

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**

14 February 2019

Application No:	SMD/2018/0575	
Location	Land off Main Road Hollington.	
Proposal	Proposed campsite including the construction of 6 bases for portable shepherd huts along with the siting of 12 tents and associated engineering works, access, parking and cycle store.	
Applicant	Mr Willard	
Agent	WW Planning. Mr G Willard	
Parish/ward	Checkley	Date registered: 18/09/2018
If you have a question about this report please contact: Mrs L. Jackson tel: 01538 395400 ex 4125 lisa.jackson@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk		

REFERRAL

The application is considered to be locally contentious

1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The application site is roughly square in its shape. The road frontage measures approximately 147m, the rear boundary is approximately 120m in length, the land has a depth of between approximately 125m and 140m. Land levels within the site vary significantly with the main character being that of the land dropping in level from the roadside towards the rear (northern) boundary. A substantially sized hedgerow fronts the highway, sat behind a grass verge with access from the road being through an agricultural style gate. Other boundaries are clearly marked by hedgerows and trees. There are gates and accesses from the application site to the neighbouring dwelling, Paradise Farm. There are a small number of sporadically located dwellings within the surrounding area including one to the West of Paradise Farm, one to the south (across the road) and also some in close proximity to Lockers Bank further to the east.

2.2 For the purposes of planning policy consideration the application site is located within the open countryside but it not designated as Green Belt land. The site does not form part of any Conservation Area, there are no Listed Buildings within close proximity and there are no protected trees nearby.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 The application seeks full planning consent for a campsite including the construction of 6 bases for portable shepherd's huts along with the siting of 12 tents and associated engineering works, access, parking and cycle store. Access to the site will be directly off Main Road through a re-aligned field entrance with inwards opening double gates. Two permeable stone access roads would lead into the site and branch off in two directions (roughly towards the north and east). One of the roads (adjacent to the western site boundary) would lead to an 18 space car park area and turning head, near which the plans show the location of a package treatment plant and indicate the possible future location of a cycle wash and secure bike store. The other access road would be directed along the south of the application site and curve towards the eastern boundary. Some excavation is proposed in order to provide a level road. The southern access road would provide a vehicular link to six concrete hard-standings; each would be rectangular in shape and have surface areas of 12.2m x 3.6m. Each hardstanding would be approximately 8.0m apart and be sited to follow the curve of the road. Twelve flat grass pitches for tents (with electricity hook-ups) would be sited within the north-eastern part of the site. Hedgerows would surround the entire parcel of land and significant tree planting is proposed. Tree planting would be located around the car park and near to the main site access and also towards the south and eastern boundaries of the site.

3.2 The applicant states that *'the business is targeted at those visitors to the area who seek to explore the countryside by walking or on bicycle. The aim is to provide a high quality and well managed site from where visitors can simply cycle around the area on the main roads and local tracks suitable for road-bike and mountain-bike fans.'* It is understood that the development is based upon a 2 phase business model. The first phase is to change the use of the site and set it out. Future development would include facilities in the form of a toilet and shower block along with laundry and bike store and workshop together with cleaning area for bikes, walking gear and dogs. The applicant states that as this is a new venture there is no commitment to future phases at this stage as development will depend upon the business viability of the first phase.

Amended Plans

3.3 Members are informed that originally the applicant sought consent for a larger scheme which included 30 parking spaces, 6 concrete hardstandings and 24 tent pitches. The tent pitches which have been removed are those which were to be located within the woodland.

3.4 The application, the details attached to it, including plans, documents and consultation responses can be found on the council's website at:-

<http://publicaccess.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=126200>

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None

5. PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

5.1 The Development Plan comprises of:

- Saved Local Plan Proposals Map / Settlement Boundaries (adopted 1998).
- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted March 2014)

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998)

5.2 Development boundaries within the 1998 Adopted Local Plan are still in force until such time as they are reviewed and adopted through the site allocations process.

Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (26th March 2014)

5.3 The following Core Strategy policies are relevant to the application:-

- SS1 Development Principles.
- SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.
- SS6 Rural Areas.
- SS6b Smaller Villages Area Strategy.
- SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy.
- SS7 Churnet Valley Area Strategy.
- SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources.
- SD4 Pollution and Flood Risk.
- E1 New Employment Development.
- E3 Tourism and Cultural Development.
- R1 Rural Diversification
- DC1 Design Considerations.
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting.
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources.
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.
- T2 Other Sustainable Transport Measures.

Supplementary Planning Document

1. Churnet Valley Masterplan

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Planning for Landscape Change (SCC 2001)

Landscape Character Assessments

1. Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2011).
2. Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment of the Staffordshire Moorlands (2008).

