

PLANNING STATEMENT

**RAMSHORN ESTATE
OAKAMoor**

JUNE 2025

Site Address:

Ramshorn Estate, Ramshorn Road, Oakamoor, Staffordshire, ST10 3BZ

Applicant:

Amos Group

Proposal:

Erection of facilities building

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 5th June 2025

Job Reference: RDP/2025/047

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Amos of the Amos Group to seek full planning permission for the erection of a facilities building on land at the Ramshorn Estate, Ramshorn Road, Oakamoor which is to be used for purposes ancillary to the operation of the established holiday lodges across the wider Ramshorn Estate site.
- 1.2 The proposed facilities building will occupy a footprint of 159.1 square metres and have a gross internal floor area of 238.37 square metres. The building will stand to a ridge height of 6.3 metres, and is to be finished in timber cladding with a grey tiled roof atop.
- 1.3 The proposed accommodation of the facilities building will comprise of a reception area with ancillary sales for meeting and greeting guests of the holiday accommodation on arrival, an ancillary office, storage areas, including for cleaning products associated with the holiday lodges, in addition to laundry sorting areas. Within the roofspace there will be a kitchen / lounge and shower room for use by staff members, along with a further office and a storage area.
- 1.4 The building is to be located on an existing area of hardstanding located to the west of the existing access drive serving the holiday lodge complex, and also proposes the formation of a staff car parking area on the land to the south of it.
- 1.5 This Planning Statement should be read on conjunction with the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Assessment, Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey and Tree Survey documents that have also been submitted to accompany the application. The proposal is exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements as the building will be constructed on an existing hardstanding.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site is located within the rural area and comprises a long established area of hardstanding that is located to the west of the main access road that serves the holiday lodge complex. The building will lie approximately 54 metres distant of the nearby Ramshorn Road which lies to the south of the site.
- 2.2 The existing hardstanding area is enclosed by trees to its north, west and east, with further trees located to the south and southeast in between it and the Ramshorn Road beyond. A cluster of steel shipping containers are currently located on the site which are used for ancillary storage purposes associated with the operation of the holiday lodge complex. The existing cluster of holiday lodges lie approximately 100 metres to the east of the site. The nearest neighbouring occupier (Birchwood House) is located some 83 metres to the west.
- 2.3 There are no statutorily listed buildings located in close proximity of the site, nor does the site lie within a Conservation Area. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low-probability of flooding). The site is located within the Churnet Valley Master Plan area. The trees within the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (SM105W001).

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any relevant material considerations. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of the application:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that 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:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, including starter homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities.
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers.
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community.
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce.

- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment.
- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings.
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations.
- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that 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 policy confirms that the Council will sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified. It also offers support to sustainable tourism developments and measures within the Churnet Valley Master Plan Area.

3.4 Policy SS11 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Churnet Valley Strategy' and states that the Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The Churnet Valley Masterplan provides a comprehensive

framework for development in the Churnet Valley and development should be in accordance with the Masterplan. Within this area particular support will be given to the following forms of development and measures:

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

3.5 The policy goes on to state that any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area. Strong sustainable development and environmental management principles should also be demonstrated. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in

all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximise opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that 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.
3. create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design.
4. incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development.
5. protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight,

overbearing development, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution.

6. promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate.
7. provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.
8. require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links.
9. ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed.
10. ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community.
11. be served by high speed broadband (>30mbps) unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access Network providers that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable. In all circumstances during construction of the site sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.

