
Agenda Item:	5.1
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Site:	Land At St Stephens Hill Farm, Steenwood Lane, Admaston, Staffordshire, WS15 3NQ
Proposal:	Change of use of agricultural land to facilitate the siting of 10 holiday lodges, for a holiday season of 11 months each year, including installation of septic tank, formation of reed bed, pond/wetland and formation of vehicular access

Report of Head of Service (Section 151 Officer)

This report has been checked on behalf of Legal Services by John Kirkham

[Hyperlink to Application Details](#)

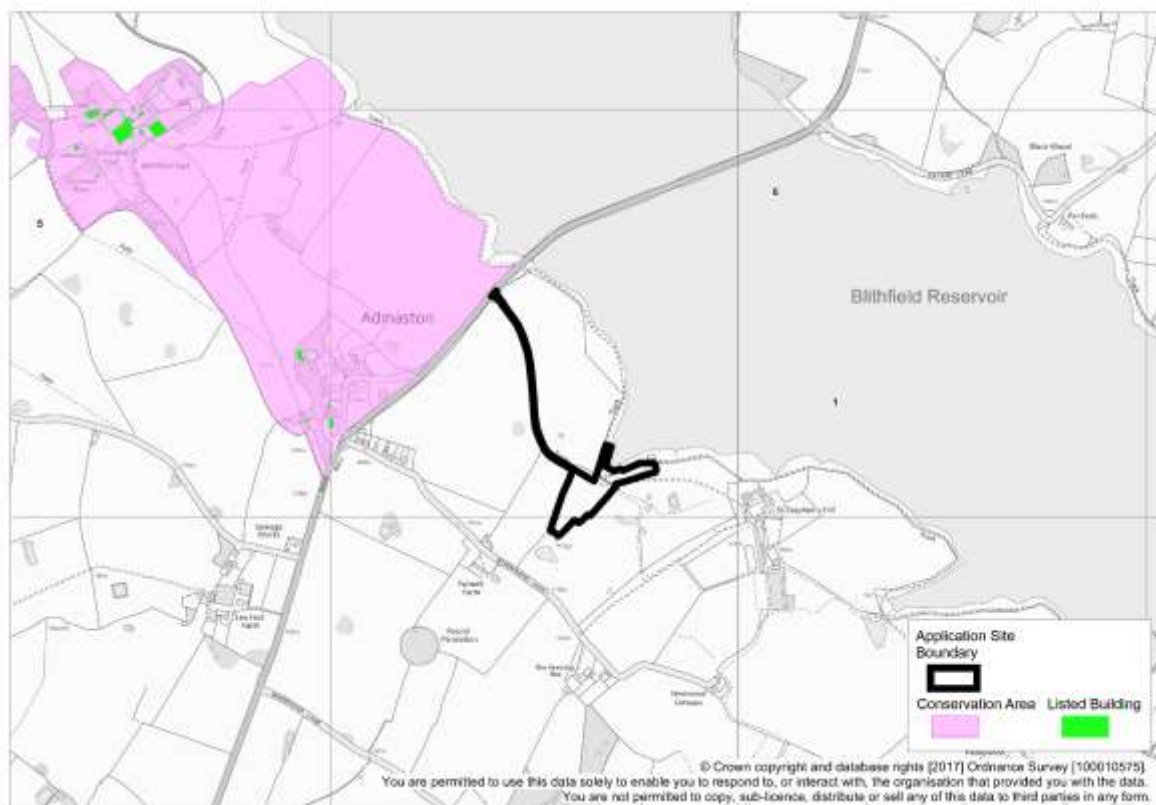
Application Number:	P/2016/01267	
Planning Officer:	Emily Christie	
Type of Application:	Detailed Planning Application	
Applicant:	Mr Peter & Mrs Maxine Brown	
Ward:	Bagots	
Ward Member (s):	Councillor G Hall	
Date Registered:	07 December 2016	
Date Expires:	03 March 2017	

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application site comprises agricultural land on the south-western shore of Blithfield Reservoir. The site lies within a rural area approximately 500 metres east of the settlement of Admaston and approximately 2.8km south-west of Abbots Bromley. Surrounding land use is predominantly agricultural.
- 1.2 The application proposes the change of use of the application site to provide 10 holiday lodges, together with the installation of a septic tank, the formation of a reed bed, pond/wetland and the formation of vehicular access.

- 1.3 Statutory consultees have raised no objections that cannot be addressed by the imposition of planning conditions. The Parish Council voted two for and two against, with one abstention.
- 1.4 Twenty-four responses (14 Objections and 10 letters in support) have been received from local residents.
- 1.5 It is considered that the development is of an appropriate scale and design within its rural context to comply with the provisions of relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.6 The proposal will also not adversely affect the amenities of occupiers of existing nearby dwellings.
- 1.7 The proposal will not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the existing highway network.
- 1.8 It is not considered that the development would be to the detriment of the character or appearance or setting of any listed buildings within the locality or the setting of the Admaston Conservation Area.
- 1.9 **Members are advised that the above is a brief summary of the proposals and key issues contained in the main report below which provides full details of all consultation responses, planning policies and the Officer's assessment, and Members are advised that this summary should be read in conjunction with the detailed report.**

Map of site



2. The site description

- 2.1 The application site comprises agricultural land on the south-western shore of Blithfield Reservoir. The site lies within a rural area approximately 500 metres east of the settlement of Admaston and approximately 2.8km south-west of Abbots Bromley. Surrounding land use is predominantly agricultural. However, there are also residential properties in the area, the closest of which is situated on Steenwood Lane to the south-west of the application site. Furthermore, there are holiday-lets owned and operated by the applicant approximately 450 metres to the east of the application site in converted traditional brick and tile buildings.
- 2.2 The application site comprises part of a small valley within undulating countryside on the south-western shore of the reservoir. Ground levels generally rise from the reservoir towards Steenwood Lane to the south-west, and from east to west across the site. The site is enclosed by a mixture of stock-proof fencing and established hedgerows.
- 2.3 The site is accessed off the B5013 via a tarmac track, which also serves the applicant's farmyard and holiday-lets.
- 2.4 Blithfield Reservoir is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is nationally important for goosander and provides an important wintering habitat for a variety of birds.

