

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

HPK/2023/0463
Valid 28/11/2023

**SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH CENTRE
HARPUR HILL BUSINESS
PARK
HARPUR HILL
BUXTON**

**RETROSPECTIVE
APPLICATION FOR
RETENTION OF STAFF
WELFARE BLOCK AND
PARKING AREA

(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Design, Character and Appearance
- Amenity
- Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application relates to a small area of land within the large overall landholding at the Harpur Hill Research Facility owned and operated by the University of Sheffield.

The site is accessed via an internal link road that serves the nearby Health and Safety Executive to the north, and is within close proximity to a number of bunkers, which facilitate the research and testing of explosives, in relation to the strength and resilience of a range of materials, which takes place both indoors and outdoors, hence the remote location.

The specific area of land subject to this application is located a short distance south-east of the main access to the facility, and at the time of a site visit, contains a single storey functional building with a rectangular form and flat roof, together with a surrounding area of hard standing.

For the purposes of the Local Development Plan the site lies outside of the built-up area boundary of any town or village in the open countryside.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the single storey building in situ on site, which as stated within the supporting Cover Letter functions as a welfare block for staff, together with the associated hard standing that facilitates car parking and storage of plant and machinery.

The welfare block provides a Kitchen, Toilets, Lockers, Changing/Shower Room, Meeting Room, and Open Office area. The facilities in the block are used by staff, researchers and visitors.

The building is finished in a plastisol-coated galvanised steel sheeting, with the hard surfaced informal, unmarked parking area finished in a type 1 aggregate, with capacity for up to 6no. vehicles at any one time. Staff, researchers and visitors do not park their own personal vehicles in this area.



Above: Photographs of the building and associated hard standing subject of this retrospective planning application.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

The Local Development Plan for this site comprises the High Peak Local Plan (2016). Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance documents and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are also material considerations in determining applications.

High Peak Local Plan 2016

- S1 Sustainable Development Principles
- S1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- EQ3 Rural Development
- EQ6 Design and Place Making
- E1 New Employment Development
- CF6 Accessibility and Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

- | | |
|--|------------|
| Achieving Sustainable Development | Chapter 2 |
| Building a Strong Competitive Economy | Chapter 6 |
| Promoting Sustainable Transport | Chapter 9 |
| Achieving Well Designed Places | Chapter 12 |
| Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment | Chapter 15 |

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

HPK/0003/0438 Construction of Research Bunker (Approved 07/05/1991)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 9th January 2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

N/A

Environmental Health

No comments received

Derbyshire County Council Highways

No Objections

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application seeks retrospective full planning permission for a single storey Welfare Block that functions as an ancillary use to the research and development Sheffield University facility at Harpur Hill.

Given that the University is essentially a private business, and that the specific nature of the site operates as a research facility that employs staff, the existing use is considered to amount to an employment site. Local Plan (LP) Policy E1 supports the expansion and development of existing employment sites subject to all other material considerations.

The site lies outside of the built-up area boundary in the open countryside and as such is subject to LP Policy EQ3. This policy refers to rural development proposals which lie outside of the defined built-up area boundaries and seeks to ensure that new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape's intrinsic character and distinctiveness.

In light of the above, the principle of development is supported provided that the proposed development is found to preserve the character and appearance of the

immediate and wider rural landscape by virtue of its design, notwithstanding all other material planning considerations.

Design Character and Appearance

LP Policy S1 sets out a number of sustainability principles which all new development proposals should incorporate in order to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect, and where possible enhance the environment.

LP Policy EQ3 refers to rural development proposals which lie outside of the defined built-up area boundaries and seeks to ensure that new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape's intrinsic character and distinctiveness.

LP Policy EQ6 states that all development should be well designed to respect and contribute positively to the character, identity and context of High Peak's townscapes, having regard to matters of scale, height, density, layout, appearance and materials.

Paragraph 135 states amongst other things that decisions should ensure that developments will add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture; and are sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

The proposed hardstanding that has been introduced adjacent to the Welfare Block would be read in conjunction with the bunkers, existing hard standing, plant and machinery, and wider functionality of the site from public footpaths and is not considered to have any adverse impacts on the immediate or indeed wider rural landscape character.