Local Plan Process

National Policy Guidance

Paragraph 48 of the newly adopted NPPF states that:

“...decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Local Plan process

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was “sound”. Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. An examination in public has now taken place in order to determine whether the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. Subject to the findings of the appointed inspector, the Local Plan is expected to be adopted in the Spring of 2019. At this point, it will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and become part of the statutory development plan for the District.

In this context, the Council’s position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is as follows:

- The stage of preparation – the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the Council has submitted it to the SoS for examination

- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies – this varies depending on the policy in question.
- The degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF – given that the Council has submitted a Local Plan that it considers to be sound, all policies are deemed to be consistent with the NPPF.

Emerging Policies

The following policies (including their weighting) are considered to be relevant to this application:

- SS1 Development Principles (Moderate)
- SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (Significant)
- SS9 Smaller Villages Area Strategy (Limited)
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy (Limited)
- SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy (Limited)
- SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources (Limited)
- SD4 Pollution and Water Quality (Significant)
- SD5 Flood Risk (Significant)
- E1 New Employment Development (Moderate)
- E4 Tourism and Cultural Development (Moderate)
- DC1 Design Considerations (Moderate)
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting (Significant)
- DC4 Local Green Space Moderate)
- C3 Green Infrastructure (Significant)
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources (Moderate)
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport (Moderate)
- T2 Other Sustainable Transport Measures (Moderate)

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections;

- 1: Introduction.
- 2: Achieving sustainable development.
- 4: Decision-making.
- 6: Building a strong, competitive economy.
- 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities.
- 9: Promoting sustainable transport.
- 11: Making effective use of land.
- 12: Achieving well-designed places.
- 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.
- 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

National Planning Policy Guidance

6. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

Neighbour Notification: Expires 11/10/2018
Site Notice: Expires 01/11/2018.

Checkley Parish Council: Object to the application (along with a large number of local Hollington residents) for the following reasons;

- Unsustainable location due to there being no bus service, this busy road has no footpaths and all amenities are a car journey away;
- Conflict with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Core Strategy;
- Development will have a vast negative impact on the landscape and will alter the character of the village.

Environmental Health (SMDC): Object to the application and recommend refusal due to insufficient information being provided to assess drainage and noise impacts of the proposed development. (Officer note: further detail is provided within the main body of this report).

Trees (SMDC): (Officer note: some details referred to within the following consultation response have been amended/addressed. For example tent pitches within the woodland and the chemical toilet have been removed and the issues regarding the scale of the plans has been resolved).

The application is to change use of and provide various accommodation works and facilities for camping in a presently undeveloped agricultural field on the north side of Main Road. The site slopes downhill away from the road towards the north-east, having an expansive open outlook over rolling countryside of hills, fields and woods towards Alton and the Weaver Hills beyond. There is an established field hedge along the Main Road frontage boundary; this provides some screening of the site in casual views from the highway, although where the structure of the hedge is less strong these views are more open into the site and beyond.

The fact that the land slopes down from the road, and the application proposes to cut in a plateau further lowering ground level in the southern part of the site, would help to reduce visual impact of the development – in particular the more constructed/engineered elements of the access road, caravan standings and related parking. (Whilst the D & A Statement refers to 6 shepherd huts, it is noted that the proposed site plan designates these standing bases for “static caravans/touring caravan/motor homes/static cabin).

In addition, the application proposed site plan indicates potential woodland planting to provide screening (and accommodate additional tent pitches in woodland setting). Appropriately, this woodland planting is shown extending along the full length of the south-east boundary as well as the south-west boundary to Main Road, as there are also some open views into/across the site from the road at Lockers Bank. Further blocks of woodland planting are shown to screen the main parking area and chemical toilet emptying facility, including in views into the site at the main entrance.

In principle, such planting could, once established and if carried out to create an appropriate woodland/woodland edge structure using suitable species mixes of trees and shrubs at suitable densities over the areas indicated, provide a useful and fairly effective screening function for a development currently proposed (further facilities, structures and uses in potential future phases of development may have greater visual impact and require additional screening). However, a few points to bear in mind:

