

Dear Members

Special Planning Committee (Large Scale Major Application) (2)

A special meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Council Chamber, Martin Street, Stafford** on **Wednesday 12 April 2023** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

The Committee will meet at the **rear of the Civic Centre** and depart at **9.30 am** to visit the site as set out in the agenda and re-convene at the **County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford** at approximately **1.00 pm** to determine the application.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Administration

**SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
(LARGE SCALE MAJOR APPLICATION) (2)
12 April 2023**

**Chairman - Councillor E G R Jones
Vice-Chairman - Councillor P W Jones**

AGENDA

1	Apologies	
2	Declaration of Member's Interests/Lobbying	
3	Planning Applications	Page Nos 3 - 30

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman - Councillor E G R Jones

F Beatty
A G Cooper
A P Edgeller
A D Hobbs
J Hood
E G R Jones

P W Jones
B McKeown
A Nixon
G P K Pardesi
C V Trowbridge

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (2) - 12 APRIL 2023

Ward Interest - Nil

Planning Applications

Report of Head of Development

Purpose of Report

To consider the following planning applications, the reports for which are set out in the attached **APPENDIX**:-

		Page Nos
19/31487/COU	Land at Former Airfield, Hixon	4 - 30
	This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large scale major application	
	Officer Contact - Richard Wood, Development Lead Telephone 01785 619324	

Previous Consideration

Nil

Background Papers

Planning application files are available for Members to inspect, by prior arrangement, in the Development Management Section. The applications including the background papers, information and correspondence received during the consideration of the application, consultation replies, neighbour representations are scanned and are available to view on the Council website.

Application:	19/31487/COU
Case Officer:	Leanne Pogson
Date Registered:	21 November 2019
Target Decision Date:	20 February 2020
Extended To:	-
Address:	Land at former airfield, Hixon
Ward:	Haywood and Hixon
Parish:	Hixon
Proposal:	Change of use of concrete runway for storage of vehicles and associated perimeter fencing and landscape improvements
Applicant:	Jonathan Lloyd Developments
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions.

Reason for referral to Committee

This application is for a large-scale major development which is exempt from the scheme of delegation, and has been called-in by Councillor B McKeown (Ward Member for Haywood and Hixon) for the following reason:

"Site is outside industrial area as defined in Hixon Neighbourhood Plan and plan for Stafford".

This application has also been called in by Councillor McKeown (Ward Member for Haywood and Hixon) for the following reason: -

"Site is outside industrial area as defined in Hixon Neighbourhood Plan and plan for Stafford".

UPDATE FOLLOWING PREVIOUS COMMITTEE SITE VISIT

This report follows the previous committee site visit on 11 August 2021 and subsequent amended plans and information submitted in October 2022.

Summary of amendments/further information:

- Increased height of landscaping bunds from 2.4m to 4m with planting proposed to further increase the overall height.

- Footprint of landscaping bunds increased to include an 'overlap' to prevent views between bunds (note public right of way will be maintained).
- Inclusion of more significant landscaping along northern edge of runway, comprising two staggered rows of trees with low level native shrubs below and between.
- Off site landscaping has taken place at the western edge of Hope Cottage, comprising of an earth mound with planting of privet hedge and the relocating of the boundary fence, reducing visual impact.

Points of note

- Previous committee site visit was from elevated position not representative of view from Stowe Lane or Hope cottage.
- Bunds have increased in height and additional planting taken place since last site visit, on eastern and northern boundaries of application site, to the boundary of Hope Cottage and on the existing development.
- Public right of way will not be affected, altered, or impeded in any way
- Further information has been submitted in relation to justification of the application site, by way of increasing employment and that alternative sites have been considered.
- A condition was previously suggested and agreed by the applicants regarding the removal of concrete under the bunds. This is not considered necessary as vegetation is clearly growing on the bunds and there is no material planning reason to warrant these works. As such, no such condition is proposed.

Context

- 1 The Application Site (the Site) extends to some 3.17 hectares in area, consisting of hardstanding (i.e. part of the concrete runways) and grassed areas associated with the former airfield. The storage area itself is located on the concrete runway and is approximately 300 metres in length by 45 metres in depth, totalling some 1.35 hectares in area.
- 2 To the east of the Site is the north-eastern boundary of a vehicle storage area granted planning permission in July 2017 (application reference 16/25315/COU). To the south of the Site beyond a grassed area are industrial and commercial buildings associated with the designated Hixon Airfield Industrial Estate. The nearest dwellings are on Stowe Lane at a distance of some 280 and 320 metres from the eastern boundary of the Site. Other residential properties are located some 500 metres to the north-east of the Site in Stowe-by-Chartley.
- 3 Temporary planning permission for a period to 30 September 2020 was previously granted on the Site in August 2016 under application reference 16/24279/FUL for the storage of aggregates associated with roadworks (incorporating fencing).
- 4 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the concrete runway area to accommodate the storage of commercial vehicles (vans, lorries, coaches, trailers etc.). Whilst the Application does not propose any additional buildings on the Site, the scheme does include perimeter fencing akin to that approved under application reference 16/25315/COU. The submitted plans show that trees and shrubs would be planted on the north and south sides of the former runway, and there would be

larger areas of tree and shrub planting and sections of earth mounding (i.e. a bund) up to 4m high that would also be planted, at the eastern end. Provision is included for keeping the public footpath route at the eastern end unobstructed including a relocated pedestrian gate. No lighting is proposed.