The proposed structure subject of this retrospective application is single storey with a simple rectangular form. It possesses a functional practical appearance that is considered to be appropriate for its ancillary use that is of a modest scale that would clearly be read in conjunction with the wider research site. As such, it is judged that the proposed building is of a scale, height, mass and visual appearance that would preserve both the immediate and wider rural landscape character, thereby in accordance with LP Policies S1, EQ3 and EQ6 and relevant paragraphs contained under Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

Amenity

LP Policy EQ6 requires all new development to have a satisfactory relationship with existing land and buildings and protects the amenity of the area, which includes residential amenity of neighbouring properties. Aspects of residential amenity include impacts such as a loss of sunlight, overshadowing and overbearing impacts, loss of outlook, and loss of privacy.

LP Policy EQ10 seeks to ensure that people and the environment are protected from adverse impacts relating to issues including air pollution, noise, light pollution or any

other nuisance or harm to amenity, by securing appropriate mitigation by way of planning conditions and obligations.

Paragraph 191 of the NPPF states that policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, mitigating any adverse impacts resulting from noise and light pollution amongst others.

The site lies in a very isolated location from any sensitive receptors such as residential properties which is required due to the nature of the facility (explosives testing) but is located within reasonably close proximity to public footpaths that cross the wider site to the north.

Whilst no comments have been received at the time of writing from Environmental Health, it is judged that in any event, the proposed building serves as a Welfare Facility for staff, researchers and visitors and as such will not result in any harm to the amenity of any person not associated with the facility. As such, the proposed development would not result in any harm to the amenity of any residential property or users of the nearby public footpath, in accordance with LP Policy EQ6 and EQ10 and relevant paragraphs under Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

Highway Safety

LP Policy CF6 seeks to ensure that development can be safely accessed in a sustainable manner and that all new development is located where it can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing highway network.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that in assessing applications for development, it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Paragraph 115 goes on to state that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. The site is served by an existing vehicular access, with clear visibility for users entering and exiting the site. The hard standing serves an informal parking area which allows vehicles to enter and exit the site in a forward gear without compromising the safety of pedestrians or other vehicles.

As such and in line with comments from the Highways Authority that confirm that they have no objections, the application is considered to preserve highway safety, in accordance with LP Policy CF6 and paragraph 114 of the NPPF.

Other Matters

Nutrient Neutrality

The site lies within the catchment of the River Wye which forms the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Council has been notified that action must be taken to address exceedances of phosphorus in the River. As such, the Council cannot grant consent for development unless it can rule out “likely significant effects” on the SAC. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be required when the plan or project creates a source of water pollution or has an impact on

water quality and when it is within the catchment of the SAC. Initially, a screening assessment will be required to consider if “likely significant effects” (alone or in-combination) on the SAC can be ruled out. If not, this will be followed by an “Appropriate Assessment” where the impact of the plan or project is considered in detail.

Screening Assessment

The proposal is not directly connected with or necessary for the conservation management of a European site. The proposal will not increase overnight stays. However, the proposal does involve additional hard surfacing and roof area and will therefore increase surface water run-off. However, given the very limited extent of the additional roof and hardstanding and the fact that the wider area is already hard surfaced it will not significantly increase run-off from the site and in turn will not risk having a significant negative effect on the SAC either on its own or in combination with other proposals and therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Appropriate Assessment.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

LP Policy S1a reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. It states that planning applications that accord with relevant policies in the Local Plan will be approved without delay.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless:

- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- 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.

The application seeks retrospective permission for a modest single storey Welfare Block used by staff, researchers and visitors in associated with the explosive testing site operated by Sheffield University south of the Health and Safety Executive at Harpur Hill.

The application has found that the proposed development accords with all relevant Local Development Plan policies and relevant national planning policies and thus constitutes a sustainable form of development. In line with LP Policy S1a and paragraph 11 of the NPPF the application is recommended for approval subject to appropriate conditions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve with Conditions

Case Officer: James Stannard

Recommendation Date: 9th January 2024

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of High Peak Borough Council