

Application No: 23/2945M

Location: Land Off, LEEK ROAD, BOSLEY

Proposal: Use of land as a touring caravan and camping site (74 pitches), amenity/reception building, new access & ancillary works

Applicant: Mr Lionel Cox, Healthy Happy Hub Ltd

Expiry Date: 28-Jun-2024

SUMMARY

The application site lies within the Open Countryside within the Peak Park Fringe Local Landscape Designation Area.

The proposed camping and caravan site would be an inappropriate scale in relation to the location and setting of the site, and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that there is an identified need for the proposal. The development would also have an adverse effect on the character of the surrounding landscape and the visual qualities of the countryside within which it is located. It has also not been demonstrated that a net gain for biodiversity would be achieved due to a lack of information. The proposal therefore conflicts with the development plan on these matters, which collectively carry substantial weight against the proposal.

No concerns are raised with regard to highway safety matters, trees, flood risk or drainage, contamination, loss of best or most versatile agricultural land or subject to conditions where appropriate. However, these are not considered to represent stand-alone 'benefits', but requirements of the application proposals to adhere to policy requirements and are considered to carry neutral weight in the planning balance.

Turning to the benefits of the proposal, the campsite would provide opportunities for visitors to access the countryside, which does carry some limited weight in favour of the proposal. There would also be some knock-on economic benefits realised in terms of job creation during the construction period and longer-term jobs on the site (stated to be 5 full time equivalent posts) and through business rates/taxes. The planning statement suggests that the development would support the local economy through the provision of tourist accommodation and support to the supply chain and the associated spending on local visitor attractions and shops/services. However, the construction period is unlikely to be particularly long given the nature of the development and the extent of construction activities required, therefore construction jobs would be very short-term. Furthermore, due to the lack of shops and services in the vicinity of the site, there would be very limited economic benefit to the area where the impacts of the development would be most evident. Accordingly, only limited weight is afforded to the economic benefits of the proposal.

The benefits of the proposal therefore do not outweigh the identified conflict with the development plan.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to the Strategic Planning Board because the site area is over 4ha hectares and in line with the Council's Constitution it requires a Committee decision by the Strategic Planning Board.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises over 4 hectares of open fields currently used for sheep grazing. The site is approximately 5km to the south of Macclesfield and 5km to the east of Congleton and is located within the open countryside.

The site is relatively level with a small pond within the centre of the site. The site is surrounded by agricultural land with a small residential estate and a number of residential park homes located to the south. Isolated dwellings and farmsteads lie to the north and west, with a commercial premises to the north east. Bosley reservoir is located approximately 200m to the south east, which is also a Local Wildlife Site. The A54 and A523 roads run along the north and south western boundaries on the site, Fold lane runs along the south east. The site is bordered by a post and rail fence, hedgerows and trees.

Bosley public rights of way FP1 and FP9 run around 250M to the east with Bosley FP 15 running along the Macclesfield Canal to around 900m to the west.

The site is located within flood zone 1 and generally within in an area at very low risk from surface water flooding, with bands of low risk within the site and several small areas within high-risk areas (topographic low spots within the site).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the land to a touring caravan and camping site. The site would comprise the siting of 74 pitches for touring caravans, motorhomes and tents arranged in clusters throughout the site. An amenity building would be located to the west, along with two permanently sited wardens caravans and parking area. A new vehicular and pedestrian access would be taken from Leek Road with an additional emergency exit on Buxton Road to the north and Fold Lane to the South. Pedestrian only access points are located to the south west and east with a circular route laid out within the site.

The proposed amenity building would be constructed from woodgrain Upvc, have a footprint of 13m by 6m, and a height of 3.5m to the ridge. Each of the units for warden accommodation would be 13m by 4m, with a ridge height of 4m, featuring a separate bedroom, kitchen, lounge, shower room and utility room. Measurements taken from the plans suggest that each of these meets the dimension requirements for a caravan, although the Design & Access Statement refers to the amenity building as the "only building".

The following plans and documents accompany the application;

- Planning Design and Access statement;
- Proposed Warden Accommodation
- Proposed Amenity Building

- Transport Statement
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Ecological Report

Additional information was requested during the course of the application to address concerns raised by the planning officer and consultees, including updated ecological data and drainage details which has not been provided.

RELEVANT HISTORY

None

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (CELPS)

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

PG1 Overall Development Strategy

PG6 Open Countryside

SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable Development Principles

EG 2 Rural Economy

EG 4 Tourism

SC1 Leisure and Recreation

SC3 Health and Well-being

SE1 Design

SE3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

SE4 The Landscape

SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

SE6 Green Infrastructure

SE12 Pollution, Land contamination and land instability

SE13 Flood risk and water management

SE15 Peak District National Park Fringe

CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport

Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG9 Settlement Boundaries

GEN1 Design principles

RUR 6 Outdoor sport, leisure and recreation outside of settlement boundaries

RUR 8 Visitor Accommodation outside of Settlement Boundaries

RUR 9 Caravan and Camping Sites

ENV 1 Ecological Network

ENV2 Ecological implementation

ENV 3 Landscape character

ENV5 Landscaping

ENV6 Trees, hedgerows and woodland implementation

ENV7 Climate Change

ENV12 Air quality

ENV14 Light pollution

ENV15 New development and existing uses
ENV16 Surface water management and flood risk
ENV17 Protecting water resources
HOU 12 Amenity
INF1 Cycleways, bridleways and footpaths
INF3 Highways safety and access
INF6 Protection of existing and proposed infrastructure
INF9 Utilities

National Planning Policy / Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework National Planning Policy Guidance

No made neighbourhood plan

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Canals and Rivers Trust – Recommend conditions regarding drainage, and an external lighting plan.

