

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0278
Valid 09/06/2025

THE RAMSHORN ESTATE
RAMSHORN ROAD
OAKAMoor

ERECTION OF FACILITIES
BUILDING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The planning history, discussed below, narrows the issues:

- Impact on the character & appearance of the area (particularly in respect of on-site conditions, 16 years after the issue was first considered and the impacts the development might have on existing tree cover)
- Impact on biodiversity and ecology

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The wider site to which the application relates is the grounds of The Ramshorn Estate on the northern side of Ramshorn Road, Oakamoor. The estate extends north of the application boundaries towards Ramshorn Common. The estate comprises an area of woodland within which 8 No. holiday chalets/lodges have been constructed (with the benefit of planning permission) along with 2 No. associated access points (off Ramshorn Road), internal track/road and associated infrastructure.

Specifically, the application site relates to an area where storage containers being used to store maintenance equipment, piles of stones and an area provided for refuse bins (close to the western boundary). The site provides a relative clearing within the wooded area. The site has a compressed crushed stone surface and is described by the applicant as the existing service yard.

The Ramshorn Estate is within a Local Plan designated 'other rural area' of countryside outside of the villages and towns, a Mineral Safeguarding Area (cement shale) and there is a blanket Tree Preservation Order (SM105W001) which extends across the estate and Ramshorn Common (Ramshorn Common being designated a SBI and Nature Conservation Site), as defined in the Core Strategy. The site is also located within the boundary of the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

There are 2 No. Public Rights Of Way that pass close by the site, i.e. Farley 39, which runs in a north-south direction along the western boundary of the Estate (passing close by the dilapidated building referred to above) and Farley 37, which meanders broadly north of the Estate, with part of the path running adjacent to part of the north-eastern boundary.

PROPOSAL

This repeat application proposes the provision of a utility/facilities building to occupy a footprint of 159.1 square metres and 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. 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 roof space there will be a kitchen / lounge and shower room for use by staff members, along with a further office and a storage area. The building is to be located on an existing area of hardstanding, described as existing service yard, 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.

The application is submitted with a Great Crested Newts Survey, Ecological Appraisal, and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

Relevant history that precedes the application and narrows the issues

Planning permission was refused to provide a utility building on this site in summer 2010 (9/01215/FUL) – Need had not been demonstrated, and, at that time, it was a relatively open part of the woodland exposed to the road. Google Street View photographs taken in 2009 confirm this to have, indeed, been the case.

In 2011, an application to provide two additional holiday chalets and a utility building was refused but then allowed at appeal. The permission was to provide a utility building on an entirely different part of the estate, toward the eastern boundary, where it would have been enclosed and concealed by existing mature woodland. The appeal decision effectively accepted that there was need for such a building and facility. However, if there is any argument to suggest that permission might still be extant, it would be now impossible to provide a utility building in that location because subsequent permissions have seen an additional chalet built in that place.

In 2018 (SMD/2018/0349) a planning application to erect four holiday chalets and provide a utility building on the current application site was refused and dismissed at appeal. The Inspector identified the following main issues: the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; the impact on trees (the latter being particularly pertinent to the facilities building - paragraph 7 of the appeal decision). and, whether sufficient information had been submitted in respect of biodiversity. They found harm in all those regards, but did not take issue with the question of need.

In 2020, a further application (SMD/2020/0238) was submitted to provide additional holiday lodges, with submission to address the Inspectors concerns and objection. Planning permission was granted. However, the application did not further any proposal to provide a utility building on the estate.

So, this repeat application is submitted to provide a facilities building, essentially, on the same site that was applied for in 2011 and 2018. The building would be of similar size and function to that which had been accepted at appeal in 2011 and provided on a part of the estate that had previously been considered to be open and exposed and where there was unaddressed concern about the building's impact on protected trees. This current application includes the necessary tree survey in an attempt to address the issues raised by the Inspector and demonstrate that no harm to trees would arise in respect of the facilities building.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
E1 New Employment Development
E4 Tourism Cultural Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SM93/1196 – Original approval of 8 holiday chalets. Approved.
04/01239/FUL 4 No. two storey holiday chalets. APPROVED.
08/00127/FUL Change of chalet designs on plots 1,2,3 and 8 pursuant to extant permission SM93-1196. APPROVED.
11/01058/FUL Erection of two holiday chalets and a utility building, retention of electricity sub-station and construction of additional water treatment plant. REFUSED. ALLOWED APPEAL.
12/00311/FUL Erection of two holiday chalets and a utility building, retention of switching station, removal of generator and oil tank and construction of additional water treatment plant. WITHDRAWN.
SMD/2018/0349 Erection of four holiday chalets, the conversion of the redundant building into a holiday let and the relocation of the utility building. REFUSED DISMISSED APPEAL.
SMD/2020/0238 Erection of 6 self-catering lodges, parking and associated works. APPROVED.
SMD/2021/0818 Variation of condition 2 (SMD/2020/0238). APPROVED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 1/08/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 1/08/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Farley PC: No response within consultation period

SMDC Tree Officer

No objection subject to conditions.