1. The typical cross section drawing on the proposed site plan gives an indication of newly planted roadside woodland screen, but the trees shown are approx. 10m tall which is unrealistic in the short to medium term and may take around 20 – 25 years to achieve in practice. Having said that, trees/shrubs/woodland of such height would not be required for effective screening of the types of structures/features envisaged at this first phase of the scheme – i.e. tents, shepherd huts, caravans, cars etc.
2. Reasonably effective (i.e. well established and dense) screening of perhaps 3/4/5 metres in height might be anticipated in around 5 – 10 years assuming typical forestry planting spacing and the use of mainly small-sized planting stock.
3. The bar scale on the plan seems at odds with measurements taken off Statmap and would bear double checking with the applicant – for instance the north-east boundary of the field on the application site plan scales off at approx. 160m length using the plan's bar scale but measures approximately 118m on Statmap. I estimate that the site plan indicates approximately one fifth of the site area as woodland planting in total – using Statmap measurement (1.7ha for the whole field area) this would amount to a woodland area of around 0.34ha or 3400 square metres. At typical woodland/forestry planting spacing of c.2m centres for trees, and perhaps 1m centres for underplanting with woodland edge shrubs species in some key areas for greater density and more effective screening, this would equate to around 850 – 1000 plants, being considerably more than the c.300 referred to in the D & A Statement.
4. For woodland planting on such a scale, the use of a large majority of whips/transplants planting stock (normally c.30 – 60cm tall, and best protected in individual tree shelters) would be anticipated and realistically cost-effective and the best means of securing most successful establishment and quicker screening in the medium term compared to using large planting stock eg standard trees, but in view of the planting being essentially for development screening purposes, an element of larger planting stock should be required to give some more immediate effect – say around 10% of plants as feathered trees approx. 1.5 – 1.8m tall at planting.

Ecology (SMDC): Object to the application on the grounds that there is inadequate ecological information to determine impacts on biodiversity. There is no Preliminary Ecological Assessment. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application indicates hard landscaping, tree planting and meadow creation but lacks underpinning surveys to inform actions. A survey should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecological consultant. As a minimum the survey should follow the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management).

Waste (SMDC): No objections to the application.

Highways Officer (Staffordshire County Council): No objections to the application on highways grounds subject to conditions.

Minerals (Staffordshire County Council): No objections to the application. Records confirm that the site does fall within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for bedrock Sand as defined in the Minerals Local Plan for Staffordshire (2015-2030). Nature of the development is such that it would not directly affect any underlying mineral, or hinder the potential development of the resource.

Severn Trent Water: As the proposal has minimal impact on the public sewerage system STW advise that they have no objections to the proposals and do not require a drainage condition to be applied. STW comment that they have apparatus in the area of the planned development, the developer will need to contact STW (New Connections Team) to assess their proposals for diversion requirements.

Environment Agency: No objections in principle to the proposed development. E.A advise the applicant to contact Severn Trent Water in regards to their foul drainage proposals and new connection to the existing foul sewer adjacent to the site.

Regeneration Officer (SMDC): The Destination Staffordshire Tourism Review, Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2018 identifies that the number of 'bedspaces' (which includes all accommodation providers including camping) provided in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is just c.16, 500 bedspaces, compared to 39,000 in Derbyshire. – and one of its 5 key priorities is to “Attract more staying visitors via improving the quality and range of accommodation stock – in order to extend visitor stays and increase visitor spend”

The Stoke & Staffordshire Local Economic Partnership's key strategy for the sub-region is called the Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030 (SEP). This widely consulted upon document recognises that tourism employs around ten percent of all employees within Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and thus forms a key part of the areas economic base. Staffordshire Moorlands District has the greatest concentration of employment in this sector (largely due to Alton Towers and the Peak District), and the SEP, which sets the strategy for financial commitments at a regional level, identifies the priority for the sector is “to make more consumers aware of Staffordshire as a destination for a short break, encouraging greater volume of overnight stays, increased revenue and more employment in the industry”

The site of the planning application is less than 5 miles from the boundary of the Churnet Valley Masterplan (adopted SPD) 2014. This identifies “Limited range of accommodation”; “Lack of provision for 'all-year-round' tourism” as a key weakness for the area and identifies delivery goals of Churnet Valley masterplan as;

- Enhancing the accommodation stock
- Developing the visitor offer aimed primarily at the countryside market including families
- Increasing overnight stays

While the SPD boundary may not directly apply to this application, the same principles of support for a wider number and range of tourist accommodation to increase the number of overnight stays forms part of tourism strategy. The context for the planning application in terms of tourism is therefore supportive of the need for new accommodation.

Economic Impact

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's corporate plan supports the regeneration of our town centres, supports business growth and the visitor economy. The latest tourism data for 2017, shows that there are currently 4.77m day visitors to the Moorlands, spending an average £36.48 per person, per day. In comparison there are 0.488m staying visitors each year, with an average 1.561 visitor days made. The economic impact of a staying visitor is £66.35 per person per day (or £212.25 per visit per person). There is therefore a clear economic advantage to the district if greater numbers of day visitors can be converted into staying visitors – as this will support the wider tourism economy and spend in our shops, food & drink establishments, attractions as well as supporting the supply chain that feeds into these businesses.