United Utilities – There are no known sewers in the vicinity of the site. Strongly recommend all developments include sustainable drainage systems to help manage surface water.

Strategic Highways (CEC) – No objections.

Environmental Protection (CEC) – Updated comments.

Amenity – Site license required in accordance with Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Mobile Homes Act 2013. Informatives recommended regarding hours of construction and dust management plan.

Air Quality – Condition required regarding EV charging

Contaminated Land – No objection. Recommend that conditions for reporting unexpected contamination and informative for environmental protection act.

Lead Local Flood Authority – Holding objection. Requested drainage details for the amenity block and outfall details from the development.

Peak District National Park Planning Authority- Consideration of the adequacy of the scope of the LVIA in terms of the potential impact of the development on the setting of the National Park must be undertaken prior to any decision. If approved, a condition is required which prevents the installation of static caravan, chalets or lodges at the site.

Bosley Parish Council – The Parish council raises the following concerns:

- Visual impact may be significant from local viewpoint and wider views and from the Peak District National Park.
- Wardens block may impact negatively
- Further clarification on screening is sought
- Insufficient and poorly located amenity facilities (may increase demand for additional buildings in future)
- Lack of detail regarding reprofiling and access track construction
- No complete route around reservoir contrary to statement in the application
- Redaction is excessive in ecological report

- Loss of community orchard trees
- Inappropriate lighting may affect neighbours and visual amenity
- No demand/evidenced need for facility
- Proposals bring no value to the community
- No energy efficiency measures included

The PC also make the following point:

- Proposal would support tourism and bring visitors to the local pub and generate limited employment
- Proposals would need to be adequately licensed.

REPRESENTATIONS

A petition has been received containing 228 signatures of people who do not agree with the proposed use of land, asking that planning permission is not granted and noting that it will “*spoil the countryside in the village of Bosley*”.

105 letters of representation have been received from neighbours, CPRE, and other interested parties objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

Principle

- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of amenities in the surrounding area
- Scale of development so close to existing dwellings
- Scale of disproportionate to the population of Bosley
- Impact on quality of life for residents
- Permanent change to character of area
- There is already a small campsite serving the village
- Existing facilities (i.e. playground are only big enough for small number of residents)
- Unsustainable location – 4mile round trip to nearest shop
- Only 1 pub in the village
- Transient campsite would contribute little to village
- Proposals could equate to around 222 visitors plus staff which is over half the population of Bosley (population was 400 people in 2011)
- Scale not appropriate and no identified need
- No benefit to community
- Not essential as village already has a campsite
- Inappropriate location
- No tourism need or economic impact assessment submitted to justify development
- Proposals would dominate village
- Contrary to CE local plan policy
- Inappropriate overdevelopment
- No demonstration that alternative sites have been considered
- There are 178 campsites within 20miles of Bosley, why is another needed?
- Development would cause undue stress to local residents
- Rural community is disappearing at a fast pace and this will not help

Visual Amenity

- Detrimental to character of area which is on fringe of Peak District
- Loss of beautiful views

- Change to landscape
- Proposals would be a blot on the landscape
- Alteration to appearance of area from agricultural unimproved wet meadowland to large scale engineered development
- Development would urbanise and undeveloped part of the landscape
- It would be visually prominent from north, south and east
- Field is currently wild and natural looking
- Ugly white boxes would spoil the Peak fringe location
- Visually intrusive and detrimental to character of the area
- Reduction in openness
- Reduction in attractiveness of the village
- Cramped layout, not enough room for facilities for campers
- Site is a gateway to the village and will not retain Bosleys character

Highways

- Lack of footpaths on the area
- Lack of passing places in surrounding lanes
- No footpath around reservoir, informal path used is unsafe
- No parking in the village
- Entrance to site too close to 4 way junction
- No footpaths on Buxton road for pedestrians
- 74 Pitches = 74+ vehicles
- Access is not wide enough for 2no twin axle caravans to pass
- Bus service in village is very limited and do not run in evenings
- Current footpaths are poorly maintained
- Increase in footfall would require footpath improvements
- Substantial increase in vehicular movements
- Introducing 200+cars would be dangerous and irresponsible
- All footpaths are accessed by busy A road and do not have safe access
- Bus runs 2hourly and therefore car reliant development
- Dangerous crossroads subject to accidents already
- Increased traffic generation
- Access point not suitable

Ecology

- Impact on flora and fauna in immediate area
- Impact on owls and birds
- Diverse fauna would loss out from loss of habitat
- We need to preserve the environment, wildlife and rural appeal of countryside
- Frogs, Toads, and common newts, Barn Owls, Sparrow Hawks, Woodpecker, and a range of wild fowl all present in field
- Lighting would affect bats that's feed in evening
- Devastating impact on biodiversity
- Threat to poaching and wildlife
- Insects found on site are susceptible to pollution
- Large parts of ecology report are redacted and therefore transparency is questioned

Flooding

- Site floods regularly [Many photos of flood events have been supplied by residents]
- Field acts as a natural soakaway, highway drains are all blocked

- Drainage system already at capacity
- Sewage system at eastern end of site could release effluent into reservoir

Environmental

- Noise pollution
- Light pollution
- Increased litter
- Profound effect on residents of Bosley
- Potential for anti-social behaviour
- Transient and temporary visitors may not treat area as local would
- The pond on site is as a result of artificial excavations
- No planned method of water disposal
- Increased in dog fouling
- Site could be open 24hrs and would be a nuisance
- Allowing addition screening is good but will cause hazards for road users
- Waste tanks of existing developments smell and overflow into the streams and assume this will happen for this site
- LVIA does not take into account impact locally or on PDNP
- Proposals would affect water supply for local residents
- Waste from site would attract vermin
- Insufficient evidence to demonstrate proposals would not result in unacceptable landscape impacts
- Vehicle pollution would not help climate change

Amenity

- Unacceptable loss of privacy
- Impacts of cooking/noise and general activity from visitors would be detrimental to countryside and residents
- Too close to existing residents
- Dominating effect of temporary and permanent reception buildings
- Unsubstantiated comments regarding prevailing wind reducing noise on site
- Overbearing effect of new buildings
- Neighbouring fences are all low this would be a massive invasion of privacy
- Toilets and bins next to neighbouring business will cause smells and nuisance

Other

- Property depreciation
- Hedges and fences are not maintained by landowner
- Scrap tyres litter the site
- Not enough clearance for the electrical cables overhead
- Anomalies in the application
- Greater risk of crime and vandalism
- Potential contamination from former petrol station to north west
- What provision has been made for power to the site
- The land is vital for food production
- Reservoir suffered in lockdown from increase in visitors
- Is this a viable business? Who would want to camp on a busy main road?
- Once tarmac and concrete go in a housing application would follow.
- Increased footfall around reservoir would have adverse effect on angling

- The small set of caravans in Bosley are already occupied all year contrary to PP
- Security risk to neighbouring business
- No planting plan submitted
- Greed driven application
- Present owner has neglected the field
- Potential for anti-social behaviour

1 representation of support summarised below;

- Beneficial to the area bring revenue to local businesses.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

The site is located on the edge of the village of Bosley; a small and scattered village consisting of large open areas of countryside and pockets of residential dwellings, and some commercial development, located beyond established settlement boundaries within the open countryside. There are few facilities within the village, but these include a public house, a church and a primary school.

CELPS policy PG6 states that within the Open Countryside only development that is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, public infrastructure, essential works undertaken by public service authorities or statutory undertakers, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted.

CELPS policy EG2 provides support for rural based tourist attractions and visitor facilities, where the development meets certain criteria. These include a requirement that the development:

- Meets sustainable development objectives as set out in policies MP 1, SD 1 and SD 2
- Is consistent in scale with its location and does not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity;
- Is well sited and designed in order to conserve and where possible enhance the character and quality of the landscape and built form; and
- Does not conflict with Policies PG 3, PG 4, PG 6, PG 7, SE 3, SE 4, SE 5, SE 6, and SE 7 of the Local Plan Strategy.

CELPS policy EG4 seeks to protect and enhance Cheshire East and its unique features which attract tourists. One of the strategies for this is the enhancement and expansion of existing visitor attractions and tourist accommodation, and the provision of new visitor and tourism facilities, in sustainable and appropriate locations. Relevant to this application, the policy goes on to state that proposals outside of Principal Towns and Key Service Centres will be supported where:

i. Either:

- a. They are located within a Local Service Centre; or
- b. They are located within an existing or replacement building; or
- c. There is evidence that the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction;

ii. And:

- a. The scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape or townscape setting and would not detract from the character or appearance of the area; and
- b. It would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas; and
- c. The proposals are served by adequate access and infrastructure; and
- d. The site has access to local services and employment

Similarly, SADPD policies RUR6, RUR 8 and RUR9 advise that certain types of visitor accommodation may be appropriate to a rural area where their scale is appropriate to the location and setting; where there is an identified need for the accommodation, which cannot be met in nearby settlements because the type of accommodation proposed is intrinsically linked with the countryside; and provided proposals do not unacceptably affect the amenity and character of the surrounding area (including visual impacts, noise, odour, design and appearance).

The development scheme proposes 74 pitches and the erection (permanent positioning) of 3 buildings / caravans (amenity building and 2 warden lodges). The village is a modest size with a population of approximately 450 people (2021 census). A small campsite is located within the village (adjacent to the Harrington Arms) and a permanent caravan park located to the north (Stoneyfold caravan park).

The site is not located within a Local Service Centre, is not located within an existing or replacement building, and no evidence that the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction has been submitted. The proposal is therefore not supported by policy EG4.

Policy RUR 9 relates specifically to caravan and camping sites. This policy explains that where their scale is appropriate to the location and setting, sites for touring caravans and camping are considered to be uses appropriate to a rural area, provided it can be demonstrated that a countryside location is necessary for the proposal.

Whilst the supporting planning statement makes brief reference to there being “*several caravan and camping sites beyond Cheshire East’s boundary in the Peal District, there is very little provision for touring caravans and camping within a 5 miles radius of the application site within Cheshire East*”, this does not demonstrate a countryside location is necessary in this case. It has also not been demonstrated that the scale of the proposed development is appropriate to the location and setting of the site. Bosley falls in the very lowest tier of Cheshire East’s settlement hierarchy outlined in policy PG2 of the CELPS. Falling within the “Other Settlements and Rural Areas” tier where proportionate development at a scale commensurate with the function and character of the settlement and confined to locations well related to the existing built-up extent of the settlement is permitted.

The site is located at the northern end of Bosley Village, adjacent to Bosley crossroads. The majority of the existing development in Bosley lies adjacent to the A523 Leek Road in a loose linear form. The application site is over 4ha in area and extends back from Leek Road by over 400m. The proposed 74 camping pitches are scattered across the full extent of the site. The scale of the 74-pitch site for caravans, camper vans and tents, and associated levels of activity, is considered to be disproportionate to the existing development within Bosley village, which has a population of approximately 450 people. The pattern of development within Bosley is such that there are small pockets of development separated by open spaces along the A523

for the full length of the village. None of these pockets of development are of a comparable scale to the application site. The facilities in Bosley are very limited and the site is some distance from shops and most services. The nearest shops are located within Macclesfield, some 6km to the north of the site. Most trips to and from the site will be reliant on the private car. When occupied the capacity the site has the potential to introduce large numbers of visitors that would overwhelm this very modest village. A proposal of this size would not relate well and would be completely out of scale and character with the local area.

Overall, the scheme would not be of a suitable scale appropriate to this location and setting and no evidence is submitted that demonstrate a countryside location is necessary for the proposal. The proposals are not considered to comply with the principal requirements of CELPS policies PG6, EG2 and EG4 or SADPD policies RUR 6, RUR 8 and RUR 9 in this regard.

Character and Appearance

Paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that, amongst other things, developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change; establish or maintain a strong sense of place, and create attractive and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

Policy SE1 of the CELPS sets out the design criteria for new development and states that development proposals should make a positive contribution to their surroundings. It seeks to ensure design solutions achieve a sense of place by protecting and enhancing the quality, distinctiveness and character of settlements. It should also respect the pattern, character and form of the surroundings. Policy SD2 of the CELPS further details the design matters that should be considered, including height, scale, form and grouping of development, choice of materials, external design features, massing of development and the balance between built form and green/public spaces.

SADPD Policy GEN 1 requires proposals to create high quality development reflecting local character and design and creating a sense of identity and legibility by using landmarks and incorporating key views into, within and out of new development and reflecting local character.

Policy SE4 of the CELPS seeks to conserve the landscape character and quality and where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes. Policy SD2 advises that development should respect and, where possible, enhance the landscape character of the area.

The site lies within the countryside and is within a rural location. It is a relatively flat site, with higher ground beyond to the west towards the Peak District national Park and north towards Sutton. The flat setting of the site and limited screening to the A54 (along the northern boundary of the site) means that the site is prominent in short distance views from this highway. More limited views are also available from Fold Lane to the south and the A523 to the west. In addition, as noted within the LVIA and the consultation responses more distant views of the site are possible from the surrounding higher ground, notably from PRow Bosley FP01.

Only details of the external appearance of the amenity building have been provided (wood grain cladding and graphite pantile roof sheets). Whilst it is acknowledged that it is not unusual to see caravans in the countryside, caravans and motorhomes visiting the site will often have a light colouring, which would stand out and appear stark and incongruous in their surroundings. The proposals would introduce caravans (and/or buildings), parked cars and hard surfaces into an agricultural field otherwise free from built development. The visual impact would be exacerbated due to the scale of the proposals and their spread across the whole 4ha. site. The proposed layout is large and yet scattered, and it is a very open site with groupings of units and buildings. There is no explanation provided to justify this arrangement. The distance from the amenity building to the west of the site to the tent pitches to the very east is over 350m with the pitches positioned along this length, and visible from the above-mentioned visual receptors. The addition of lighting (albeit low-level) across a site of this scale would intensify this visual impact. The proposed pitches would be gravelled and would be served by gravelled access roads with two designated parking areas shown to the east and west, however it is assumed most vehicles would be parked alongside their caravan or tent. 74 pitches are proposed, with large areas of the site not marked out with pitches, although the capacity to accommodate more pitches clearly exists. The boundary hedgerow and trees are shown to remain, however there are no landscaping details to accompany the application.

The proposals would fundamentally alter the existing open and rural character of the site introducing urbanising features (access roads, vehicles, levels of activity etc.). This is at odds with the countryside location and would appear obtrusive and detrimental to the open character of the surrounding countryside.

It is proposed to maintain hedgerows at a greater height than at present and the planning statement advises that a woodland buffer would be established to the south of the site (to the rear of the existing residential properties), which is now shown on a plan. However, a tree buffer this would take many years to establish to a point where it is an effective screen. Furthermore, in order to be an appropriate landscape scheme for this area, this would need to comprise native deciduous trees which would offer sparse leaf coverage and screening during winter months.

The site lies within the Peak Fringe Local Landscape Designation Area (LLDA). This recognises that the area is an extension of many of the special qualities associated with the nationally protected Peak Park landscapes, such as; The naturally varied undulating landform and buildings of local materials which add a strong sense of rural place and pastoral character derived from the distinctive character of hamlets and villages. The area contributes a sense of escapism and remoteness despite the proximity of Congleton, Macclesfield and Bollington and this landscape acts as a buffer between urban areas and the National Park. CELPS Policy SE15 seeks to protect the setting of the Peak District National Park. Development will be considered on its individual merits having particular regard to the type, scale and location taking account of the Peak District National Park Landscape guidelines and characteristics of the South West Peak and the adjoining areas of the Cheshire Plain.

The site lies within landscape character type (LCT) 12: Upland foot slopes and landscape area (LCA)12C: Langley as identified in the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment.

The site currently comprises an open agricultural field. The farmland is attractive and characteristic of the Peak Fringe Area with panoramic views within the site out towards the south, north and east. An agricultural merchant and turf care supplier is located to the north

west corner of the site but sits relatively low in the landscape and is surrounded by a tree and hedge boundary.

Policy ENV3 of the SADPD outlines that development proposals should respect the qualities, features and characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness of the local area, as described in the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (2018) taking into account any cumulative effects alongside any existing, planned or committed development. Policy ENV5 of the SADPD sets out what should be included in landscaping plans.

As outlined above, SADPD policies RUR 6, RUR8 and RUR9 provide support for recreational visitor accommodation proposals that do not unacceptably affect the amenity and character of the surrounding area and subject to appropriate landscaping and screening being provided.

A landscape and visual assessment has been submitted providing an assessment of potential visual impact. The report considers the sensitivity of the landscape to be medium high. Whilst the assessment concludes that the site is able to accommodate the proposed tourist development without causing undue harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and surrounding countryside, local landscape designation and the footpath network, the report advises that adverse effects identified would be mitigated by the potential planting scheme described within the landscape strategy. However, no detailed landscape proposals have been submitted.

The Peak District National Park Planning Authority (PDNPA) also note that the LVIA does not make reference to the PDNPA's Landscape Strategy. They advise that the application site is adjacent to an area which forms part of Open Moors Landscape Character type, identified as one of the 8 types within the South West Peak Character Area, which is not considered in the LVIA.

Whilst existing hedgerow and trees would provide a degree of mitigation for potential adverse effects at the operational phase. The Council's landscape officer advises that the existing boundary planting is not adequate to screen the proposals and would therefore have a harmful effect on the openness of the countryside, a detrimental visual effect on the 'Peak Fringe' and other local character areas. This site would be visible from higher ground at a distance, with the visual effects this will cause, with mobile caravans of various sizes and colours being very visible in the landscape, which will be especially noticeable at peak times such as during the summer.

The setting of the Church, School, residential properties and general built environment relies on gaps and breaks in development to soften the settlements edges. This proposal will harden such an existing gap within the settlement matrix and thus affect the local existing character area dramatically with negative consequences.

The Council's landscape officer objects to the proposal and considers the proposals to be too large, poorly designed regarding landscape and to have visual impacts which are unacceptable for the size, scale and positioning of the units and the red line.

Overall, the proposals would result in a dramatic and negative change to the character of this area by virtue of its inappropriate scale in relation to the location and setting of the site. The proposals would have an adverse effect on the character of the surrounding landscape and the visual qualities of the Countryside within which it is located and would be contrary to policies

SE1, SD2 and SE15 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, Policies GEN1, RUR 6, RUR 8 and RUR 9 of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Living conditions

CELPS policy SE1 seeks to ensure appropriate levels of privacy for new and existing residential properties. Policy SD 2 also expects all development to contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness in terms of its relationship to neighbouring properties. SADPD policy HOU 12 seeks to ensure development does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of adjoining or nearby occupiers of residential properties, sensitive uses, or future occupiers of the proposed development due to:

1. loss of privacy;
2. loss of sunlight and daylight;
3. the overbearing and dominating effect of new buildings;
4. environmental disturbance or pollution; or
5. traffic generation, access and parking.

SADPD Policy HOU 13 (table 8.2) and the Cheshire East Design Guide set out the standards for space between buildings and the requirement to include an appropriate quantity and quality of outdoor private amenity space, having regard to the type and size of the proposed development. This is required to maintain an adequate standard of privacy and amenity between residential properties and provide appropriate amenity space for future occupants.

The closest neighbouring residential properties to the application site are the around 25m the south, and around 30m to the north. The planning statement advises a 20m deep landscape buffer would be planted in the south west section of the site.

Given the distance between the pitches and residential properties it is not considered that the development would result in any unacceptable neighbouring impacts in terms of loss of privacy, loss of light or overbearing impacts.

Residents are concerned about the potential for increased noise and disturbance and general activity from the site. The use will generate additional movements to and from the site from guests and people servicing the site and there will be a change to the noise impacts currently experienced by residents at the site. However, this is likely to be of a level comparable to a residential use and the site is close the main road where a level of traffic noise and movement is already experienced. The extant agricultural use could also generate a certain level of comings and goings from farm related traffic. There are wardens on site who could manage noise and guests at the site. Additionally, a site operation plan can be secured via condition to manage the site further. Consequently, no significant noise issues are raised.

It is therefore considered that the proposals comply with the principles of CELPS policy SE1, SADPD policies HOU 12 and 13 and advice within the Cheshire East Design Guide in this regard.

Highways/Accessibility

CELPS Policy CO 1 deals with sustainable travel and transport. It supports a shift from car travel to public transport and seeks to guide development to sustainable and accessible locations.

SADPD policy INF3 requires that amongst other things, proposals provide safe access to and from the site for all highway users and incorporate safe internal movement in the site to meet the requirements of servicing and emergency vehicles. Development traffic should be satisfactorily assimilated into the operation of the existing highway network so that it would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, incorporating measures to assist access to, from and within the site by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users and meets the needs of people with disabilities.

Residents are concerned about the highway impacts of the development with regards to traffic generation, highway safety and adequacy of proposed access points and lack of footways in the surrounding immediate area. However, the highway officer has not raised any objections to the proposals.

The single main access to the site is a priority junction with the A523, it has 6m radii and is 5.5m at the bellmouth which reduces to 4.8m internally within the site. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m were proposed in both directions at the access. Following an assessment of these details the applicant was informed that due to the boundary landscaping and the bend on the A523, the visibility available in the leading direction would be compromised by the vegetation. The applicant has subsequently undertaken a speed survey on the vehicle approach speeds in the leading direction, the results of this survey indicate that the 85%ile speed is 36mph thereby leading to a reduced visibility splay of 60m which can be achieved at the proposed access point. This is considered acceptable by the highway officer.

Internally, the access track is circular and would likely be one way or the occurrence of meeting opposing vehicles would be relatively low. In any event the internal roads would be private and a matter for the applicant to manage.

There is a bin store within the site close to the amenity building and swept paths have been provided to show that refuse vehicles can access the site and can turn and exit the site.

Although the site is linked to the external pedestrian routes and there is a limited bus service on the A523 close to the site, the vast majority of trips will be vehicle based in this rural location. However, the level of traffic generation to and from the site is predicted to be low and not coincide with peak hours trips on the road network as they will predominantly be leisure trips.

The highway officer considers the proposed leisure use of the site would not result in any traffic/capacity problems on the local road network and the access is acceptable subject to conditions regarding visibility space and access laid out per approved plans prior to occupation.

The proposals therefore comply with CELPS Appendix C: Parking Standards and SADPD policy INF 3, and Policy CO1 of the CELPS.

Trees

CELPS Policy SE5 seeks to ensure the sustainable management of trees, woodland and hedgerows including provision of new planting to provide local distinctiveness within the landscape, enable climate adaptation resilience, and support biodiversity. Furthermore, the planting and sustainable growth of large trees within new development as part of a structured landscape scheme is encouraged in order to retain and improve tree canopy cover within the borough as a whole. Similarly, SADPD policy ENV 6 requires proposals to retain and protect trees, woodland and hedgerows. Proposals should include measures to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees.

The application site is located within open countryside and benefits from established and high amenity field boundary trees and hedgerows. The site is not within a Conservation Area and no Tree Preservation Orders are present on the site.

The application is not supported by any arboricultural information although tree positions are identifiable on supporting plans. A linear group of trees to the northeast side of the proposed main access and outside the site boundary are afforded protection by the Macclesfield Borough Council (Bosley – Former Crossroads Filling Station) Tree Preservation Order 1990.

Whilst it appears that the boundary trees may be retained, the creation of the main vehicular access to the site would pass between retained trees and result in the loss of a section of agricultural hedgerow which may be subject to the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Additionally, the proposed Suds concept design within the FRA suggests that a swale could be incoming to the site from Leek Road.

In the absence of an arboricultural survey which confirms tree and hedgerow positions and root protection areas it is unclear what the true impacts of the proposal would be once these elements of the layout are confirmed. However, the Council's tree officer considers that the proposals could include the retention of important trees, and that the plans suggest that they are retained. In the event that the application is approved, conditions for tree protection and submission of an arboricultural method statement which considers any final SUDS scheme and drainage layout to ensure the retention of all existing established boundary trees, is recommended.

Where proposed development is likely to result in the loss of existing agricultural hedgerows which are more than 30 years old, a Hedgerow Removal Notice would be normally required under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. However, there are some circumstances where hedge removal can be exempt from the Regulations, for example,

- To make a new opening in substitution for an existing one which gives access to land (in which case the existing access must be planted up with hedge plants within 8 months),
- or
- To obtain access to land where another means of access is not available or is only available at disproportionate cost.

The tree officer considers that the hedge in question may meet one of the historic criteria in the Regulations. Nevertheless, if the applicant can demonstrate that an exemption would be applicable, a full assessment may not be required but the amount of hedgerow to be removed in its entirety to accommodate the access should be indicated on the proposed plans.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to comply with policies SE5 and ENV6 of the local plan.

Flooding and Drainage

Policy SE13 of the CELPS states that developments must integrate measures for sustainable water management to reduce flood risk, avoid an adverse impact on water quality and quantity within the borough and provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity, health and recreation.

Representations have raised concerns over flood risk at the site and have supplied photographic evidence of recent flood events on the site and in the locality.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, indicating that the site is not at risk from fluvial or tidal sources according to the Flood Map for Planning. Although the site is generally identified as being a low risk for surface water flooding, there are areas of high risk within the site. The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) accompanying the application considers reservoir breaches from Bosley reservoir which would occur south and flow towards the River Dane. The Canal and River Trust agree with the findings.

The Local Lead Flood Authority have placed a holding objection on the application seeking further details regarding drainage. Whilst this was raised with the applicant, no further detail has been submitted.

The FRA proposes that development is directed to areas with no surface water flood risk within the site and that 3 swales are incorporated into key flow paths in the site with run off directed to the existing pond on site and infiltration managed on site. It is also proposed that the access road and pitches for caravans have a permeable gravel substrate. The report concludes that the proposals are not expected to increase flood risk elsewhere although makes recommendations for further investigations of drainage features on site.

It is considered that conditions could appropriately deal with drainage design and management at the site and therefore subject to these conditions the proposals would accord with policy SE13 of the CELPS and the NPPF in this regard.

Contamination

CELPS policy SE12 seeks to ensure that all development is located and designed so as not to result in a harmful or cumulative impact upon air quality, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, soil contamination, light pollution or any other pollution which would unacceptably affect the natural and built environment, or detrimentally affect amenity or cause harm. In most cases, development will only be deemed acceptable where it can be demonstrated that any contamination or land instability issues can be appropriately mitigated against and remediated, if necessary.

The application is for a proposed use that would be vulnerable to the presence of contamination that may exist due to the former agricultural use of the site. The Council's Environmental Health officer has advised that a condition regarding the reporting of unexpected contamination would be sufficient to address any potential issues and informatics can advise the applicant of their obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Mobile Homes Act 2013, dust and hours of construction.

A condition has also been recommended by Environmental Health regarding the provision of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure in the interests of protecting air quality.

It is therefore considered that subject to conditions the proposed development would comply with Policy SE12 of CELPS and the NPPF in this regard.

Agricultural Land Quality

Policy SD1 of the CELPS states that development should, wherever possible (and amongst other matters), protect the best and most versatile agricultural land. Policy SD2 of the CELPS states that all development will be expected to avoid the permanent loss of areas of agricultural land quality 1, 2 or 3a, unless the strategic need overrides these issues.

Paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Agricultural land falling within classes 1-3a are classed as ‘Best and Most Versatile’ BMV.

According to the 2010 Natural England Land Classification Map for the North West Region, the site falls within land which is Grade 4 ‘poor’ quality.

According to a more up-to-date (2017) map produced by Natural England, which considers the likelihood of parcels of land being Best and Most Versatile, the map shows that the site as being of moderate likelihood of BMV.

In light of the above it is not considered that the proposal would result in a loss of BMV agricultural land.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Section 15 of the NPPF considers the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Local Plan Policy SE 3(5) requires all developments to aim to positively contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. This is echoed within SADPD policy ENV 2.

Interested parties have highlighted concerns about the impacts on wildlife and biodiversity as a result of the proposals. The ecological assessment accompanying the application advises that the site is 5m from Bosley Reservoir Local Wildlife Site (LWS), across Fold Lane, and anticipates negligible impact to the LWS.

Biodiversity Net Gain

In accordance with Local Plan policy SE3(5) all development proposals must seek to lead to an overall enhancement for biodiversity. This planning application provides an opportunity to incorporate features to increase the biodiversity value of the final development in accordance with Local Plan Policy SE 3. To achieve net gain for biodiversity it should be ensured that any habitats that are higher value (such as ponds and woodland, more species rich grassland etc) are retained and enhanced as part of the development proposals. In order to assess the overall loss/gains of biodiversity, an assessment undertaken in accordance with the Defra Biodiversity ‘Metric’ version 4 should be undertaken. This has been requested from the applicant, but no further details have been submitted.

Ecological Network Map

The application site falls within the CEC ecological network which forms part of the SADPD. Policy ENV1 therefore applies to this application. The Council's ecologist considers that an ecological enhancement scheme could be required by condition to satisfy this requirement. However, as noted above, the baseline ecological position still needs to be established (as part of the Defra Biodiversity metric assessment) so the full impacts of the development can be identified, and appropriate ecological enhancement strategy can be secured.

Wildlife sensitive lighting

Due to the potential impacts of the proposed lighting scheme upon bat roost features, bat commuting and foraging habitat (boundary hedgerows, trees, watercourses etc.), if the application is approved a condition is recommended requiring details of the proposed lighting to be submitted and approved,

Breeding Birds

A number of bird species were recorded as nesting on site. Planning conditions can safeguard nesting birds and to ensure the incorporation of measures to provide replacement nesting opportunities could be included on any approval.

Ecology and Biodiversity Conclusions

In the absence of a biodiversity metric calculation, it is not possible to identify the full biodiversity impacts of the proposal or determine whether the development would provide for a net gain in biodiversity in line with the expectations of national policy and the requirements of SADPD policy ENV2 and CELPS policy SE3.

Other Matters Raised by Representations

A number of representations refer to increased crime and vandalism. There is no evidence to suggest that this would be the case, and in any event, it would be a matter for the Police to deal with outside of the planning process.

Residents have also raised concerns about the impact on property prices and loss of a view which are both not material considerations for this planning application.

Residents are also concerned that this proposal would be followed by a housing application. However, each application is dealt with on its merits.

Planning Balance

The proposed camping and caravan site would be an inappropriate scale in relation to the location and setting of the site, and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that there is an identified need for the proposal. The development would also have an adverse effect on the character of the surrounding landscape and the visual qualities of the countryside within which it is located. It has also not been demonstrated that a net gain for biodiversity would be achieved due to a lack of information. The proposal therefore conflicts with the development plan on these matters, which collectively carry substantial weight against the proposal.

No concerns are noted with regard to highway safety matters, trees, flood risk or drainage, contamination, loss of best or most versatile agricultural land or subject to conditions where appropriate. However, these are not considered to represent stand-alone benefits, but requirements of the application proposals to adhere to policy requirements and are considered to carry neutral weight in the planning balance.

Turning to the benefits of the proposal, the campsite would provide opportunities for visitors to access the countryside, which does carry some limited weight in favour of the proposal. There would also be some knock-on economic benefits realised in terms of job creation during the construction period and longer-term jobs on the site (stated to be 5 full time equivalent posts) and through business rates/taxes. The planning statement suggests that the development would support the local economy through the provision of tourist accommodation and support to the supply chain and the associated spending on local visitor attractions and shops/services. However, the construction period is unlikely to be particularly long given the nature of the development and the extent of construction activities required, therefore construction jobs would be very short-term and limited in extent. Furthermore, due to the lack of shops and services in the vicinity of the site, there would be very limited economic benefit to the area

where the impacts of the development would be most evident. Accordingly, only limited weight is afforded to the economic benefits of the proposal.

The cumulative benefits of the proposal are therefore not considered to outweigh the identified conflict with the development plan.

CONCLUSION

The proposed camping and caravan site would be an inappropriate scale in relation to the location and setting of the site and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that there is an identified need for the proposal or that the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction. The proposed development is therefore contrary to policies PG6, SE1, SD2, EG2 and EG4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, Policies RUR 6, RUR 8 and RUR 9 of the Site Allocations Development. It would also have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to policies SD2, SE1, SE4 and SE15 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, and GEN1 of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document. It has also not been demonstrated that a net gain for biodiversity would be achieved due to a lack of information, and consequently the proposal does not comply with policy SE3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and policy ENV 2 of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document. The identified benefits of the proposal do not outweigh this conflict with the development plan. The proposal is therefore not a sustainable development, and the application is accordingly recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed camping and caravan site would be an inappropriate scale in relation to the location and setting of the site, and no evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that there is an identified need for the proposal or that the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction. The proposed development is therefore contrary to policies PG6, SE1, SD2, EG2 and EG4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, Policies RUR 6, RUR 8 and RUR 9 of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.**
- 2. The proposed development, by reason of its size, scale, siting and design would introduce incongruous features that would contrast starkly with the existing landscape context, and which would not be mitigated by landscaping that would take considerable time to become effective. The proposal therefore results in harm to the character and appearance of the area in conflict with policies SD2, SE1, SE4 and SE15 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, and GEN1 of the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document.**
- 3. Insufficient information has been submitted with regard to the assessment of biodiversity. In the absence of a metric calculation it is not possible to determine whether the development proposed would provide a net gain in biodiversity. The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy SE3 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and Policy ENV 2 of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.**