A previous application (SMD/2018/0349), which was refused and subsequently dismissed on appeal, proposed several elements of development including a proposal to relocate an as-yet unbuilt facilities building approved for a position elsewhere on the wider site to a revised new location within the existing “service yard” area near the main site entrance which is now the general application site area for the current application. The main tree-related concern with the previous 2018 application's relocated facilities building element was that there was no Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report covering this specific area of the site, and consequently it was not demonstrated that the proposed facilities building would not have detrimental impact on existing trees nor in turn on the character and appearance of the site/surroundings including creating greater visual intrusion as a result of the potential loss of/adverse impact on existing tree cover.

The site lies fully within the extent of Woodland W1 protected under TPO No. SM.105, and there are further unprotected mature trees immediately adjacent at the neighbouring property Ladybrook to the west. An AIA report by Tree Heritage now accompanies the current application. The proposed position for the facilities building is within the existing long-established hard surfaced (hard core) extent of the service yard. The AIA demonstrates that the building footprint would be outside the RPA of all surveyed trees/hedge on/around the site. Whilst the building would be closely enclosed by massed tree canopies to its north, east and west sides, its non-residential use would mean that there should not be undue pressure for felling/substantial crown reductions due to issues such as shading and reduced outlook.

The proposal includes an element of staff car parking on site, but this is also within the extent of existing hard surfacing which would also acceptably provide for access and turning by service/delivery/collection vehicles as required, all using the existing hard-surfaced access off the main track through the wider site, and these arrangements would not have significant impact on existing trees.

The proposed facilities building would be set back from the road a distance comparable to that of the closest holiday lodges on the site, with timber-clad external walls and grey tiled roof (as proposed) adding to low and recessive visual impact. The proposal would not itself require the removal of any trees (although the AIA report recommends the removal of a damaged Pine denoted T9 on arboricultural safety grounds) and therefore the existing dense screening of mature, young and understorey trees and shrubs between the service yard and the public highway would be retained to continue to provide effective screening. Following leaf-fall, there may still be some glimpsed but heavily filtered views of the brightly coloured storage containers presently on site, but the application planning statement advises that these would be removed off-site following completion of the development as their function would be provided for within the new facilities building. This could be appropriately conditioned if the application is approved.

Their removal, and that of various associated accumulated debris, would also greatly improve the “first impression” appearance of this yard area given that the new building is also proposed to provide a reception and basic grocery supplies facility for lodge guests.

In conclusion, I have no objection to this application on the grounds of impact on or relationship with existing trees (protected or otherwise), and I consider that the proposed development would not have significant adverse visual impact – particularly given the removal of existing containers etc. I would request that the following conditions be imposed in the event that planning permission is granted:

1. The first action on commencement of development, prior to any further action (including any site clearance, site stripping, site establishment or formation/improvement of temporary/permanent access) shall be the erection of temporary tree protection barriers and advisory notices for the protection of the existing trees to be retained, in accordance with guidance in British Standard 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction.

– Recommendations, and as set out in the Tree Heritage Arboricultural Report reference THL-R25-50 dated 21st May 2025 submitted in support of the application hereby approved, and these barriers and notices shall be retained in position for the duration of the period that development takes place, unless otherwise agreed by the LPA. Within the fenced areas there shall be no excavation, changes in ground levels, installation of underground services, provision of hard surfacing, passage of vehicles, storage of materials, equipment or site huts, tipping of chemicals, waste or cement, or lighting of fires unless otherwise agreed by the LPA.

I would also suggest a condition requiring the permanent removal off-site (the wider Ramshorn Estates site, not just the current applications site) of the existing storage containers, building/maintenance/service debris etc within a reasonable period of, say, 2 months following completion and first use of the proposed new facilities building.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Conditional/No objection subject to conditions requiring provision of parking and turning.