Summary Comments

From an economic and tourism policy perspective, the creation of new visitor accommodation would be welcomed and this should therefore be considered as part of your consideration of the planning balance in determining this application.

Neighbour Notification: 37 representations received, (two of which are from the Hollington Residents Steering Group) all objecting to the application and making the following comments;

- Greenfield land which is undeveloped;
- Unsustainable location; development would be totally reliant on the motor vehicle; visitors using their cars for shopping and visiting tourist attractions;
- Two unsuccessful appeals have confirmed the site is not a sustainable location stating that additional accommodation is an unsustainable form of development;
- Approval of the scheme would set a precedent for similar schemes;
- Site is detached both physically and visually from the village;
- Cannot assume that visitors will only use bikes or will walk, this restriction cannot be enforced;
- The reduced number of tent pitches is not helpful because if the proposal is successful further expansion could take place in the future;
- Spoil appearance of the local landscape and will be visible across the valley;
- Visual blot on the landscape/open hillside;
- Site can be seen from Locker's Bank;
- Landscape is sensitive to change both ecologically and biologically;
- Site is within a Minerals Safeguarded Area and should be subject to an Environmental impact Assessment;
- Loss of green space;
- No need for another camp site/shepherd hut style facility;
- Not a working farm therefore not looking to diversify;

- Highway safety. The road is very popular with walkers, push-bike users and horse riders;
- Increased traffic on the narrow country roads which are already used by Alton Towers and JCB traffic;
- No footpaths on the road. Roads through Hollington are narrow;
- No street lighting;
- Development is on Green Belt land and not within Checkley Neighbourhood Plan;
- Speculative application;
- Design and Access Statement indicates that this is potentially the first phase of a larger development;
- Environmental issues have not been addressed;
- Biodiversity of landscape should be protected;
- Reduction of camp pitches would not stop landscape being altered;
- Increased noise coming from users of the site for example barbeques;
- Speculative application and not thought out regarding the impact on neighbours;
- Future plans include toilet/shower block/laundry etc which suggests substantial future development;
- New woodland would take decades to form;
- Proposed tree corridors would be in conflict with the open vista;
- Already plenty of visitor accommodation including Alton Towers (hotels, woodland lodges, tree houses etc) and The Raddle Inn;
- Not sustainable as a business and look terrible during the winter months;
- Impact of surface run-off from the hard-standings;
- No foul drainage plan has been submitted;
- Shepherd's huts would be artificial structures of regular and angular shape and not in keeping with the rural setting; highly visible from neighbouring properties and the higher ground of Firbob;
- Site layout plan shows hardstanding which are double the size for Shepherd's Huts and says that the bases could be used for static caravans, touring caravans, motor homes or static cabins;
- Design and Access Statement shows pictures of Shepherd's Huts which usually require no hard standing;
- Reduced number of pitches (30-18) still uses the same amount of land;
- Light pollution would be visible on the skyline from a wide area;
- Large tankers on the road to remove septic tank waste?
- Permission is required for a package treatment plant and cannot be left out of this application;
- Greenfield site (loss not outweighed by any benefits), development should be on brownfield sites;
- Future developments should be kept to brown field sites and existing homesteads
- Planting of 500 trees would be visually prominent and change the open appearance of the area;
- No identified need for the change of use. Within a 1 mile radius there are two existing facilities providing nearly 100 camp sites and lodges which do not impact on the open aspect of the countryside;

- Development would be contrary to development plan policies T1, SS1a, SS6b, SS7, E3, R1 and the Churnet Valley Master Plan or section 4 of the NPPF;
- Proposal is contrary to SMDC's Core Strategy, The Churnet Valley Master Plan, Hollington Parish Council adopted development policy and the Checkley Neighbourhood Plan;
- Tree barrier is not in keeping with the open vista of the high ground abutting the Main Road;
- Industrial waste needs to be considered;
- Plan will not provide new employment of any significant level;
- Impact on the local rural wildlife;
- A water pipe crosses the site, hard standings over the pipes may prevent future maintenance;
- Carbon footprint of the village will be increased by the volume of traffic attracted to the site;

7. OFFICER COMMENT, PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Principle of Development and Policy Context

- 7.1 As with all applications, the Local Planning Authority is required to determine this application in accordance with the Development Plan, unless there are material circumstances which indicate otherwise and, in determining these applications, it shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, in so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations.
- 7.2 Core Strategy Policy SS1 expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. Core Strategy policy SS1a establishes a 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' in line with the National Planning Policy (herein referred to as the NPPF) where: (1) planning applications that accord with policies within the Core Strategy will be approved without delay and (2) where there are no relevant policies or they are out of date, the Council will grant planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise considering:-
- I. Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, or,
 - II. Specific policies in within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.
- 7.3 Core Strategy SS6c states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. Policy SS7 identifies the Churnet Valley as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. Policy SD1 requires encouragement to be given to development on previously developed sites in sustainable locations. Policy E1 requires new employment development to be

assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce.

