildings/structures provided. It would be well screened from road.

Policy DC1 refers to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality which is designed to add value to the area and to respect the site and its surroundings. New development should promote a positive sense of place and identity through its

scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance. The plans meet those requirements.

## **8. TREES**

To the west of the site lies a boundary wall which lies behind a wide verge to Knypersley Road. Local Authority records include a hedge along the verge which is subject of a Tree Preservation Order. No trees will be adversely affected by the construction of the proposed new building as it lies outside tree protection zones. An arboricultural report accompanies this application.

## **9. PARKING AND HIGHWAYS**

Policies DC1 and T1 seek to achieve a level of parking and an access that is appropriate to the development it serves.

Policy SS6c allows development where this would not lead to significant traffic generation by aiming to "limit uses which generate traffic". The site is in a sustainable location, with a bus stop on Knypersley Road close to the site. Cycle parking facilities can be provided on the site. This will allow staff to access the site by methods other than the private car.

It is acknowledged that child drop-offs and pick-ups would be likely to be via car. Vehicle movements are likely to be staggered as nursery drop off and pick up times are variable depending on the childcare needs of each parent.

The car park outside the Sports centre building is large enough to accommodate staff vehicle parking as well as brief drop off and pick up vehicles. From there is a short walk/buggy push distance to the existing and proposed childcare facility. The additional capacity that would result for the proposed development would not lead to additional traffic resulting in significant harm to highway safety.

## **10. OTHER MATTERS**

### Residential Amenity

The application site is not close to any dwellings and therefore there are no amenity issues arise associated with the proposed development.

### Coal Mining

The site lies within an area with a coal mining legacy. Investigations have indicated that no particular issues arise with respect to the proposed development. A Coal Mining Risk Assessment accompanies this application.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

Creating sustainable communities is a key planning policy aim. They require good access to jobs and key services and to sports, recreation and leisure facilities for all the population. Community facilities such as village halls, village shops and post offices, schools, colleges, nurseries, places of worship, health services, sports and physical activity facilities, convenience stores, libraries, public houses and cultural facilities such as theatres and arts centres play an important role in community life.

Central Government funding allows all parents free childcare. Approximately 50 % of pre-schoolers attend nurseries rather than childminders, etc. This is a growing sector and as such there is general policy support for additional childcare provision.

Although the site lies within the Green Belt, it will replace an existing building, and as such there will be no loss of openness. The building is modest in proportions and will not be prominent in the street scene or landscape.

The existing car park is capable of accommodating additional cars for children to be brought to and taken away from the nursey. There are non-car options available too.

No residential issues arise, and no coal mining or tree matters dictate against granting planning permission.