- 5 Access to the storage area is via the industrial estate to New Road, as per the earlier application.
- 6 The Site is outside any defined settlement boundary or developmental limits of any designated industrial estate as shown on the Inset Plans to The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 and the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan. The Site in policy terms is within the open countryside. The Site does constitute previously developed land (i.e. a brownfield site) as set out in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Planning policy framework and material considerations

- 7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan consists of parts 1 and 2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (the PSB) adopted in 2014 and 2017 respectively, and the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan made on 22 November 2016 (the HNP).
- 8 Other material considerations include, albeit not limited, to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance), together with the National Design Guide (the Guide). At the local level, other material considerations include the Supplementary Planning Document on Design (2018) (the SPD).

Main issues

- 9 The main issues in determining this application are firstly; the principle of the proposed development; secondly, effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area; and thirdly, impact upon residential amenity.

The principle of the proposed development

- 10 The PSB contains overarching policies and principles, all of which are set under the umbrella of the purpose of the planning system being to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as set within Strategic Principle 1 (SP1) and section 2 of the Framework.
- 11 Spatial Principle 6 (SP6) the PSB gives support to rural sustainability through protecting and enhancing the environmental assets and character of the Borough whilst sustaining the social and economic fabric of its communities that can be achieved by the appropriate re-use of redundant buildings. Whereas; SP7 supports in principle development in the open countryside where, in part, where it is

considered with the objectives of policy E2 of the PSB, and does not harm the environmental quality of the area that is reflected within policies N1 and N8 of the PSB.

- 12 Whilst, neither SP6 nor SP7 reference the re-use previously development land; it is considered that a similar principle of sustainability underlies these two repurposing elements.
- 13 Both the PSB and the HNP are silent on policies relating to storage uses. However, policy E2 indicates support in principle for such uses in areas outside defined settlement boundaries, and in turn defined industrial estates, by noting that *All development in these areas should, where appropriate and feasible...make use of...previously developed land before proposing new buildings of development of Greenfield land.*
- 14 At the national level, the Framework supports economic development and the re-use of previously developed land. The Framework at section 6 (*Building a strong, competitive economy*) under the heading of Supporting a prosperous rural economy at paragraph 84 notes that...*The use of previously developed land, and sites that area physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.* By extension, this position is also pertinent to sites for proposals that are well related to existing industrial sites.
- 15 It is therefore considered that the principle of the development accords with the overarching policies and principles of the PSB and the Framework, subject to the impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area and residential amenity

National Planning Policy Framework -Paragraphs 8, 11, 12, 104, Annex 2:
Glossary.

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development

SP6 Achieving Rural Sustainability

SP7 Supporting the Location of New Development

E2 Sustainable Rural Development

Hixon Neighbourhood Plan

Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

- 16 The character of the immediate area to the north, east, and west of the Site is flat, open land set down to arable use around the former airfield infrastructure. Whereas; the Site is adjacent a vehicle storage and auction site; with the Industrial Estate as a backdrop is to the south of the Site.
- 17 As noted above the landscape is flat and quite featureless as a result of the construction of the airfield, and it is acknowledged that it has a low visual amenity value. However, the placement of vehicles on the Site will have an impact upon the character and appearance of the area, and visually will impact been seen from the

rear of the nearest residential properties, which are those fronting Stowe Lane, some 260m from the Site.

- 18 Other residential properties are located much further away (over 500m) to the north-east in Stowe-by-Chartley village and would have only very distant views of the development. Users of the public footpath would have close views of the development where its route passes through the site. This route continues into the built-up industrial estate to the south, and to the north, views from the public right of way of the site would in time be softened by the mature planting.
- 19 The site would be substantially screened from other sensitive locations to the south and south east by the industrial estate itself, and to the north by the tree-lined former railway trackbed running south west/north east which serves to enclose the old airfield and contain views of it in and out.
- 20 However, allowing for the bunding and associated planting, together with the adjoining vehicle storage and auction site, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies SP1, N1, N8, and SP7 of the PSB, the HNP, together with national guidance.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs: 127, 128, 130, 170, 172.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N1 Design
N8 Landscape Character

Impact upon residential amenity

- 21 As cited above, the nearest dwellings are in Stowe Lane to the east of the site and about 260m distant. The Environmental Health Officer has made no comments on the application and it is considered that there would be no worsening of any incidence of noise in the area when the close proximity of the existing uses in the industrial estate are taken into account.
- 22 It would therefore be unlikely that residential amenity in these terms would be harmed and the proposed development complies with policies N1 and N8 of the PSB, together with paragraphs 170 and 180 of the Framework.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 170, 180.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N1 Design

Other Issues

Adequacy of access, highway safety, and parking provision

- 23 Vehicular access is shown to utilise existing arrangements and the Highway Authority does not consider that there would be excessive traffic generation to prejudice the current state of highway safety.
- 24 No parking space is shown for the four employees expected. However, the PSB has no specific standard for the storage of commercial vehicles and it is considered that it would be likely that there would be available area on the site for employee car parking given the relatively large space needed to be kept clear for manoeuvring the stored commercial transport. The Highway Authority does not raise any concern for the absence of such parking space.
- 25 No objection is raised on highway safety or parking grounds and the proposal accords with policies T1, and T2 of the PSB, together with national guidance.

Additional justification

- 26 The proposed development will provide approximately 10 new jobs and allow expansion of an existing established local business. There is a shortage of vehicle storage sites for commercial vehicles nationally, with existing car storage companies being unable to store commercial vehicles. This results in a need for space to store commercial vehicles prior to auction. There are no industrial estates or other land with consent, or within development limits which would be appropriate for such development. As such, it is logical to extend the existing business further along a former runway, a brownfield site at the edge of a large, established industrial estate, than either explore greenfield options or send vehicles to scrap yards.
- 27 In short, the use of an off-site storage facility to meet the demand for additional commercial vehicle storage would harm the efficiency of the operation of the applicant's business, adding substantial time and cost to their movement of vehicles in between auctions taking place and preparation for each auction. These are the principal reasons why the applicant ceased using a supplementary storage facility in Meaford/Stone and elected to invest in preparing this proposal/planning application for additional storage land/capacity directly adjacent to their existing storage and auction facility.
- 28 In addition to the above considerations from the perspective of the operation of the applicant's business, the use of an off-site storage facility would have material adverse impacts on the environment. The harm that would be caused to the environment would include increased trips/mileage and associated emissions, along with associated increased use of non-renewable fossil fuels, plus increased use of and potential disruption to the highway network (potentially increasing congestion and reducing highway safety due to the high frequency of movements of large commercial vehicles to and from the existing auction/storage site and a storage facility elsewhere).

- 29 The agent has submitted a letter from Millar Sandy, a commercial property agent based in Stafford dated 27/03/2023, who have confirmed:
- There is nothing available on the market that would satisfy the applicants requirements and there has not been for some time
 - That particularly applies to the geographical area the applicant needs to operate within
 - Any land for commercial use has tended to be regarded as providing a development opportunity in recent years, and that has led to an increasing shortage of the type of land the applicant is seeking.
- 30 The agent has also confirmed that there are strong links between the applicant's company and Copart. Copart are an industry leader in used and salvage vehicles and are a key source of vehicles the applicant stores. Copart have 14 yards/depots across the country but do not have room to store the larger commercial vehicles due to the large volume of cars they deal with and subsequently fill their yards. The applicant will deal with storage and auction of commercial vehicles from Copart, which has led to success of the business at Hixon airfield.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 108,109

The Plan for Stafford Borough
T1 Transport
T2 Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

Surface water drainage

- 31 The main site is within the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 1, the zone of least flood risk. The submitted drainage strategy concludes that, no comments. Whereas, the Local Lead Flood Authority does not wish to comment as the existing impermeable areas would not be increased.
- 32 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with policies SP1 and N2 of the PSB and national advice within the Framework.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs: 148, 155, 163, 164.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N2 Climate Change

Biodiversity

- 33 The site is assessed to be hydrologically connected to the Pasturefields Salt Marsh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) via surface and groundwater sources.
- 34 The Council's Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations includes the need to secure specific details of surface drainage and Natural England concurs with this conclusion, requiring that they should be secured by a planning condition on a consent.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 170, 175, 176, 177.

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N4 The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure

N5 Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance

Public rights of way

- 35 Public footpath Hixon 22 passes from the north through the eastern end of the main site, clear of the defined vehicle storage compound, and divides to continue into the industrial area south eastwards as well as to the south west as public footpath Hixon 18 along the access road. The landscaping scheme makes provision for the route with a gap shown in the proposed mounding and a relocated pedestrian gate shown in the boundary fencing.
- 36 It is therefore unlikely that the public rights of way would be obstructed but the advice of the Public Rights of Way Officer and The Ramblers would be covered in an informative attached to a consent.

The planning balance and conclusion

- 37 Whilst the proposed development will cause some harm to the character and appearance of the area, and impact upon aspects of amenity, allowing for the scale of the proposed development, landscaping and neighbouring uses, it is considered on balance that the proposed development accords with the quoted policies of the development plan and national guidance.

Consultations

Highway Authority:

- No objection.
- It is considered that this development will not generate a significant number of additional vehicles and therefore will not have a major effect on the highway.

Natural England:*26 August 2020:*

- We note that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment of the proposal in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) in relation to the Pasturefields salt marsh Special Area of Conservation.
- We are a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.
- Your authority has concluded that the adverse effects arising from the proposal could be avoided subject to the proposed avoidance measures being secured by the appropriately worded conditions
- Having considered the assessment Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions.
- Appropriate planning conditions are attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.

1 May 2020:

- On the basis of the information provided, in order to assist your authority in screening for the likelihood of significant effects of air pollution, it is our advice that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on any European site, and can therefore be screened out from any requirement for further assessment.
- Full consideration of the potential water supply and water dependency pathways between the development site and Pasturefields Salt Marsh SSSI and SAC is needed to ensure that any potential impacts are addressed.

Environment Agency:

- Having reviewed the information submitted, we have assessed the scheme as having low environmental risk.
- No comments.

Local Lead Flood Authority:

- The proposed development will only be acceptable if a detailed surface water drainage scheme is secured by a condition on a planning permission.

Health and Safety Executive:

- Do not advise against granting permission on safety grounds

Environmental Health Officer:

- The development may adversely impact nearby residences; conditions recommended (see conditions section)

Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Officer:

- The application recognises the existence of Public Footpath Nos 19 and 22 Hixon

Parish and also Public Footpath No 32(a) Stowe By Chartley Parish all of which run through the application site.

- It appears that the proposals for the site will directly impact on all the public rights of way footpaths.
- The attention of the applicant should be drawn to the existence of the paths and to the requirement that any planning permission given does not construe the right to divert, extinguish or obstruct any part of the public paths.
- A Diversion Order needs to be secured for the paths if they are to be obstructed.
- The applicants must seek the local highway authority's permission before installing any structure such as gates on the public right of way.
- It is important that users are still able to exercise their public rights safely and that the paths are reinstated if any damage to the surface occurs as a result of the planning permission being granted for the site.

The Ramblers:

October 2022:

- The applicant's commitment to increased landscaping is welcomed, no further comments to add.

Original comments:

- As long as the footpath is kept open and free from obstructions during the construction of the compound, no comments.

Parish Council (Hixon):

6 January 2020:

- The scheme will greatly increase the volume of traffic along New Road both in terms of cars driven by the people employed at the new employment sites and the delivery lorries and vans visiting these sites.
- The traffic at the A51/New Road junction at peak times, particularly in the evening when traffic is leaving Hixon, is extremely bad with queues going back over the rail bridge into Hixon - i.e. a queue of in excess of half a mile on frequent occasions.
- Any approval should have a condition to improve the junction of the A51/New Road junction with traffic lights or an alternative suitable solution agreed with Highways.

19 December 2019:

- The site is outside the industrial development area as defined in the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan.
- This application is a replica of planning application 16/24410 which was recommended for refusal for the following reasons:
 - a) Excessive, prominent, unsightly, incongruous and intrusive
 - b) Harm to visual amenity
 - c) It would not assist rural sustainability
 - d) It would not protect environmental character
 - e) It would not be in accordance with environmental protection policies
 - f) It would not be sustainable development

g) It would not support Policies SP6(i) and SP7 (ii) and (iii), would conflict with Policies E2(d) and (g) in the Stafford Plan as well as paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- It will have minimal benefit to the local community.
- It will not satisfy the employment aspirations of local young people.
- This application will not provide the quality or quantity of employment opportunities that would out-weigh the visual and environmental impact in the community;
- If permitted, it will blight the landscape for years to come and will detract from the rural character of Hixon and Stowe-by-Chartley
- There is the serious threat of ground pollution caused by leaking fuel, oil and hydraulic fluids from the scrap vehicles
- There does not appear to be a drainage strategy supplied with the application documents that should include pollution control measures
- Harm to heritage value of former World War II airfield

Neighbours:

In response to amended plans, two further letters of objection received from two addresses who had previously objected to the application. These objectors do not feel that the landscaping has improved visual impact from their property which is in an elevated position, and would not detract from other concerns in respect of eyesore, contamination, damage to road and historical importance. Other concerns raised are not directly material to the application or have previously been assessed by previous reports.

Previous application:

33 notified; 10 replies/representations received from 10 addresses. 1 in support providing the road surfaces in the area are improved. 9 object. The material issues are summarised below:

- Visual intrusion
- Excessive traffic
- Encroachment onto green space
- Ground pollution
- Harm to wildlife
- Conflict with Hixon Neighbourhood Plan
- Noise

Site Notices:

Expiry dates 27 December 2019

Adverts:

Expiry dates 1 January 2020

Relevant Planning History

Part of current site

16/24279/FUL - Continued use of former runway for storage of aggregates for roadworks – expired 30 September 2020.

Other former airfield land

20/32514/FUL - Temporary change of use of land to develop a temporary compound to facilitate off-site ground investigation works – To be determined.

18/29781/COU - Temporary change of use of former runway to develop a temporary compound to facilitate off-site ground investigation works to cease before August 2020 - approved 22 May 2019; not implemented.

16/25315/COU – Change of use of former airfield runway for storage of commercial vehicles and up to six commercial vehicle auctions per year; office/sales/facilities building; landscaping works – approved 27 July 2017; implemented.

16/24410/FUL – (Substantially the same site to above) Change of use of former airfield runway for storage of commercial vehicles and up to six commercial vehicle auctions per year, plus construction of building to provide office/sales area and toilet facilities and associated landscaping and perimeter fencing – application withdrawn from consideration; no decision made.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
- 2 The development authorised by this permission shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved drawings and specification listed below:

Drawings (all by DEP Landscape Architecture)

- 4163/01 Rev B Site Location Plan
- 4163/02 Rev J Landscape Layout – Wider Landscape Plan
- 4163/03 Rev H Landscape Layout – Detailed Plan
- 4163/04 Paladin Fence Elevation
- 4163/06 Section Through Mounds – Year 1
- 4163/07 Section Through Mounds – Year 7-10

Documents

- Landscape Assessment by DEP Landscape Architecture
 - Drainage Strategy ref. 12287-Drainage Strategy-02 by Waterco
 - Planning Statement ref. JON7/3 by Knights
 - Explanatory Note – Amended and Additional Plans by Knights
- 3 No development shall begin until a detailed surface water drainage design has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority. The design shall be in accordance

with the overall strategy and key design parameters set out in the Drainage Strategy report (Waterco File Ref: 12287-Drainage Strategy-02, dated 11-12-20), and the design shall demonstrate:

- Surface water drainage system(s) designed in accordance with national and local standards, including the non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (DEFRA, March 2015).
- SuDS design to provide adequate water quality treatment in accordance with the Simple Index Approach and SuDS treatment design criteria (The SuDS Manual, CIRIA C753, 2015).
- Demonstration of a viable point of discharge.
- Limiting the discharge rate for all events to 66.9l/s and providing the attenuation storage necessary to limit flows to 66.9l/s for all events up to and including the 100-year plus 20% climate change event.
- Detailed design (plans, network details and calculations) in support of any surface water drainage scheme, including details on any attenuation system, and the outfall arrangements. Calculations should demonstrate the performance of the designed system for a range of return periods and storm durations inclusive of the 1 in 1 year, 1 in 30 year, 1 in 100 year and 1 in 100 year plus climate change return periods.
- Plans illustrating flooded areas and flow paths in the event of exceedance of the drainage system. Site layout and levels should provide safe exceedance routes and adequate access for maintenance.
- Provision of an acceptable management and maintenance plan for surface water drainage to ensure continued performance of the system for the lifetime of the development. This should include a schedule of required maintenance activities and frequencies, and contact details for the organisation responsible for carrying out these duties.

Thereafter, the use shall not commence unless and until the approved surface water drainage scheme has been constructed and completed.

- 4 The landscaping bunds and planting scheme shown on the approved drawings shall be carried out and completed within eight months of the first use hereby permitted of the site. Any plants or trees which die, become diseased or are removed within five years of planting shall be replaced in the current or subsequent planting season.
- 5 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended, this permission only relates to the open storage of vehicles. It does not grant or imply consent for any other Use Class B8 (storage or distribution) use, nor for the auction or sale of the stored vehicles.

- 6 No external tannoy or public address systems shall be installed or used without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.
- 7 The storage of vehicles hereby permitted shall only be carried out within the fence enclosed area shown on the approved plans. It shall not be carried out anywhere else on the site.
- 8 All vehicles shall be stored at ground level only and for the avoidance of doubt no vehicles shall be stacked or stored on top of any other vehicle or structure.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

- 1 To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2 To define the permission.
- 3 To reduce the risk of surface water flooding to the development and properties downstream for the lifetime of the development (Policy N2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough)
- 4 To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
- 5 To define the permission.
- 6 To safeguard the area from undue noise. (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
- 7 To define the permission.
- 8 To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

Informative(s)

- 1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2010, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.
- 2 The attention of the applicant is drawn to the observations of the Public Rights of Way, The Ramblers and the Lead Local Flood Authority on this application. All comments received can be viewed online through the planning public access pages of the Council's website (www.staffordbc.gov.uk).

Previous report from the Committee held on 11 August 2021

Application:	19/31487/COU
Case Officer:	Mark Alford
Date Registered:	21 November 2019
Target Decision Date:	20 February 2020
Extended To:	
Address:	Land at former airfield, Hixon
Ward:	Haywood and Hixon
Parish:	Hixon
Proposal:	Change of use of concrete runway for storage of vehicles and associated perimeter fencing and landscape improvements
Applicant:	Jonathan Lloyd Developments
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions.

Reason for referral to Committee

This application is for a large-scale major development which is exempt from the scheme of delegation, and has been called-in by Councillor B McKeown (Ward Member for Haywood and Hixon) for the following reason:

"Site is outside industrial area as defined in Hixon Neighbourhood Plan and plan for Stafford".

Context

- 1 The Application Site (the Site) extends to some 3.17 hectares in area, consisting of hardstanding (i.e. part of the concrete runways) and grassed areas associated with the former airfield. The storage area itself is located on the concrete runway and is approximately 300 metres in length by 45 metres in depth, totalling some 1.35 hectares in area.
- 2 To the east of the Site is the north-eastern boundary of a vehicle storage area granted planning permission in July 2017 (application reference 16/25315/COU). To the south of the Site beyond a grassed area are industrial and commercial buildings associated with the designated Hixon Airfield Industrial Estate. The nearest dwellings are on Stowe Lane at a distance of some 280 and 320 metres

from the eastern boundary of the Site. Other residential properties are located some 500 metres to the north-east of the Site in Stowe-by-Chartley.

- 3 Temporary planning permission for a period to 30 September 2020 was previously granted on the Site in August 2016 under application reference 16/24279/FUL for the storage of aggregates associated with roadworks (incorporating fencing).
- 4 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the concrete runway area to accommodate the storage of commercial vehicles (vans, lorries, coaches, trailers etc.). Whilst the Application does not propose any additional buildings on the Site, the scheme does include perimeter fencing akin to that approved under application reference 16/25315/COU. The submitted plans show that trees and shrubs would be planted on the north and south sides of the former runway, and there would be larger areas of tree and shrub planting and sections of earth mounding (i.e. a bund) up to 1.5m high that would also be planted, at the eastern end. Provision is included for keeping the public footpath route at the eastern end unobstructed including a relocated pedestrian gate. No lighting is proposed.
- 5 Access to the storage area is via the industrial estate to New Road, as per the earlier application.
- 6 The Site is outside any defined settlement boundary or developmental limits of any designated industrial estate as shown on the Inset Plans to The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 and the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan. The Site in policy terms is within the open countryside. The Site does constitute previously developed land (i.e. a brownfield site) as set out in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Officer Assessment

Planning policy framework and material considerations

- 7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan consists of parts 1 and 2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (the PSB) adopted in 2014 and 2017 respectively, and the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan made on 22 November 2016 (the HNP).
- 8 Other material considerations include, albeit not limited, to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance), together with the National Design Guide (the Guide). At the local level, other material considerations include the Supplementary Planning Document on Design (2018) (the SPD).

Main issues

- 9 The main issues in determining this application are firstly; the principle of the proposed development; secondly, effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area; and thirdly, impact upon residential amenity.

The principle of the proposed development

- 10 The PSB contains overarching policies and principles, all of which are set under the umbrella of the purpose of the planning system being to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as set within Strategic Principle 1 (SP1) and section 2 of the Framework.
- 11 Spatial Principle 6 (SP6) the PSB gives support to rural sustainability through protecting and enhancing the environmental assets and character of the Borough whilst sustaining the social and economic fabric of its communities that can be achieved by the appropriate re-use of redundant buildings. Whereas; SP7 supports in principle development in the open countryside where, in part, where it is considered with the objectives of policy E2 of the PSB, and does not harm the environmental quality of the area that is reflected within policies N1 and N8 of the PSB.
- 12 Whilst, neither SP6 nor SP7 reference the re-use previously development land; it is considered that a similar principle of sustainability underlies these two repurposing elements.
- 13 Both the PSB and the HNP are silent on policies relating to storage uses. However, policy E2 indicates support in principle for such uses in areas outside defined settlement boundaries, and in turn defined industrial estates, by noting that *All development in these areas should, where appropriate and feasible...make use of...previously developed land before proposing new buildings of development of Greenfield land.*
- 14 At the national level, the Framework supports economic development and the re-use of previously developed land. The Framework at section 6 (*Building a strong, competitive economy*) under the heading of Supporting a prosperous rural economy at paragraph 84 notes that...*The use of previously developed land, and sites that area physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.* By extension, this position is also pertinent to sites for proposals that are well related to existing industrial sites.
- 15 It is therefore considered that the principle of the development accords with the overarching policies and principles of the PSB and the Framework, subject to the impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area and residential amenity

National Planning Policy Framework -Paragraphs 8, 11, 12, 104, Annex 2:
Glossary.

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development

SP6 Achieving Rural Sustainability

SP7 Supporting the Location of New Development

E2 Sustainable Rural Development

Hixon Neighbourhood Plan

Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

- 16 The character of the immediate area to the north, east, and west of the Site is flat, open land set down to arable use around the former airfield infrastructure. Whereas; the Site is adjacent a vehicle storage and auction site; with the Industrial Estate as a backdrop is to the south of the Site.
- 17 As noted above the landscape is flat and quite featureless as a result of the construction of the airfield, and it is acknowledged that it has a low visual amenity value. However, the placement of vehicles on the Site will have an impact upon the character and appearance of the area, and visually will impact been seen from the rear of the nearest residential properties, which are those fronting Stowe Lane, some 260m from the Site.
- 18 Other residential properties are located much further away (over 500m) to the north-east in Stowe-by-Chartley village and would have only very distant views of the development. Users of the public footpath would have close views of the development where its route passes through the site. This route continues into the built-up industrial estate to the south, and to the north, views from the public right of way of the site would in time be softened by the mature planting.
- 19 The site would be substantially screened from other sensitive locations to the south and south east by the industrial estate itself, and to the north by the tree-lined former railway trackbed running south west/north east which serves to enclose the old airfield and contain views of it in and out.
- 20 However, allowing for the bunding and associated planting, together with the adjoining vehicle storage and auction site, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies SP1, N1, N8, and SP7 of the PSB, the HNP, together with national guidance.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs: 127, 128, 130, 170, 172.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N1 Design
N8 Landscape Character

Impact upon residential amenity

- 21 As cited above, the nearest dwellings are in Stowe Lane to the east of the site and about 260m distant. The Environmental Health Officer has made no comments on the application and it is considered that there would be no worsening of any incidence of noise in the area when the close proximity of the existing uses in the industrial estate are taken into account.
- 22 It would therefore be unlikely that residential amenity in these terms would be harmed and the proposed development complies with policies N1 and N8 of the PSB, together with paragraphs 170 and 180 of the Framework.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 170, 180.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N1 Design

Other Issues

Adequacy of access, highway safety, and parking provision

- 23 Vehicular access is shown to utilise existing arrangements and the Highway Authority does not consider that there would be excessive traffic generation to prejudice the current state of highway safety.
- 24 No parking space is shown for the four employees expected. However, the PSB has no specific standard for the storage of commercial vehicles and it is considered that it would be likely that there would be available area on the site for employee car parking given the relatively large space needed to be kept clear for manoeuvring the stored commercial transport. The Highway Authority does not raise any concern for the absence of such parking space.
- 25 No objection is raised on highway safety or parking grounds and the proposal accords with policies T1, and T2 of the PSB, together with national guidance.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 108,109

The Plan for Stafford Borough
T1 Transport
T2 Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

Surface water drainage

- 26 The main site is within the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 1, the zone of least flood risk. The submitted drainage strategy concludes that, no comments. Whereas, the Local Lead Flood Authority does not wish to comment as the existing impermeable areas would not be increased.
- 27 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with policies SP1 and N2 of the PSB and national advice within the Framework.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs: 148, 155, 163, 164.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N2 Climate Change

Biodiversity

- 28 The site is assessed to be hydrologically connected to the Pasturefields Salt Marsh Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) via surface and groundwater sources.
- 29 The Council's Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations includes the need to secure specific details of surface drainage and Natural England concurs with this conclusion, requiring that they should be secured by a planning condition on a consent.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework
Paragraphs 170, 175, 176, 177.

The Plan for Stafford Borough
SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
N4 The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure
N5 Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance

Public rights of way

- 30 Public footpath Hixon 22 passes from the north through the eastern end of the main site, clear of the defined vehicle storage compound, and divides to continue into the industrial area south eastwards as well as to the south west as public footpath Hixon 18 along the access road. The landscaping scheme makes provision for the route with a gap shown in the proposed mounding and a relocated pedestrian gate shown in the boundary fencing.

- 31 It is therefore unlikely that the public rights of way would be obstructed but the advice of the Public Rights of Way Officer and The Ramblers would be covered in an informative attached to a consent.

The planning balance and conclusion

- 32 Whilst the proposed development will cause some harm to the character and appearance of the area, and impact upon aspects of amenity, allowing for the scale of the proposed development, landscaping and neighbouring uses, it is considered on balance that the proposed development accords with the quoted policies of the development plan and national guidance.

Consultations

Highway Authority:

- No objection.
- It is considered that this development will not generate a significant number of additional vehicles and therefore will not have a major effect on the highway.

Natural England:

26 August 2020:

- We note that your authority, as competent authority, has undertaken an appropriate assessment of the proposal in accordance with Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) in relation to the Pasturefields salt marsh Special Area of Conservation.
- We are a statutory consultee on the appropriate assessment stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process.
- Your authority has concluded that the adverse effects arising from the proposal could be avoided subject to the proposed avoidance measures being secured by the appropriately worded conditions
- Having considered the assessment Natural England advises that we concur with the assessment conclusions.
- Appropriate planning conditions are attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.

1 May 2020:

- On the basis of the information provided, in order to assist your authority in screening for the likelihood of significant effects of air pollution, it is our advice that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on any European site, and can therefore be screened out from any requirement for further assessment.
- Full consideration of the potential water supply and water dependency pathways between the development site and Pasturefields Salt Marsh SSSI and SAC is needed to ensure that any potential impacts are addressed.

Environment Agency:

- Having reviewed the information submitted, we have assessed the scheme as having low environmental risk.
- No comments.

Local Lead Flood Authority:

- The proposed development will only be acceptable if a detailed surface water drainage scheme is secured by a condition on a planning permission.

Health and Safety Executive:

- Do not advise against granting permission on safety grounds

Environmental Health Officer:

- The development may adversely impact nearby residences; conditions requiring the following are recommended:

Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Officer:

- The application recognises the existence of Public Footpath Nos 19 and 22 Hixon Parish and also Public Footpath No 32(a) Stowe By Chartley Parish all of which run through the application site.
- It appears that the proposals for the site will directly impact on all the public rights of way footpaths.
- The attention of the applicant should be drawn to the existence of the paths and to the requirement that any planning permission given does not construe the right to divert, extinguish or obstruct any part of the public paths.
- A Diversion Order needs to be secured for the paths if they are to be obstructed.
- The applicants must seek the local highway authority's permission before installing any structure such as gates on the public right of way.
- It is important that users are still able to exercise their public rights safely and that the paths are reinstated if any damage to the surface occurs as a result of the planning permission being granted for the site.

The Ramblers:

- As long as the footpath is kept open and free from obstructions during the construction of the compound, no comments.

Parish Council (Hixon):

6 January 2020:

- The scheme will greatly increase the volume of traffic along New Road both in terms of cars driven by the people employed at the new employment sites and the delivery lorries and vans visiting these sites.

- The traffic at the A51/New Road junction at peak times, particularly in the evening when traffic is leaving Hixon, is extremely bad with queues going back over the rail bridge into Hixon - i.e. a queue of in excess of half a mile on frequent occasions.
- Any approval should have a condition to improve the junction of the A51/New Road junction with traffic lights or an alternative suitable solution agreed with Highways.

19 December 2019:

- The site is outside the industrial development area as defined in the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan.
- This application is a replica of planning application 16/24410 which was recommended for refusal for the following reasons:

- a) Excessive, prominent, unsightly, incongruous and intrusive
- b) Harm to visual amenity
- c) It would not assist rural sustainability
- d) It would not protect environmental character
- e) It would not be in accordance with environmental protection policies
- f) It would not be sustainable development
- g) It would not support Policies SP6(i) and SP7 (ii) and (iii), would conflict with Policies E2(d) and (g) in the Stafford Plan as well as paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- It will have minimal benefit to the local community.
- It will not satisfy the employment aspirations of local young people.
- This application will not provide the quality or quantity of employment opportunities that would out-weigh the visual and environmental impact in the community;
- If permitted, it will blight the landscape for years to come and will detract from the rural character of Hixon and Stowe-by-Chartley
- There is the serious threat of ground pollution caused by leaking fuel, oil and hydraulic fluids from the scrap vehicles
- There does not appear to be a drainage strategy supplied with the application documents that should include pollution control measures
- Harm to heritage value of former World War II airfield

Neighbours:

33 notified; 10 replies/representations received from 10 addresses. 1 in support providing the road surfaces in the area are improved. 9 object. The material issues are summarised below:

- Visual intrusion
- Excessive traffic
- Encroachment onto green space
- Ground pollution
- Harm to wildlife
- Conflict with Hixon Neighbourhood Plan
- Noise

Site Notices:

Expiry dates 27 December 2019

Adverts:

Expiry dates 1 January 2020

Relevant Planning History**Part of current site**

16/24279/FUL - Continued use of former runway for storage of aggregates for roadworks – expired 30 September 2020.

Other former airfield land

20/32514/FUL - Temporary change of use of land to develop a temporary compound to facilitate off-site ground investigation works – To be determined.

18/29781/COU - Temporary change of use of former runway to develop a temporary compound to facilitate off-site ground investigation works to cease before August 2020 - approved 22 May 2019; not implemented.

16/25315/COU – Change of use of former airfield runway for storage of commercial vehicles and up to six commercial vehicle auctions per year; office/sales/facilities building; landscaping works – approved 27 July 2017; implemented.

16/24410/FUL – (Substantially the same site to above) Change of use of former airfield runway for storage of commercial vehicles and up to six commercial vehicle auctions per year, plus construction of building to provide office/sales area and toilet facilities and associated landscaping and perimeter fencing – application withdrawn from consideration; no decision made.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
- 2 The approved plans are drawing nos. 4163-01B; 4163-02F; 4163-03D and 4163-04.
- 4 No development shall begin until a detailed surface water drainage design has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority. The design shall be in accordance with the overall strategy and key design parameters set out in the Drainage Strategy report (Waterco File Ref: 12287-Drainage Strategy-02, dated 11-12-20), and the design shall demonstrate:

- Surface water drainage system(s) designed in accordance with national and local standards, including the non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (DEFRA, March 2015).
- SuDS design to provide adequate water quality treatment in accordance with the Simple Index Approach and SuDS treatment design criteria (The SuDS Manual, CIRIA C753, 2015).
- Demonstration of a viable point of discharge.
- Limiting the discharge rate for all events to 66.9l/s and providing the attenuation storage necessary to limit flows to 66.9l/s for all events up to and including the 100-year plus 20% climate change event.
- Detailed design (plans, network details and calculations) in support of any surface water drainage scheme, including details on any attenuation system, and the outfall arrangements. Calculations should demonstrate the performance of the designed system for a range of return periods and storm durations inclusive of the 1 in 1 year, 1 in 30 year, 1 in 100 year and 1 in 100 year plus climate change return periods.
- Plans illustrating flooded areas and flow paths in the event of exceedance of the drainage system. Site layout and levels should provide safe exceedance routes and adequate access for maintenance.
- Provision of an acceptable management and maintenance plan for surface water drainage to ensure continued performance of the system for the lifetime of the development. This should include a schedule of required maintenance activities and frequencies, and contact details for the organisation responsible for carrying out these duties.

Thereafter, the use shall not commence unless and until the approved surface water drainage scheme has been constructed and completed.

- 5 The landscaped planting scheme shown on the approved drawings shall be carried out and completed within eight months of the first use hereby permitted of the site. Any plants or trees which die, become diseased or are removed within five years of planting shall be replaced in the current or subsequent planting season.
- 6 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended, this permission only relates to the open storage of vehicles. It does not grant or imply consent for any other Use Class B8 (storage or distribution) use, nor for the auction or sale of the stored vehicles.
- 7 No external tannoy or public address systems shall be installed or used without the prior written permission of the Local Planning Authority.
- 8 The storage of vehicles hereby permitted shall only be carried out within the fence enclosed area shown on the approved plans. It shall not be carried out anywhere else on the site.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

- 1 To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 To define the permission.
- 3 To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
- 4 To reduce the risk of surface water flooding to the development and properties downstream for the lifetime of the development (Policy N2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough)
- 5 To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
- 6 To define the permission.
- 7 To safeguard the area from undue noise. (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
- 8 To define the permission.

Informative(s)

- 1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2010, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.
- 2 The attention of the applicant is drawn to the observations of the Public Rights of Way, The Ramblers and the Lead Local Flood Authority on this application. All comments received can be viewed online through the planning public access pages of the Council's website (www.staffordbc.gov.uk).

19/31487/COU Land At Hixon Airfield Industrial Estate Stafford