- 7.4 Core Strategy policy E3 relates to new tourism and cultural developments and states that 'new tourist and visitor accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering, good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling. They should normally be located in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available or in areas specifically allocated for tourism development. Outside of these locations, including within the Green Belt, new accommodation, attractions and facilities should: 1) be of a scale and design which can easily be assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner; 2) normally be limited to the conversion of existing businesses; or 3) exceptionally, may be new build where it is required to support or compliment existing accommodation, facilities or attractions and there is an identified need which cannot be met in other ways. Policy T1 promotes an support development which reduces the reliance on the private car for travel journeys.
- 7.5 The application site is not located within the Green Belt; it does not lie within an identified settlement and cannot be considered to be a part of Hollington village due to its separation distance from the nucleus of the settlement and its lack of any visual connectivity with it. The site is not located within the area boundary of the Churnet Valley Masterplan. In planning policy terms the site is green field land located within a rural area. This is not a farm diversification scheme or the expansion/redevelopment of an existing authorised business. The application site is within a remote location where visitors would be reliant upon the motor vehicle to access the site and its facilities. It may be the case that some visitors take the opportunity for pursuing walking and/or cycling activities once at the site but the distance and remoteness of the camp facilities together with the lack of any pavements and street lighting would result in tourists relying heavily/not choosing an alternative means of transport from the motor vehicle to arrive at their holiday destination.
- 7.6 The application site itself is also not well-connected to any surrounding areas/services so upon arrival at the camp site visitors would find themselves out of reach of any meaningful facility for example shops and tourist attractions. Hollington is the nearest settlement and has very little to offer in terms of facilities which include a church and the Star Inn public house. The Raddle Inn is to the north-west (but very separate from) the settlement. There is no public transport connectivity to these facilities from the application site and again would instigate pressure upon the use and reliance of the motor vehicle to make trips, contrary to the requirements of the Framework to secure sustainable development.
- 7.7 The views reached within paragraphs 7.5 and 7.6 above are not isolated and formed only as a result of considering this application. Members will be aware of a number of recent appeal decisions in which Planning Inspectors found that Hollington was not within a sustainable location. Appeal reference

APP/B3438/W/18/3199145 (The Raddle Inn – dated 1st February 2019) concluded that the erection of 3 holiday lodges would result in reliance upon the private vehicle due to the lack of facilities and the poor connectivity with Hollington (this is despite the appeal site having an on-site public house and part of the scheme including an extension to form an on-site shop). The Inspector found conflict with the Framework including policies SS6c and E3.

- 7.8 The appeal referred to above is not the only recent decision which has supported the Council in terms of establishing Hollington and its surrounding area as being an unsustainable and remote location. Albeit for housing development appeal reference APP/B3438/W/18/3204494 (The Cross – dated 18th December 2018) identified Hollington as being ‘within a location with poor access to services and facilities to meet daily needs.’ This appeal site is much closer to the settlement than the proposed camp site land. Appeal APP/B3438/W/17/3167894 (Land off Main Rd Hollington – dated 16th May 2017) also dismissed housing development by its failure to meet the environmental role of the Framework because of the need to travel to access services and facilities. This appeal site is not far from this application site, being located further to the east on the same road. There are other appeal decisions within the area which identify the unsustainable location of Hollington and its surrounding area, reference numbers can be provided to Members if required but the above cases are the most notable ones due to their relatively recent decision dates (the most recent two being within the lifetime of the Council’s adopted Core Strategy and the revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework).
- 7.9 Based on the above it is concluded that this application site is within an unsustainable location, it is even less well connected to Hollington than those appeal cases identified above and therefore the proposal represents an even poorer form of sustainable development by the increase and reliance on motor vehicles. It is an unacceptably remote location for the development proposed. The application is therefore found to be in conflict with the Framework including Core Strategy policies SS1, SS1a, SS6c, SD1, E3, R1 and T1.
- 7.10 Core Strategy policy R1 informs that development in rural areas will (amongst other matters) be considered according to the extent to which it facilitates economic activity and E3 assesses the extent to which it will support the local economy. It is recognised that the proposed development would bring about some economic benefit to the area and this is evidenced by the comprehensive consultation response from the Council’s Regeneration Officer (see above Section 6 ‘Consultations Carried Out’ of this report). The applicant states that *‘this is a new venture and as such there is no commitment to future phase at this stage as further investment will depend upon the business viability of the first phase.’* It is likely (but not guaranteed) that any future expansion of the camp site facilities would increase the number of jobs available. At the present time the applicant states the creation of 1 x full-time and 1 x part-time job (application form). It is expected that the site would be open from Easter through to Christmas/New Year. It is reasonable to conclude that other economic benefits will be brought by visitors supporting local businesses in surrounding areas (albeit the extent is unknown), potentially

Alton Towers, public houses, nearby towns/villages and also by providing short-term employment for the physical on-site works i.e construction of the access roads, car park and concrete hardstanding. There are clear adverse issues in terms of the site's locational suitability (as outlined above including appeal decisions) and, on balance, it is not considered that the limited economic benefits would outweigh the strong policy presumption against the use of this site for overnight accommodation.

Landscape and Visual Impact (including Trees and Ecology)

- 7.11 Core Strategy policies DC1 includes the requirement to secure well-designed developments, for them to respect the site and its surroundings by taking into account matters of scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance and promote the maintenance/enhancement/restoration and re-creation of biodiversity where appropriate in accordance with policy NE1. Policy DC3 concerns itself with landscape and settlement setting, resisting developments which would be harmful and/or detrimental to the character of the landscape and seeks development proposals which would respect/enhance local landscape character. Policy E3 makes reference to securing development which is of a scale and design which can easily be assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner including screening, siting, design and access.
- 7.12 The application site is an undeveloped parcel of greenfield land within an open countryside setting. The site is partially screened by a roadside fronting hedgerow and drops significantly in level towards the rear (northern) site boundary offering views over the open countryside towards Alton and the Weaver Hills. In addition to views from the neighbouring property Paradise Farm the application site is also visible from various locations along Lockers Bank. The open aspect of the site contributes towards the character and appearance of the undeveloped rural area and landscape and the views across it contribute positively.
- 7.13 The scheme involves the planting of a significant number of trees (500 in total according to the applicant – could be approx 850-1000 plants according to the Trees and Woodlands officer based on the percentage coverage of the site and taking into account the typical woodland/forestry spacing requirements) along the roadside frontage, the eastern boundary and the areas around the vehicular access and parking areas. The applicant intends to use a mix of Beech, Alder, Holly, Birch, Wild Cherry, Hazel, Maple, Oak, Rowan, Spindle, Sallow and Guilder Rose. The applicant states that these species have been planted within Rays Wood (West of Paradise Farm) and have established very well. It is understood that existing hedgerows will be maintained with additional planting where they are gappy with mixed species. The Councils Trees and Woodlands officer comments that the more substantial trees could take 20-25 years to reach maturity, this would not offer much short to medium term screening but opines that such substantial trees would not be required for effective screening of the types of structures/features proposed at the first stage (more screening may be required as part of any future stage to screen any proposed buildings).

- 7.14 Although (based on the Trees and Woodlands officer's comments) it appears possible to provide some screening from wider public view, this would not be an immediate effect but in any case the development would impact upon the appearance/character of the site itself. The construction of approximately 5m-6m wide roads (running almost the complete length of the western and southern boundaries) complete with turning-head, parking spaces (adjacent to the concrete hard standings) and 18 space car-park will have a significant and detrimental visual impact upon the undeveloped nature of the site. In addition to the hardstanding areas the proposal to use a cut and fill method (cutting to level the area for the road and fill for the engineered raised plateau-as described on the submitted drawings) and the resultant artificial embankments will result in a development which would be at odds with the naturally sloping nature of the site. The hard standings, and presence of vehicles (stationary and moving) will impact upon the openness of the site by the intensification of its use and introduction of hard features to the otherwise undeveloped land. This will also be the case for the concrete hardstanding areas identified on the submitted plan as being suitable for static caravans/touring caravans/motorhomes or static cabins, these structures would also have a visual impact. Although their exact design details are not known this will also be the case for the cycle wash/bike store, hardstanding around the recycling facility and the recycling facilities themselves. It is considered that the proposal would inflict unacceptable physical and visual harm to an undeveloped parcel of green field land without any satisfactory policy justification for its need.
- 7.15 This is an undeveloped site and as such the provisions of Core Strategy policy NE1 are triggered. NE1 protects the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas which will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and the strict control of development. This will be achieved by securing biodiversity 'net-gains,' mitigation measures for any unavoidable impacts, appropriate maintenance, enhancement, restoration and/or re-creation of biodiversity through the proposed nature, scale, location and design of a proposal. The Council's Ecology advisor objects to the application on the grounds that there is inadequate ecological information to determine the impacts (if any) of the development on biodiversity. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the application indicates hard landscaping, tree planting and meadow creation but lacks underpinning surveys to inform actions. Without any meaningful survey/additional information it is agreed with the Ecology advisor that the requirements of policy NE1 cannot satisfactorily be applied, considered or established as being met/satisfied as the policy requirements for securing net-gains and identifying mitigation measures cannot be informed without any background information. Upon learning of the objections, the applicant submitted some data from Staffordshire Ecological Record which he states shows no record of any ecological interest on or near to this site. The SER information is welcomed, the Ecology advisor states that it should support a walkover survey but is not a substitute for an on-site Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and his original comments (objections) still apply.