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No Objection.

The site is exempt from BNG but is still required to show an uplift as per the NPPF. This can be achieved through the installation of bird and bat boxes, hedgehog boxes and insect hotels, as suggested in the ecologists' reports.

As stated in the ecological reports, if works are not started within 12-18 months of the reports, then further surveys may be needed. Recommends conditions.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

With reference to the above Local Plan policies and additional key material considerations, the proposal is to support visitor accommodation, with the provision of reception, storage and staff facility for a substantial holiday park. The development would support tourism; the site is located within the boundary of the Churnet Valley Masterplan. A recurring theme of the policies referred to above is protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of the Moorlands landscape. Indeed, policy SS7 states that consideration of the landscape character is "paramount" when appraising all proposals within the Churnet Valley. Therefore, the proposal could be acceptable in principle, subject to maintaining and enhancing the landscape, character of the area and biodiversity. Permission would still require the proposal to accord with all other relevant Development Plan policies.

Impact on Character and Appearance

The building would have the scale, character and appearance of a woodland lodge or park home, appropriate to the woodland setting and the adjacent holiday park. With the use of subdued roofing and facing material, the building would have a recessive visual impact and would be set back from the road a distance comparable to that of the closest holiday lodges on the site. It is a prevailing point that, while the development on the wider estate is extensive, it is all otherwise concealed and hidden from public vantage, within the woodland.

On previous application to provide a utility/facility building in this location, some 16 years ago, the application site was exposed and open and, as such, a lodge here would have appeared as a prominent intrusion. There are Google Street View photographs available, taken in the summer of 2009 that give an indication of onsite conditions at that time.

Application Site from Road:

July 2009



Aug 2025



It is clear that over the years shrubbery and foliage have matured and there has been additional planting between the site and the roadside. This provides cover that was not available in 2009, and the site is now concealed and hidden from view. The existing dense screening of mature, young and understorey trees and shrubs between the service yard and the public highway would be retained to continue to provide effective screening.

The main tree-related concern with the previous and most recent application in 2018 was that there was no Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report covering this specific area of the site, and consequently it was not demonstrated that the proposed facilities building would not have detrimental impact on existing trees nor in turn on the character and appearance of the site/surroundings including creating greater visual intrusion as a result of the potential loss of/adverse impact on existing tree cover.

With this application an AIA report by Tree Heritage has been submitted. The proposed position for the facilities building is within the existing long-established hard surfaced (hard core) extent of the service yard. The AIA demonstrates that the building footprint would be outside the RPA of all surveyed trees/hedge on/around the site. Whilst the building would be closely enclosed by massed tree canopies to its north, east and west sides, its non-residential use would mean that there should not be undue pressure for felling/substantial crown reductions due to issues such as shading and reduced outlook.

Following leaf-fall, there may be glimpses of the site available from the road. However, to the boundary and roadside much of the mature shrubbery is evergreen laurel and, as a benefit of the development, the submitted statement confirms a collection of blue storage containers would be removed as their function would be provided for within the new facilities building – a likely and achievable result given that the building is to function as a reception for new paying guests and important ‘first impressions’ would be formed through their contact and experience of this space.

Overall, the development would not be a prominent intrusion in the countryside and would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. There would not be conflict with Local Plan policies SS10, DC1 or DC3 in these regards.

Impact on Ecology and Biodiversity

The proposed development is exempt from the BNG regulations, it would be provided on existing hardstanding and would impact less than 25 sqm of habitat. However, there is still requirement, to comply with the terms of the NPPF, to replace and enhance biodiversity.

The application included an ecological appraisal and a great crested newt survey provided by ecology consultants, ‘Focus’, appointed by the applicant. There are recommendations in those surveys that there should be the provision of and compliance with a ‘reasonable avoidance method statement’ (specifically for newts), control over lighting, and the installation of bird boxes.

Conditions could be used to ensure that the development accords with and observes these recommendations.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development is acceptable in principle, on an established tourist development, considered against local plan policies that promote and support development to provide tourist accommodation an opportunity. It is apparent that maturing and supplementary planting now provides, along with woodland tree cover, screening and cover that would largely conceal the development from the road. An arboricultural impact assessment demonstrates that the development would not adversely impact that established tree cover and lead to exposure. Concerns expressed with previous application attempts, in 2009 and 2018, have been addressed with this submission and proposal. There would be no conflict with the Local Plan policies listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVAL

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 4th February 2026

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council