3.7 Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.
 2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.
 3. Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds.
 4. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape.
 5. Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.
- 3.8 Policy NE1 of the Local Plan relates to “Biodiversity and Geological Resources’ and states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development (and having regard to relevant ecological evidence) by (amongst other measures):
- Conserving, and enhancing regional and locally designated sites. The Council will not permit any development proposal which would directly or indirectly result in significant harm to geological and biodiversity conservation interests, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no appropriate alternative site available; and
 - b) all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to any such proposal have been satisfied; and
 - c) appropriate conservation and mitigation measures are provided; or if it is demonstrated that this is not possible
 - d) the need for, and benefit of, the development is demonstrated to clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site and compensatory measures are implemented.
- Expecting all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative. Where any mitigation and compensation measures are required, they should be appropriately scheduled and managed according to the nature, size and scale of the development so as to minimise impacts that may disturb protected or important habitats and species.

3.9 Policy NE2 of the Local Plan relates to 'Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows' and states that 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.

3.10 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by (amongst other measures):

- 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.
- Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of securing high quality design, supporting the rural economy, safeguarding protected spaces and protecting important trees. The provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Design Guide SPD

- 4.2 The adopted Design Guide SPD provides advice aimed at securing the delivery of high-quality built development within the District, including new build dwellings. The content of the Design Guide SPD constitutes a material consideration in the assessment of this application.

Application SMD/2011/1174 – Ramshorn Estate

- 4.3 The above application was allowed at appeal and granted planning permission for the erection of a facilities building on land to the east of the site. Reference is made to this application within the Planning Assessment as a material consideration.

Application SMD/2018/0349 – Ramshorn Estate

- 4.4 The above application had proposed, amongst a series of other developments, the re-siting of the facilities building approved under application SMD/2011/1174 to the location where it is now proposed in this application. That application was dismissed at appeal. Reference is made to the conclusions of the Local Authority and the Planning Inspector within the Planning Assessment as material considerations.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application proposes the erection of a facilities building on a parcel of existing hardstanding located within the rural area, which is to be used for purposes ancillary to the ongoing operations of the existing holiday lodge complex on the site.
- 5.2 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan encourages development that supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the area, and which promotes sustainable tourism. The policy goes on to confirm that the Council will sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified, and also offers support to sustainable tourism developments and measures within the Churnet Valley. Policy SS11 reinforces these provisions, confirming support for the expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities.
- 5.3 The building will provide a number of elements that are aimed at improving the operational efficiency of the estate, and well as enhancing its overall sustainability. The facilities building includes the provision of a reception area with ancillary retail sales. This is intended to allow new guests to be greeted on arrival, making their check-in process smoother, and in turn allow for better management of guest arrivals.
- 5.4 The ancillary retail sales will provide a range of day-to-day goods that guests may purchase, such as bread, milk, sausages, bacon, drinks etc. In doing so those guests will not need to travel off site to purchase such supplies. In doing so the proposal will help to reduce vehicle movements. Such benefits weigh in favour of the proposed development.

- 5.5 The facilities building will also provide on-site storage area for cleaning supplies / chemicals, as well as storage of cleaning equipment, storage for the shop and an office for administration of the holiday lodges. A large area for sorting bedding, sheets etc. is also proposed, along with a collection area for clean bedding. Some of these needs are currently being met by the existing storage containers on the site. The intention is for those to be removed from site upon completion of the facilities building, thereby improving the appearance of the site, as well as enhancing its operational efficiency.
- 5.6 The principle of erecting a facilities building on the site has been previously approved under application SMD/2011/1174. A subsequent application to re-site the building to the same general location as that currently proposed was refused and dismissed at appeal (SMD/2018/0349) but in doing so the Planning Inspector only cited concerns regarding a lack of information relating to the impact of the development on surrounding trees. No concerns were raised by either the Local Authority, or the Planning Inspector, with regards to the principle of erecting a facilities building on the site.
- 5.7 Having regard to the above considerations we submit that the proposed facilities building is consistent with the requirements of policies SS10 and SS11 of the Local Plan in that it will support the rural sustainability of the area, will promote sustainable tourism, and constitutes the provision of compatible new tourist facilities. The principle of development is therefore concluded to be acceptable.