Highways

- 7.16 There is an existing field gate within the roadside boundary which would be realigned and altered to suit the use of the site. The plans show that there would be a hardsurfaced access, returning hedgerow leading towards inwards opening double gates and the roadside hedge would be retained but cut-back where required to maintain adequate visibility. The County Highways officer has visited the site and raises no objections to the application on highways grounds but does recommend a number of conditions including securing satisfactory visibility splays, surfacing of the access drive for a minimum distance of 10m rear of the carriageway edge and inwards opening gates.

Environmental Health – Including Amenity and Drainage

- 7.17 Amenity - The application is proposing the development of an open, agricultural field for camping purposes. The very nature of such a development brings with it associated noise including by the comings and goings of vehicles and the outdoor noise generated from visitors to the site. Core Strategy policies seeks to protect amenity (including residential and area). Policy E3 requires developments to be of an appropriate quality, scale and character, compatible with the area and protecting residential amenity. DC1 protects the amenity of the area including residential amenity and R1 specifies development shall not harm the rural character and environmental quality of an area by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity including the effects of noise.
- 7.18 The Council's Environmental Health officer objects to the application stating that *'the proposal to develop this field into a camping and caravanning site for up to 18 units (6 caravans/pods and 12 tents) has the potential to cause a significant change in the acoustic nature of this area. The Noise Policy Statement of England 2010 recognises the protection of quiet places and times which should be a consideration for this development.'* There are a number of residential properties (noise sensitive residential properties) within the vicinity of the site; Paradise Farm immediately to the west, The Bungalow to the north-east and Paradise Cottage to the south-east. The amenity of all of these properties is at times likely to be impacted upon by noise from the camping/caravanning activities. It is understood that the applicant resides at Paradise Farm (west of site) however this does not exempt the property from being considered in terms of amenity impact. The Environmental Health officer accepts that *'the 6 pods in isolation pose a lesser problem of noise considering their design and location but the number of tent sites, the nature of this activity and location of tents do cause a significant concern. Noise from this operation could include music, people (shouting/singing etc.), and vehicle noise.'* 18 outdoor residential units with associated noise (as well as impacting upon neighbours) would likely impact on what would otherwise be low rural background noise levels. The Environmental Health officer concludes that *'there is no advice contained within the submission as to how noise from the proposed operation will not impact on the amenity of the nearest noise sensitive receptors and the amenity of this area.'* For these reasons it is

considered that the application is contrary to Core Strategy Policies E3, DC1 and R1 in terms of amenity impact.

- 7.19 Drainage – Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency make comments in relation to public sewerage and foul drainage only. Environmental Health officer's have assessed the application in a wider issues basis and conclude that 'there is insufficient information provided on the drainage infrastructure on the proposed site, including septic tank capacity, outlet details, drain runs, cesspit details, and effluent disposal. There is also no detail on land drainage, surface water management and ground conditions for soakaways.' Due to the lack of information it is considered that the application is contrary to policies SS1, SS1a, SD4 and DC1.

Planning Balance & Conclusion

- 7.20 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration of weight in the determination of this application; setting out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 identifies the three dimensions to sustainable development i.e economic, social and environmental. The Framework makes it clear that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation. It is concluded that the proposal does not form a sustainable rural tourist enterprise by reason of the remoteness of the application site, the lack of any surrounding facilities, the inevitable reliance upon the private motor vehicle to travel to/from the site and the likelihood of further motor vehicle trips during the course of a customer's stay (due to the site not being in close proximity to any services/facilities. It is recognized that some economic benefits may be brought by the scheme it is not considered that these would outweigh the loss of an undeveloped parcel of open countryside land due to their limited nature. The development of the green field site would also constitute harm, both physically and visually. There are no surveys/information to inform any bio-diversity enhancements/mitigation measures and no details concerning drainage arrangements. Finally the nature of the proposal is highly likely to have an adverse impact upon residential amenity as well as the rural character (quietness) of the area. No information has been submitted to satisfactorily demonstrate that the scheme would not cause harm in respect of these matters. Taking into account all of the identified issues within this report the application is recommended for refusal.

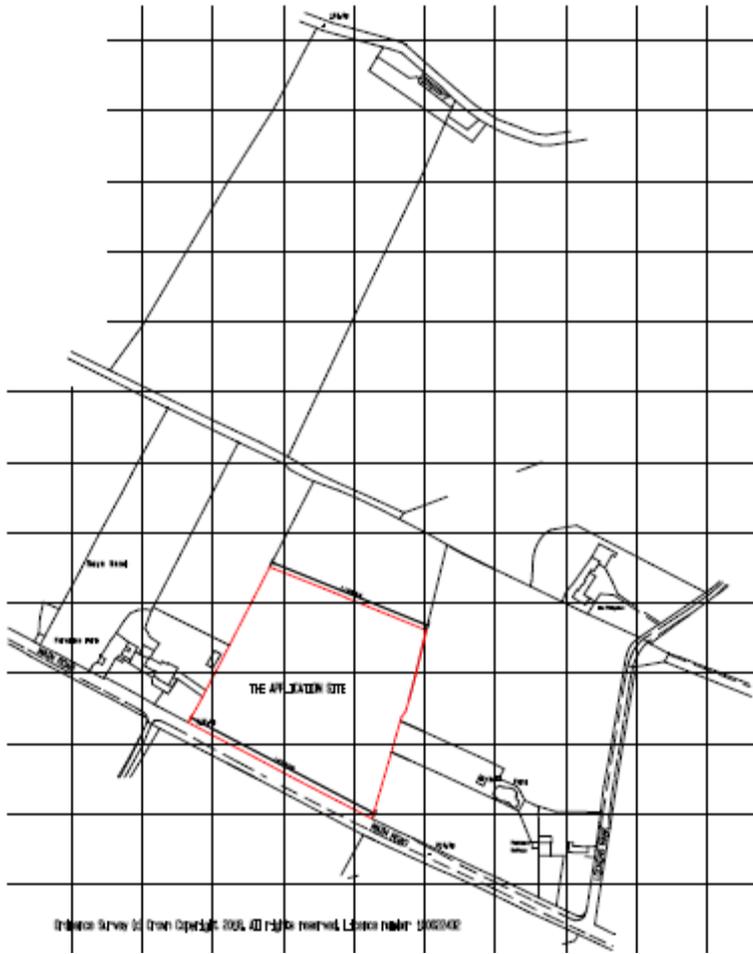
8. RECOMMENDATION

A. That the application is refused for the following reasons;

- 1. By reason of the sites remote location, poor accessibility to surrounding services/facilities and inevitable reliance upon the motor vehicle for travel to/from the application site as well as catering for day-to-day needs, it is considered that the proposal would not represent sustainable development as required by the Framework. It is**

recognized that the scheme would bring about some limited economic benefits to the area but they would not be considered sufficient enough to outweigh the identified environmental harm of the development of an unsustainable site. The application is therefore contrary to the requirements of policies SS1, SS1a, SS6c, SD1, E3, R1 and T1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework including sections 2, 6, 9, 11 and 12.

2. The construction of internal access roads (including turning heads), the widening and hard surfacing of the access, creation of an 18 space car-park, the regrading of the land, provision of concrete hardstandings, the accommodation units themselves as well as stationary and moving vehicles would have a significant and detrimental visual impact upon the openness, undeveloped and naturally sloping character of the site. The application is therefore contrary to policies SS6c, E3, DC1, DC3 and R1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework including sections 2, 12 and 15.
3. Inadequate information has been submitted to determine the impacts of the development on biodiversity. Without such information it is not possible to secure (if applicable/necessary) biodiversity 'net-gains,' mitigation measures for any unavoidable impacts, appropriate maintenance, enhancement, restoration and/or re-creation of biodiversity through the proposed nature, scale, location and design of a proposal contrary to the provisions of policies SS6c, DC1, DC3, E3, R1 and NE1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework including sections 2, 14 and 15.
4. The proposed development has the potential to cause a significant and adverse change to the acoustic nature of this quiet rural area. The associated noise including the comings and goings of vehicles and outdoor noise generated by visitors would be unacceptable and to the detriment of this quiet rural setting and occupants of surrounding dwellings. The application fails to satisfactorily demonstrate how these matters could be addressed and therefore the application is contrary to policies SS6c, SD4, E3, DC1 and R1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework including sections 2, 12 and 15.
5. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would be able to be served by satisfactory drainage connections including septic tank capacity, outlet details, drain runs, cesspit details, and effluent disposal. There is also no detail on land drainage, surface water management and ground conditions for soakaways. The application is therefore contrary to policies SS1, SS1a, SD4 and DC1 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework including sections 2 and 15.



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