3. Planning history

- 3.1 **P/2011/00888/JI** - Siting of 28 holiday lodges (Static Caravans), and change of use of agricultural land to facilitate the siting of the lodges, including associated engineering operations, for a holiday season of 11 months each year – Withdrawn.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The application proposes the change of use of the application site to a holiday park including the siting of 10 holiday lodges, installation of septic tank, and formation of reed bed, pond/wetland and formation of vehicular access.
- 4.2 The proposed holiday lodges would each have a maximum length of 14 metres, a maximum width of 6.1 metres and a height to the ridge of 4.13m. The style of lodges proposed comes from a range by the manufacturer Tingdene and the style proposed is the Warreners lodge. The lodge comprises an open plan kitchen, dining and living area and two double en-suite bedrooms with additional WC. The lodges also incorporate a glazed gable detail serving the living area.
- 4.3 Whilst the lodges fall within the legal definition of static caravans, they have a character and appearance similar to single storey chalets. The proposed lodges would be clad in natural finished timber, with pitched roofs with a dark grey roof tile seeking to reflect the local vernacular.
- 4.4 The lodges would be serviced via the existing farm drive routed from the B5013. The lodges are arranged around a single access drive in a fairly

organic manner, taking into account the topography of the site, avoiding regimented rows or blocks. The proposal incorporates 20 parking bays for cars including two disability spaces and four cycle spaces.

- 4.5 It is proposed that the holiday park would have an 11-month season. The ‘closed period’ is proposed to be from 7th January to 7th February each year.

List of supporting documentation

- 4.6 The following documents have been provided as part of the application:

- 1471.03 Rev A – 1:500 Proposed Layout and Landscaping Plan dated as received 27th January 2017.
- 1:2500 Location Plan dated as received 21st November 2016.
- 1:50 Proposed Lodge Elevations dated as received 21st November 2016.
- 1:50 Proposed Side Elevation and Floor plan of Lodges dated as received 21st November 2016.
- 1499/H 1:500 Waste Storage Facilities, Foul and Surface Water Drainage and Cycle Storage dated as received 16th November 2016.
- 1499/T 1:500 Cross Section of Pond dated as received 3rd November 2016.
- RBS 1830/1 Issue B – Proposed Reed Bed Layout dated as received 3rd November 2016.
- ST14.0 Rev 1 – Septic Tank Details dated as received 3rd November 2016.
- 1499/B – 1:50 Waste Storage Facilities dated as received 13th September 2016.
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by Apex Environmental dated as received 3rd November 2016.
- Flood Risk Assessment prepared by RAB dated as received 12th September 2016.
- Design and Access Statement dated as received 12th September 2016.
- Breeding Bird Survey (Ref: P8.T4.16_BB) prepared by Trust Ecology dated as received 12th September 2016.
- Overwintering Bird Survey (Ref: P8.T4.16_OB) prepared by Trust Ecology dated as received 12th September 2016.
- Ecological Appraisal (Ref: P8.T4.16_EA) prepared by Trust Ecology dated as received 12th September 2016.
- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal prepared by Allan Moss Associates Ltd dated as received 12th September 2016.

- 4.7 The relevant findings are dealt with in section 8 onwards below.

5. Consultation responses and representations

- 5.1 A summary of the consultation responses is set out below:

Statutory and non statutory consultee		Response
5.2	Parish Council	<i>The result of the voting by Blithfield Parish Councillors on</i>

		<i>the above application was two for and two against, with one abstention.</i>
5.3	SCC Highways	No objection
5.4	SCC Flood Risk Team	<p>No objection subject to conditions</p> <p><i>It would also be prudent for the owner of the site to consider an Emergency Plan, detailing evacuation routes and contingency in the event of high water within the Reservoir or failure.</i></p> <p>Condition requiring the submission of a surface water drainage scheme including the utilisation of holding sustainable drainage techniques with the incorporation of treatment trains to help improve water quality; the limitation of surface water run-off to equivalent greenfield rates; the ability to accommodate surface water run-off on-site up to the critical 1 in 100 year event plus an appropriate allowance for climate change, based upon the submission of drainage calculations; and the responsibility for the future maintenance of drainage features.</p> <p>Condition requiring finished floor levels are to be set no lower than 300mm above adjacent ground levels</p> <p>Informative: The Applicant should supply information showing arrangements to provide adequate long term maintenance of the pond, including an appropriate legal agreement to ensure maintenance in perpetuity, before any approval is granted. It is essential that the responsibility for future maintenance, repairs or improvements to the pond is confirmed for the lifetime of the proposal.</p>
5.5	Environment Agency	<p>No objection</p> <p><i>If using existing septic tank on site, ensure that there is the capacity for the extra load. Also, because the septic tank will be in use seasonally provisions must be put in place to ensure that any permit conditions are met. Permit to discharge required.</i></p> <p><i>The site is adjacent to Blithfield Reservoir SSSI and we therefore recommend that Natural England is consulted.</i></p>
5.6	Severn Trent Water	No objection
5.7	Natural England	Natural England is satisfied that the revised hedgerow

		proposals (stretches of new holly hedge planting north of the existing access track) in place of the previous woodland blocks further north and adjacent to the reservoir water body are acceptable. This approach should avoid risks to the notified wildfowl which uses the St Stephen's Bay part of the SSSI.
5.8	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	No comments received
5.9	Architectural Liaison Officer	No objection
5.10	Historic England	No comments to offer

Internal Consultees		Response
5.11	Environmental Health	No objections.
5.12	Planning Policy	No objections. The proposal satisfies policies in the Local Plan, namely SP1, SP8 and SP15 and therefore is supported in principle.

6. Neighbour responses

6.1 14 Objections and 11 letters of support were received.

Neighbour responses	
Principle	<p>The lodges will be detached from the existing accommodation and built form of the farm.</p> <p>Any additional accommodation should be focused around the existing accommodation on the site.</p> <p>If granted consent, then how will 'the period of occupancy' be policed – concerns that the units will be let for longer term accommodation.</p> <p>Admaston does not offer shops or services and therefore visitors will need to travel by private vehicle to access services/facilities.</p> <p>The development will have no benefit to the village or residents of Admaston.</p> <p>This development will set an undesirable precedent on the site and the surrounding countryside.</p> <p>What is to stop the units from being granted consent for permanent residences if the business is deemed unviable?</p> <p>The site is within the East Staffordshire Green Infrastructure Corridor. This development would be contrary to the aims of</p>

	<p>the core strategy which aims to protect and the historic and natural environment for the next generation.</p> <p>This application does not overcome the reasons for refusal on the previous application.</p> <p>Other sites on the farm should be considered as the chosen site is not suitable for such a use.</p>
Impacts on Amenity	<p>The design of the lodges is not in keeping with the traditional character of the surrounding area to its detriment.</p> <p>The site is clearly visible from the surrounding area and car park on the opposite side of the reservoir.</p> <p>Although signage is in place to direct visitors, this is not effective as local residents are regularly disturbed by visitors asking for directions.</p> <p>Local residents are disturbed by vehicles delivering take-aways and by taxis' coming to and from the site on a regular basis.</p> <p>There is no scheme for external lighting – <i>this needs to be addressed to protect the local area and wildlife.</i></p> <p>Noise impact.</p>
Highways Impacts	<p>The access onto the road which crosses the reservoir is dangerous as vehicles travel at high speeds and accidents have occurred in recent times.</p> <p>Increased traffic in the area to the detriment of the local residents.</p> <p>Traffic often uses Steenwood Lane to access the site which is unsuitable for high levels of traffic.</p>
Flood and drainage impacts	<p>The proximity of the septic tank to the reservoir is concerning and contamination is a real threat.</p> <p>Holiday makers may not adhere to the regulations as to what can be disposed of into a septic tank and subsequently into the reed bed.</p> <p>The reed bed is likely to attract nuisance insects in warm weather.</p>
Historic Environment and ecology	<p>The proposal will have a detrimental impact upon this historic landscape.</p> <p>The SSSI should be given consideration. The impact upon the local wildlife populations will be detrimental from noise and disturbance and light pollution.</p>
Other	<p>The applicant does not reside at the farm for most of the year</p>

	and as such would be unaware of the impact the development is having on local residents which is unfair.
Supporting grounds	<p>Increase in employment opportunities in the local area.</p> <p>Suitable farm diversification scheme.</p> <p>The development will benefit the local economy.</p> <p>Provide much needed accommodation in the locality.</p> <p>The proposal will complement the existing tourist accommodation on the site which has been a success.</p> <p>The visual impact will be enhancing rather than detrimental.</p> <p>Increase tourism in Staffordshire.</p> <p>The proposal has been designed in a sensitive way to blend into the landscape.</p> <p>There will be no impact upon the Blithfield Reservoir SSSI.</p> <p>There will be no detrimental impact upon local bird populations as a result of the development.</p>

7. Policy Framework

National Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Policy Guidance

Local Plan

- Principle 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SP1: East Staffordshire Approach to Sustainable Development
- NP1: Role of Neighbourhood Plans
- SP3: Provision of Homes and Jobs 2012-2031
- SP8 Development Outside Settlement Boundaries
- SP9 Infrastructure Delivery and Implementation
- SP14 Rural Economy
- SP15 Tourism, culture and leisure development
- SP24 High Quality Design
- SP25 Historic Environment
- SP27 Climate Change, Water Body Management and Flooding
- SP28 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation
- SP29 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SP30 Locally Significant Landscape
- SP35 Accessibility and Sustainable Transport
- DP1 Design of New Development
- DP2 Designing in Sustainable Construction

- DP5 Protecting the Historic Environment: All Heritage Assets, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and archaeology
- DP6 Protecting the Historic Environment: Other Heritage Assets
- DP7 Pollution and Contamination
- DP8 Tree Protection

8. Principle of Development

8.1 The NPPF states that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

8.2 Paragraph 251 of the NPPF states that 'due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The closer the policies in the plan to the framework, the greater the weight that may be given'.

9. Local Plan

9.1 The policies in the plan provide a clear framework to guide sustainable growth and the management of change, thereby following the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

9.2 Strategic Policy 1 sets out the East Staffordshire Approach to Sustainable Development. Principles listed in the policy include social, environmental and economic considerations to be taken into account in all decision making where relevant. The principles are:

- located on, or with good links to, the strategic highway network, and should not result in vehicles harming residential amenity, causing highway safety issues or harming the character of open countryside;
- it is convenient and safe to walk, cycle and travel by public transport between (and for larger sites, around) the site and existing homes, workplaces, shops, education, health, recreation, leisure, and community facilities and between any new on-site provision;
- retains, enhances, expands and connects existing green infrastructure assets into networks within the site and within the wider landscape;
- re-uses existing buildings where this is practicable and desirable in terms of the contribution the buildings make to their setting
- integrated with the character of the landscape and townscape, provides for archaeological investigation where this is appropriate and conserves and

- enhances buildings of heritage importance, setting and historic landscape character;
- designed to protect the amenity of the occupiers of residential properties nearby, and any future occupiers of the development through good design and landscaping;
- high quality design which incorporates energy efficient considerations and renewable energy technologies;
- developed without incurring unacceptable flood risk or drainage problems and uses Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) where appropriate;
- does not harm biodiversity, but rather enhances it wherever possible, including increasing tree-cover, especially as part of the National Forest;
- creates well designed and located publicly accessible open space;
- would demonstrably help to support the viability of local facilities, businesses and the local community or where new development attracts new businesses and facilities to an area this does not harm the viability of existing local facilities or businesses;
- would contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities through the provision of a mix of housing types and tenures;
- uses locally sourced, sustainable or recycled construction materials (including wood products from the National Forest where this is appropriate), sustainable waste management practices and minimises construction waste;
- safeguards the long term capability of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1, 2 and 3a in the Agricultural Land Classification) as a resource for the future; and
- would result in the removal of contamination and other environmental problems associated with the site.

9.3 Strategic Policy 8 provides guidance and criteria on how to deal with development in the countryside and is relevant in this case. This policy states that outside development boundaries planning permission will not be granted unless:

- essential to the support and viability of an existing lawful business or the relation of a new business appropriate in the countryside in terms of type of operation, size and impact and supported by relevant justification for a rural location; or
- providing facilities for the use of the general public or local community close to an existing settlement which is reasonably accessible on foot, by bicycles or by public transport; or
- in accordance with a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan; or
- development under the Rural Exception Sites policy
- Appropriate re-use of Rural Buildings following guidance set out in the Rural Buildings SPD; or
- Infrastructure development where an overriding need for the development to be located in the countryside can be demonstrated; or
- Development necessary to secure a significant improvement to the landscape or the conservation of a feature of acknowledged importance; or
- Provision for renewable energy generation, of a scale and design appropriate to its location
- Otherwise appropriate in the countryside

- 9.4 Whilst the applicant has not attempted to demonstrate that the proposal is essential to the support and viability of an existing lawful business or is a new business appropriate in the countryside, the proposal is associated with an existing farm business which already includes several holiday lets in existing barn conversions. The applicant has provided information concluding that not all booking enquiries are capable of being fulfilled and as a result, the demand for visitor accommodation is high. It can therefore be considered that the proposal meets the first criteria of SP8.
- 9.5 The Local Plan contains a vision which states 'Well managed, sustainable tourism will be a major driver in regenerating the rural areas and enhancing their character and quality.'
- 9.6 The Local Plan recognises that protecting the countryside needs to be balanced with the recognition that the rural economy, including tourism, is a vital part of the Borough's total economy and that it faces continuing change and pressure over the Plan period. It is national and local policy to support appropriate rural enterprise and this is reflected in a suitably flexible policy approach to necessary development that is of a suitable scale and designed to fit into its landscape.
- 9.7 Although East Staffordshire is not a major visitor destination, the tourism industry is a significant employer in the area, employing over 4,000 people in a range of businesses. The Borough Council supports tourism growth and it wishes to promote and enhance its environmental, historic and natural assets which contribute to the Borough's attractiveness.
- 9.8 Strategic Policy 15, Tourism, culture and leisure development states that new tourism and cultural developments, including the improvement of existing and development of facilities, will be assessed according to the extent to which they support the local economy and promote the distinctive character and quality of the Borough. The Borough Council will maximise opportunities to develop and promote tourism by approving in principle proposals which:
- respect the character and quality of the landscape and built form of the Borough's towns and villages, including heritage assets;
 - champion exemplar design, environmental credentials and sustainable construction appropriate to their context;
 - make positive use of the natural assets of the Borough such as The National Forest, without harming their intrinsic qualities or adversely affecting the natural environment and designated features of the built environment, including their settings, biodiversity, geodiversity or visual amenity; and
 - do not adversely affect the local transport infrastructure or residential amenity,
 - or mitigate such effects where they are likely to arise.
- 9.9 It is considered that the proposal complies with the criteria set out in the first part of Strategic Policy 15.
- 9.10 Strategic Policy 15 goes on to state that those activities attracting large numbers of people should be directed towards the accessible locations

of the Borough's towns, unless the tourism initiative requires a countryside location or setting or is directly related to a specific tourist destination. It is not considered that the proposal will attract large numbers of people. It is also acknowledged that the proposal is of a design and type of visitor accommodation which is usually associated with a more rural location. The proposal, whilst not directly related to nearby tourist destinations is located near Blithfield Reservoir and the Staffordshire Way public footpath, both being recognised visitor attractions.

9.11 Policy SP15 states that development of tourist facilities, as is this, in the countryside will be limited to those that make use of the natural environment in a sustainable manner. The applicant has submitted information to demonstrate how mitigation measures could ensure that there will be no significant adverse impact on the natural environment. This information is assessed in detail in the following sections of this report.

9.12 Policy SP15 makes specific reference to tourist accommodation and states that this should be provided within existing settlements where it can make use of existing infrastructure and facilities. New tourist accommodation outside settlements will only be acceptable where it will have good accessibility to existing infrastructure, and will not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside, features of historic or landscape value, biodiversity, or the amenities of nearby residents. The applicant has submitted information seeking to address impacts on the character and appearance of the countryside, biodiversity, landscape and amenity of residents. The impact of the proposal on the enjoyment of the natural environment by visitors is also assessed in detail in the following sections of this report. In relation to accessibility, the proposal is not located within a main town or settlement, however it is acknowledged that such proposals are often more isolated due to their nature. The site can be accessed by cycling as well as by car and there is a long distance footpath with access from land within the applicant's ownership. The matter is again referenced in later sections of this report.

9.13 In light of the above overview and assessment it is considered that the proposal could be considered acceptable in principle in compliance with the Policies of the Local Plan subject to evaluating the detailed material considerations relating to the proposal. This evaluation is set out below.

10. Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area

10.1 The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

10.2 Strategic Policy 1 and 24 state that development proposals must contribute positively to the area in which they are proposed. The policy

lists a number of criteria developments are expected to achieve including creating a sense of place, reinforcing character, reflecting densities and where possible minimise the production of carbon through sustainable construction.

- 10.3 Policy DP1 of the Local Plan re-iterates the design principles set by Policy SP24 stating that development must respond positively to the context of the surrounding area, exhibit a high quality of design and be compliant with the East Staffordshire Design Guide.
- 10.4 The East Staffordshire Design Guide requires the design of development to demonstrate a strong, considered and sensitive response to its context. Design which is relevant to the site and wider context will be important, as this can support local distinctiveness.
- 10.5 Local Plan Policy SP8 of the East Staffordshire Local Plan seeks to ensure that development is appropriate in terms of scale, massing and design and would not have an adverse impact upon the character of the area (including design, materials and landscaping being appropriate and not introducing considerable urban form) or upon the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby properties.
- 10.6 Detailed Policy 2 aims for development to achieve high sustainability and environmental credentials adopted energy efficiency techniques and other standards where possible.
- 10.7 The proposed lodges are typical holiday chalet style buildings constructed in natural finished timber with a dark grey roof tile. Each lodge has an end elevation that is principally glazed to take advantage of the views across the reservoir and surrounding countryside. The lodges are arranged around a central access drive, accessed off the existing driveway leading up to the existing holiday let accommodation and farm buildings.
- 10.8 The proposed landscaping around the site is to be fairly natural and informal, with a reinforced grass access drive and new tree planting to offer screening to the development.
- 10.9 The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which concludes that whilst the proposal will inevitably change the landscape character of the site from agricultural land to uses for tourism purposes, the development is modest in scale and incorporates appropriate materials and landscaping to mitigate against the overall visual impact.
- 10.10 The topography of the land slopes up to the east, south and west surrounding the site. The lodges would sit in a natural hollow in the landscape. Officers consider that this would limit the visual impact of the proposal within the surrounding area. Although there will be distant views of the development from the public car park on the opposite side of the reservoir, and from the causeway, it is considered that these views will be limited and will not be to the detriment of the surrounding countryside.
- 10.11 There are no public footpaths across or adjacent to the site. However there is a track around the perimeter of the reservoir which is used by

anglers. The lodges will therefore be visible from public vantage points but, on balance, given the form, layout, materials of the proposed development it is considered that the design and visual impact is appropriate. This visual impact will also be mitigated by the landscaping proposed to provide screening.

10.12 In conclusion, given the prevailing levels of the surrounding landscape, which offers some natural screening, and the sensitive nature of the proposed development in terms of form, layout, materials and landscaping, it is considered that the overall visual impact of the proposal will not be detrimental to the character of this rural locality and complies with the provisions of Local Plan Policies SP1, SP8 and SP24.

11. Residential Amenity

11.1 The National Planning Policy Framework and DP1, DP3 and DP7 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure new development will not have an adverse impact on the amenities of new or existing residents by way of loss of light, overlooking or overbearing, or by unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance.

11.2 The site is located approximately 165 metres away from the nearest residential property located on Steenwood Lane (south west). However, given the natural topography of the land, the site is not visible readily from the neighbouring property and the impact upon its occupiers is considered to be reduced as a result of the development being set within down within the landscape.

11.3 The development is located approximately 400 metres away from properties at Admaston and will also be screened by the natural topography of the land.

11.4 A number of residents have raised concerns regarding the current level of disturbance that they are experiencing as a result of the current holiday accommodation at the site. Issues relate to noise and disturbance, mainly from vehicles trying to find the site, by occupants themselves and delivery drivers, with concerns that many additional vehicles are using Steenwood Lane rather than the access off the B5013. Local residents have expressed concerns that these issues will be exacerbated by the additional accommodation on the site attracting larger number of visitors. An informative is suggested to ensure that adequate notification is given to visitors in advance of their arrival. This should adequately address the issues raised.

11.5 Given the separation distances from the development to the surrounding residential properties, the natural screening created by the topography of the site and the sensitive siting of the lodges in a natural hollow within the landscape, the physical impact upon of the amenity of nearby residential occupiers will not be significant.

11.6 With regard to any disturbance created by the increase in traffic visiting the site and the locality, and the increased use of Steenwood Lane by vehicles visiting the holiday accommodation, a condition is recommended to require the submission of marketing materials and information provided

to prospective visitors and to visitors upon booking to advise that the entrance to the site, accessed off the B5013, should be used to limit any impact upon local residents. There are existing signs adjacent to the access and at the entrance to Steenwood Lane on the B5013 directing guests to the accommodation via the driveway rather than using Steenwood Lane. Additional information within the marketing material and the website would help to ensure that prospective visitors are aware of the access to the site to limit the likelihood of traffic using Steenwood Lane.

11.7 Whilst it cannot be enforced that visitors cannot use the Steenwood Lane entrance/exit to the site as it is an existing lawful access point; the application states that no traffic can leave the site via the Steenwood Lane route as there is a controlled gated access within the site to restrict vehicles using the drive leading to Steenwood Lane. It is also proposed that any external lighting within the proposed development would be subject to further submissions through a planning condition.

11.8 In view of the above, it is considered that the impact upon the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby dwellings will be minimal given the separation distances between the development and existing properties and given the prevailing topography of the land and the siting of the development within the landscape. The impact will be further mitigated by the planning conditions advising on the access route taken by visiting vehicles and controls over external lighting.

12. Sustainability (energy efficiency and low carbon)

12.1 DP2 of the Local Plan sets out expectations for development which ensure the design and delivery of low carbon buildings and energy improvements to existing buildings. Considerations include where relevant:

- follow the energy hierarchy of designing out energy demand from the outset, incorporating energy efficiency measures and introducing low carbon energy supply,
- incorporate the best environmental practice and construction techniques in line with the Governments zero carbon buildings policy
- use appropriate materials, form, orientation and layout of buildings to maximise the benefits of passive solar heating, cooling, lighting and natural ventilation;
- incorporate facilities to minimise the use of water and the creation of waste, and which maximise opportunities for recycling;
- incorporate ecologically sensitive design and features for biodiversity early on within a development scheme, following guidance in 'Biodiversity by Design' or future revisions;
- where appropriate prepare Site Waste Management Plans to ensure that at least 25% of the total minerals used derive from recycled and reused content;
- aim to reduce predicted carbon emissions through the generation of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy generation where practicable;

- where on site renewable or low carbon energy generation is not practical, a contribution towards an off-site renewable energy or carbon reduction scheme will be acceptable;

12.2 Whilst the proposed development does not fully meet the criteria outlined above, the proposal does take into consideration the special ecological interest of the area and incorporates sensitive landscaping which will enhance biodiversity in the area. A condition requiring details of a scheme of external lighting is recommended to ensure that the development does not have a detrimental impact upon local wildlife populations, the character of this rural locality or the residential amenity of existing occupiers.

13. Highway Matters

13.1 The NPPF in section 4 sets out the role transport policies play in facilitating sustainable development which contributes to wider sustainability and health objectives. Decisions should consider ensure development proposals have taken the opportunities for sustainable transport modes, ensure safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

13.2 Policies SP1 and SP35 of the Local Plan aim to ensure development is located on sites with good links to the highway network, development is convenient and safe to walk, cycle and travel by public transport. Developments should not result in vehicles harming residential amenity, causing highway safety issues or harming the character of the open countryside. For those developments likely to have an impact on the wider highway infrastructure, proposals should be accompanied by a transport assessment clearly setting out how the likely impacts of the development will be addressed.

13.3 The Council's parking standards SPD sets out standards for different uses including space size, accessibility and the quantity of car parking spaces required for different uses.

13.4 The proposed development will be accessed using the existing entrance and driveway leading from the B5013 to the farm and existing holiday lets. The proposal makes provision for adequate parking facilities to serve the development within the site curtilage.

13.5 The Highway Authority has also been consulted and has raised no objections to the proposed development. The comments received from local representations relating to historic accidents in the local area have been raised with the highway authority. It has been confirmed by the highway authority that there are no accidents relating to the access to the site from the B5013 and that accidents recorded locally, between Admaston and the junction with the Uttoxeter Road (B5014), are below a level that would require further investigation by the highway authority.

13.6 In light of the above, it is considered that there will be no adverse implications for highway safety as a result of the proposal.

14. Historic Environment

14.1 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.

14.2 In determining planning applications with respect to any building or other land in a conservation area, local planning authorities are under a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Case law has established that this means that considerable importance and weight has to be given to that statutory duty when balancing the proposal against other material considerations. Paragraph 129 of the NPPF also confirms that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

14.3 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Again, as for the Section 72 duty referred to above, case law has established that this means that considerable importance and weight has to be given to that statutory duty when balancing the proposal against other material considerations.

14.4 Strategic Policy 25 states that Development proposals should protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings, taking into account their significance, as well as the distinctive character of the Borough's townscapes and landscapes.

14.5 Detailed Policy 5 goes into more detail regarding Historic Assets, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Archaeology. Detailed Policy 6 aims to protect other heritage assets which are not necessarily covered by listed building or conservation area status, such as shopfronts and the setting of important historic landscapes.

14.6 The Admaston Conservation Area is located approximately 470 metres to the west of the proposed holiday homes. The nearest listed buildings are located approximately 585 metres to the west, the nearest being a pair of semi detached properties known as Sedge Cottage and The Smithy, School Lane, Admaston.

- 14.7 The location of the site is such that it falls outside of any defined conservation area and is over half a kilometre away from any listed buildings. Given the prevailing topography of the land and the siting of the development within the valley, there is no direct inter-visibility between the proposed development and the closest heritage assets.
- 14.8 The proposed development will be visible from the opposite shores of Blithfield Reservoir and will be viewed within the panorama of the landscape alongside the Admaston Conservation Area and the listed buildings in the area, including Blithfield Hall, which can be seen across the reservoir and the valley to the west (approximately 1.3km from the site).
- 14.9 However, given the distance and topography between the site and the conservation area and listed buildings, together with the screening of the proposed holiday homes to limit the views of the development within the landscape, it is considered that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the listed buildings and the Admaston Conservation Area and would not harm their settings or significance. Historic England have been consulted and have reviewed the proposals and no comments to offer on the scheme.
- 14.10 In light of the above, it is considered that in this case, both the statutory duties under Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 have been complied with and the historic environment implications of the proposed development are adequately addressed.

15. Flood Risk and Drainage

- 15.1 Section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that new development is not at risk from flooding, or does not increase flood risk elsewhere. It advocates the use of a sequential test with the aim of steering new developments to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. The Environment Agency produces flood risk maps which classifies land according to probability of flooding. The areas of highest risk are classified as Flood Zone 3, with a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of flooding, and the areas of lowest risk are classified as Flood Zone 1, with a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of flooding.
- 15.2 Strategic Policy 27 expects all new development to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). Systems will discharge clean roof water to ground via infiltration techniques, limit surface water discharge to the greenfield run-off rate and protect and enhance wildlife habitats, heritage assets, existing open space, amenity areas and landscape value.
- 15.3 The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1 and as such is at a low risk from fluvial flooding. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment which has been considered by all relevant consultees in relation to flood risk and drainage and no objections have been received. Conditions have been recommended to require finished floor levels of the lodges to be elevated to 300mm above adjacent ground levels and the submission of an emergency plan, detailing evacuation routes and contingency in the event of high water within the Reservoir or failure.

15.4 The application documents state that the foul and surface water created as a result of the development will be disposed of into a septic tank on the site which in turn will filter waste water into a reed bed system and on to a soak away to the reservoir.

15.5 In light of the above and subject to the suggested conditions, it is considered that the development can be implemented with appropriate drainage facilities to serve the holiday units and that there will be no implications for flood risk in the area.

16. Green Infrastructure

16.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that green infrastructure is important to the delivery of high quality sustainable development, alongside other forms of infrastructure such as transport, energy, waste and water. Green infrastructure provides multiple benefits, notably ecosystem services, at a range of scales, derived from natural systems and processes, for the individual, for society, the economy and the environment. To ensure that these benefits are delivered, green infrastructure must be well-planned, designed and maintained. Green infrastructure should, therefore, be a key consideration planning decisions where relevant.

16.2 Strategic Policy 23 states that development should contribute towards the creation, enhancement or ongoing management of a series of local green infrastructure corridors.

16.3 The strategy, in its vision identifies a broad corridor around Blithfield reservoir as a 'Wetland Vision Key Area' as shown on the plan included as Appendix 1.

16.4 The strategy sets out the following vision:

Blithfield Reservoir is of considerable importance to the Borough as it supports a nationally renowned community of wetland birds as well as valuable reed beds and wet woodland on its periphery.

This national value should be celebrated, with further investment in visitor facilities such as paths and bird watching hides to ensure that people of all abilities can appreciate this valuable resource.

16.5 The principles underlying the wetland vision for East Staffordshire are as follows:

- The conservation of existing wetland habitats on all watercourses
- The creation of additional wetland habitats within flood plains
- The development of Blithfield Reservoir as a national wetland bird reserve with suitable visitor infrastructure
- The use of sensitive access infrastructure and interpretation within wetland reserves to engage the Borough's population with their local wetlands
- The realisation of opportunities presented by Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for additional wetland habitat creation and interpretation within new developments

- 16.6 The proposed development takes into consideration the special landscape character and ecological importance of the site, being a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposal incorporates a landscaping scheme which will both screen the development and enhance the habitat on the banks of the reservoir to the benefit of the wetland bird populations.
- 16.7 Whilst the development will not directly benefit the general public by way of providing visitor facilities, it will provide tourist accommodation which will in turn encourage visitors to the area. The proposed scheme includes the provision of a bird watching hide on the banks of the reservoir for patrons to use and the applicant has stated within the Design and Access Statement that *'the marketing of the lodges will be directed at discerning holidaymakers who appreciate the environmental interests associated with a large reservoir situated in a rural scenically beautiful setting. Such visitors will however be strictly advised regarding the South Staffordshire Water Company's regulations on available facilities'*.
- 16.8 In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed development does not conflict with the relevant provisions of both Local Policy and national guidance relating to green infrastructure issues.

17. Landscape

- 17.1 One of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The NPPF states that local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.
- 17.2 Strategic Policy 30 states that development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they have taken into account the Landscape Character Assessment for Staffordshire and consist of a scheme which reflects the landscape character and where possible enhances the landscape quality.
- 17.3 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal which concludes that the siting of the lodges within the natural valley on the site having taken into account the natural topography of the area and the provision of screening to further mitigate the impact of the development in the wider landscape is sufficient to limit the overall impact of the development.
- 17.4 The development will inevitably alter the character of the landscape by introducing additional built form within the natural environment and agricultural land. It is considered that given the form, layout, materials and proposed landscaping, as well as conditions requiring details of external features and lighting, the proposed development will not have a significant adverse impact on the local landscape.

18. Biodiversity

- 18.1 Paragraph 118 within Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a

development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused.

- 18.2 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that public authorities in England have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of policy or decision making.
- 18.3 Strategic Policy 29 lists criteria including development retain features of biological interest produces a net gain in biodiversity in line with Staffordshire biodiversity action plan species and supporting developments with multi-functional benefits.
- 18.4 The reservoir opened in 1953 and has since been recognised for its contribution to wetland bird populations by providing high quality habitat. The area was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1988 which included much of the surrounding woodland.
- 18.5 Any development within the vicinity must therefore take account of the special qualities of the area. The application site does not fall directly within the designated SSSI area. However it is within 10 metres of the boundary. The application is accompanied by a number of reports including an Ecological Appraisal, Arboricultural Appraisal, Great Crested Newt Survey and Breeding and Overwintering Bird Reports.
- 18.6 The Arboricultural report concludes that the development will have minimal impact upon existing trees within the site and surrounding area, but recommend some standard maintenance works to be carried out including the removal of deadwood, reinstatement of hedges and the continued monitoring of one Oak tree which is showing signs of decline.
- 18.7 The Great Crested Newt Survey, Overwintering Birds and Breeding Birds surveys conclude that any impact can be mitigated through appropriate working methods including limiting works to particular times of the year and providing habitat enhancement measures as part of any landscaping proposals.
- 18.8 The Ecological Appraisal concludes overall that *'the value of the improved grassland, which makes up the proposed development area, to protected species, in general, was relatively low. The habitat areas most important for birds, bats, great crested newts and other wildlife were the hawthorn and blackthorn boundary hedgerows (NERC habitat) and associated oak and ash veteran and mature standard trees which provide cover, linear features, perching places and cavities for shelter. The ephemeral and permanent standing water areas on and adjacent to the site provide some input to overall diversity of the site with the ponds east of the site likely supporting a breeding great crested newt population. All boundary features are to be retained, enhanced and managed for their wildlife value. Additional habitat enhancements will help to ensure that the development meets the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) sustainability criterion for no net loss, but rather net gain'*.
- 18.9 In light of the findings of the submitted reports, a condition is recommended to require details of further ecological enhancement

measures to be employed within the site and surrounding area to enhance habitat for protected species identified as present.

18.10 A further condition is required to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the conclusions of the submitted reports which will limit working to certain times of the year and to ensure appropriate methodologies are employed.

18.11 In light of the above assessment, it is considered that the impact upon protected species will be minimal and the development can be adequately mitigated through the inclusion of landscape and habitat enhancement measures which will benefit local wildlife populations.

19. Conclusions

19.1 Considering all of the above, it is concluded that subject to various conditions the proposal suitably complies with the overall aims of the relevant Local Plan Policies, the East Staffordshire Design Guide and the NPPF including the aims of the relevant sustainability criteria of Policy SP1.

19.2 The proposal provides a farm diversification opportunity to support the existing business activities on the holding. The proposal provides tourist accommodation of a type and scale considered appropriate to this rural locality.

19.3 The proposed development will be visible within the panorama of the wider landscape being read in context with the Admaston Conservation Area and the listed buildings in the area, particularly Blithfield Hall (Grade I). However, given the distance between the site from the conservation area and listed buildings and the screening proposed to limit the views of the development within the landscape, it is not considered that the development would be to the detriment of the setting of the listed buildings or the Admaston Conservation Area. In light of the above, it is considered that in this case, both the statutory duties under Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 have been complied with.

19.4 The amenities of neighbouring dwellings will not be materially harmed given the separation distances involved and the prevailing topography and the siting and design of the development within the landscape. Highway safety is not significantly affected.

19.5 Sufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal will not unacceptably harm protected species or their habitats and will not compromise the objectives of Blithfield Reservoir SSSI.

19.6 Having weighed in the balance and having taken account of the schemes overall environmental, social and economic impacts it is considered that the scheme does represent sustainable development and fits the overall aims of the Development Plan, SPDs and the NPPF.

19.7 PERMIT subject to the following conditions –

- Standard time limit for the commencement of the development (0000001A).
- Compliance with the approved plans (subject to other conditions) (00002).
- Notwithstanding the stated details, approval of all external materials (including colours) and compliance with the approved details (00002F).
- Submission and approval of a surface water and foul water drainage scheme to include details of sustainable drainage techniques and implementation and maintenance of such (00005A).
- Submission and approval of slab levels and compliance with the approved details (00016b).
- Submission of full landscaping and boundary treatment including details of tree protection measures for retained trees, the planting of native trees (00003A).
- Submission and approval of a scheme of external lighting and the implementation and maintenance of such (Bespoke)
- Submission and approval of full biodiversity enhancement measures and the implementation and maintenance of such (00016l)
- Submission and approval of details of bird hide and cycle storage facilities and compliance with the approved details (Bespoke Condition)
- Submission and approval of arrangements to provide adequate long term maintenance of the pond, to ensure maintenance in perpetuity (Bespoke Condition).
- Completion of the access, parking and turning areas and such remaining available for their dedicated purposes for the life of the development (00004a).
- Implementation of the approved landscaping scheme (00003b).
- Full compliance with all mitigation measures detailed in the ecology reports. Including enhancement measures for biodiversity protection and enhancement reasons (Bespoke Condition).
- Full compliance with The Flood Risk Assessment (Bespoke Condition).
- The Lodges shall be used for short-stay holiday accommodation only, with a maximum stay of one month in any twelve month period and a register of occupants shall be maintained for inspection during reasonable hours by the Local Planning Authority (Bespoke)
- If the lodges stand vacant and are not let for a continuous period of six months, then the cabins hereby permitted shall be removed immediately from the site and the land restored to its former condition (Bespoke)

Informatives

- Finished floor levels are to be set no lower than 300mm above adjacent ground levels (Bespoke)
- Condition regarding pond maintenance is essential as the responsibility for future maintenance, repairs or improvements to the pond needs to be confirmed for the lifetime of the proposal (Bespoke)
- Pre-commencement conditions standard informative (002a)
- Details of when materials are available for inspection (001a)
- Standard engagement informative (003a)
- Compliance with advice included within the Environment Agency's response including the requirement to obtain a permit to discharge.

- Marketing materials and information provided to prospective visitors and to visitors upon booking to advise that the entrance to the site is accessed off the B5013
- An Emergency Plan, detailing evacuation routes and contingency in the event of high water within the Reservoir or failure should be available in all holiday let units(Bespoke).

20. Background papers

20.1 The following papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- The Local and National Planning policies outlined above in section 4
- Papers on the Planning Application file reference P/2016/01267

21. Human Rights Act 1998

21.1 There may be implications under Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol regarding the right of respect for a person's private and family life and home, and to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. However, these potential issues are in this case amply covered by consideration of the environmental impact of the application under the policies of the development plan and other relevant policy guidance.

22. Crime and Disorder Implications

22.1 It is considered that the proposal does not raise any crime and disorder implications.

23. Equalities Act 2010

23.1 Due regard, where relevant, has been had to the East Staffordshire Borough Council's equality duty as contained within the Equalities Act 2010.

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