Design & Layout

- 5.8 The design of the building is simple in nature, and incorporates a roof with a strongly defined ridge line, emphasised by gables, in line with the objectives and recommendations of the Local Authority's Design Guide SPD. The building will likewise have a high solid-void ratio and will occupy a very discreet position

within the site such that it will not be visible from public views along the Ramshorn Road.

- 5.9 The proposed palette of materials encompasses timber cladding with a grey tiled roof, which will ensure that the development assimilates positively with its wooded surroundings. We recognise that the Design SPD seeks to avoid the use of timber cladding, but it is considered wholly appropriate on this particular site in the context of the woodland surroundings and timber clad finish of the holiday lodges.
- 5.10 The proposal will also avoid any adverse impact on existing trees, as discussed in the Tree Impact section below, and in doing so serves to resolve the concerns raised in the determination of application SMD/2018/0349.
- 5.11 The development will also secure the removal of the existing steel containers from the site, and in doing so will tidy up the land and enhance its appearance. The proposal will therefore derive a modest betterment to the character and appearance of the area and the wider landscape.
- 5.12 The development will be located a considerable distance from the nearest neighbouring occupier circa 83m to the west of the site, and which is separated from the site by a large swathe of woodland. No harm to neighbouring residential amenity will therefore ensue as a consequence of the development. The design and layout of the development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS11, DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan.

Protected Species

- 5.13 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment prepared by Focus Environmental Consultants. The report recommends a

series of recommendations aimed at safeguarding protected species, and these can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition.

5.14 The application is also accompanied by a Great Crested Newt Survey Report which confirms that any impact from the proposed development on Great Crested Newts is low, and that the risk of committing an offence at the site is negligible. As a consequence a licence from Natural England will not be required in order to carry out the development.

5.15 The report nevertheless recommends the implementation of Reasonable Avoidance Measures which can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition. In doing so the development will meet the requirements of policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

Tree Impacts

5.16 In determining application SMD/2018/0349, the impact of the development on existing trees was a major factor in the Local Authority's refusal of permission. The main concern was an absence of information pertaining to impact of the building on surrounding trees, which meant a conclusion could not be reached on the likely impact of the development on the character of the area. Those concerns were subsequently reinforced by the Planning Inspector who dismissed the subsequent appeal for similar reasons.

5.17 To address these concerns the application is accompanied by a Tree Survey prepared by Apex Arb Consultancy who have assessed the quality of the existing trees within the site, and have also considered the impact the development is likely to have on nearby trees. The report concludes that the development will not have an impact on the root protection areas of any important trees on the site and that special measures will not be required.

- 5.18 The recommendations set out within the Tree Survey to secure the delivery of the proposed tree protection measures can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition, and in doing so the development addresses the concerns raised in the previously refused and dismissed application (SMD/2018/0349). The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy NE2 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

- 5.19 The application proposes the provision of a small retail sales area within the proposed facilities building to serve guests using the holiday lodges. The retail sales area will sell day-to-day provisions such as bread, milk, cheese, meat, drinks etc. As a consequence the proposal stands to reduce the number of vehicle movements to and from this site, as guests will no longer be required to travel elsewhere for such supplies.
- 5.20 The existing means of access to the site will be unaltered by the proposal and consequently the development will result in no greater impact to highway safety than that which already occurs. The submitted proposal is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.21 The Preliminary Ecological Assessment accompanying the application confirms that the proposal is subject to the *de-minimis* exemption in respect of statutory biodiversity net gain requirements, as no loss of habitat will arise as a consequence of the proposed works.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposed development constitutes an appropriate and sustainable form of tourism development within the rural area.
- The design and layout of the development will not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- The proposed development will not detract from the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers.
- The proposal will not have an adverse impact on protected species.
- The proposal will not give rise to any harm to highway safety and will help to reduce vehicle movements associated with the existing holiday lodge complex.
- The proposal is exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

6.2 The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, SS11, DC1, DC2, NE1, NE2 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, and guidance contained within the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD.