

The application is for full planning permission for the retention of an existing storage unit and a proposed storage unit at Audley Community Centre.

The application site lies in the Green Belt and an Area of Landscape Enhancement as indicated on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

**The 8 week period for the determination of this application expires on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Permit, subject to conditions relating to the following: -**

- 1. Standard Time limit for commencement of development.**
- 2. Approved plans.**

**Reason for Recommendation**

Although the proposed development is inappropriate in Green Belt and would have some impact upon the character and appearance of the landscape, such impact would be small scale and limited to a relatively small area. No demonstrable substantiated harm to other interest exists in this case. Weighing the harm of the proposal arising by definition from inappropriate development against the very small scale of the containers in terms of their height and capacity and the benefits arising for this community facility in providing storage it is considered that the very special circumstances exist to justify the proposal. The proposed development would adhere with the overarching aims and objectives of both local and national policy in this regard.

**Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application**

This is considered to be a sustainable form of development and complies with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Key Issues.**

This is an application for full planning permission for the retention of an existing storage unit and a proposed storage unit at Audley Community Centre, which is located within the Green Belt and an Area of Landscape Restoration as indicated by the proposals map.

The storage unit to be retained and the proposed unit are/will be sited at the front of the Centre, behind two existing storage units. Both units are flat roofed, and match the design and appearance of the existing units.

The main issues to be considered with this proposal are:

- Is the proposal appropriate or inappropriate development in the Green Belt and if inappropriate, do the required very special circumstances exist to justify approval?
- The impact of the proposed development on the character of the landscape and visual amenity in general
- The impact on the adjacent Audley Conservation Area

**Is the proposal appropriate in the Green Belt?**

Policy S3 of the Local Plan presumes against any form of development with certain exceptions. The proposals sought do not fall within any of the categories outlined. Structure Plan Policy D5B does not address this type of proposal.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that new buildings within the Green Belt are not appropriate, unless for one of the exempted development types specified in the framework. The new storage container does not fall within any of the categories that are identified as appropriate, therefore the development is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Consideration will be given to whether there are very special circumstances that justify approval of the development, below.

#### The impact of the proposed development on the character of the landscape and visual amenity in general

The NPPF advises at para.61 that although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design go beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

The site is within an Area of Landscape Enhancement. In these areas, the Council will support, subject to other plan policies, proposals that will enhance the character and quality of the landscape.

The new storage containers would be single storey in height and would be of steel construction and proposed to be painted green, to help them to blend with their surroundings. The siting of the containers would be on a car park and not widely visible from the landscape beyond the community centre, and for the above reasons, it is considered that the impact of the development on the character of the landscape would be minimal.

#### The impact on the adjacent Audley Conservation Area

Policy B14 of the Local Plan states that special regard will be given to the acceptability or otherwise of a development's form, scale and design when related to the character of its setting within a conservation area. Exceptionally, where proposed development immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area would be likely to affect the Conservation Area adversely, similar constraints may apply.

The proposed storage container would be sited approximately 27 metres outside of the Conservation Area boundary. This distance, coupled with the fact that the storage container would be sited adjacent to existing storage containers, and separated from the Conservation Area by the community centre car park, it is considered that the storage container would have no impact upon the character and appearance of the adjacent Audley Conservation Area.

#### Do the very special circumstances exist to outweigh any harm to the openness of the Green Belt?

Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In view of the presumption against inappropriate development, the Secretary of State will attach substantial weight to the harm to the Green Belt when considering any planning application or appeal concerning such development.

A case for very special circumstances has provided by the applicant. Their submission states that the storage space is required for fund raising activities of the Community Centre, which the Centre relies upon to remain solvent. The Centre has seen a decrease in activities / income during 2015. The storage units are used to store goods donated by the public, and then offered for sale at various fund raising activities organised by the Centre. The funds raised play a vital part in maintaining the activities provided by the Community Centre, providing a valuable service to the local community.

The size of the containers are relatively small and they would be sited behind two existing containers so would not be fully visible from most vantage points. It is considered that, because of their level of

inconspicuousness and size, the storage containers would have a limited impact upon the wider landscape and Green Belt area.

In conclusion, it is your officer's opinion that, due to the minimal size of the containers in terms of their height and volume, very special circumstances exists which outweighs the harm caused by inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-**

#### Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) 2006-2026

Policy SP1: Spatial Principles of Targeted Regeneration  
Policy ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy  
Policy CSP1: Design Quality  
Policy CSP2: Historic Environment  
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change  
Policy CSP4: Natural Assets

#### Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (NLP) 2011

Policy N17: Landscape Character - General Considerations  
Policy N20: Area of Landscape Enhancement  
Policy S3: Development in the Green Belt  
Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements

### **Other Material Considerations include:**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)  
Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance SPD (2010)  
Space around Dwellings Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004)

### **Relevant Planning History**

09/00713/FUL	Permitted	Proposed repositioning of the existing storage unit & new storage unit
12/00203/FUL	Permitted	New metal storage container

### **Views of Consultees**

The **Environmental Health Division** has no objections

**Audley Parish Council** have until 18<sup>th</sup> December to comment, any comments received will be reported.

### **Representations**

None received

### **Applicant's/Agent's submission**

The application forms and plans have been submitted. These documents are available for inspection at the Guildhall and searching under the application reference number 15/01022/FUL on the website page that can be accessed by following this link <http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/>

### **Background papers**

Planning files referred to  
Planning Documents referred to

**Date report prepared**

11<sup>th</sup> December 2015