

The application is for full planning permission for the retention of the change of use of land to car park, and alterations to access and traffic calming measures with signage.

The application site is located London Road in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The site is located within the Green Belt as defined within the Local Development Framework.

The statutory 8 week determination period for the application has been extended until the 4th January 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

PERMIT subject to the following conditions;

- 1. Car park shall be provided in accordance with the approved plan and shall thereafter be retained for the approved use only for the life of the development.**
- 2. The access improvements, traffic calming and passing place shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans within 3 months of the date of the decision and thereafter be retained for the life of the development.**
- 3. The emergency parking / turning space shall be signed and marked out in accordance with the approved plan within 3 months of the date of the decision and shall thereafter be retained for the approved use only for the life of the development.**
- 4. Any external lighting will require the prior approval of the LPA.**

Reason for recommendation

Whilst the proposal includes inappropriate development in the Green Belt it is considered that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited and the development would not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. The income derived from the car park provides additional income for the Bowling Club improving its viability which will enable such facilities to continue to be provided for the benefit of the wider community. In the absence of any highway safety concerns that cannot be addressed through condition, such factors are considered to represent the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development. In these circumstances, planning permission should be granted

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

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

KEY ISSUES

The application seeks planning permission, retrospectively for the change of use of the land, which is located within the curtilage of the London Road Bowling Club, to a car park. The parking area identified is not used by club members, but by employees for the hospital opposite upon payment.

The application site is located within the Green Belt as defined within the Local Development Framework. The key issues to consider as part of the development are as follows;

- Is the development inappropriate development within the Green Belt?
- Highway implications
- Impact of the development upon the character of the area
- Impact upon the amenities of neighbouring residents

- Should it be concluded that the development is inappropriate in Green Belt terms, do the required very special circumstances exist?

Is the development considered appropriate development in the Green Belt?

Paragraph 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Since the introduction of the NPPF in March 2012, only “due weight” should now be given to relevant policies of existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF; the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the framework, the greater the weight that may be given.

Policy S3 of the Local Plan states that development for sport and recreation uses of a predominantly open character, whether formal or informal, or for other uses of land that preserve the openness of the area, may be located in the Green Belt so long as it does not disrupt viable farm holdings. The development does not fall into this exception criteria listed as the extension to the parking on site has been created for purposes not associated with the Bowling Club, but in order to generate an income stream for the club.

Paragraph 90 of the Framework states that certain types of development are not inappropriate, providing that they maintain openness of the Green Belt. The engineering operations that have been undertaken to form the extended car park fall into this category, however change of use of land as has taken place is not identified as appropriate.

In light of the above, the development must, in part, be considered as inappropriate development within the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This will be addressed below.

Are there any highway safety issues?

The existing access to the Bowling Club and its car park is directly off the A34. The access has a limited width and there is the potential that vehicles trying to enter the car park will have to wait on the A34 to allow vehicles as the access is of insufficient width to accommodate two vehicles.

In recognition of this the application includes proposals to improve the access by widening it and providing a speed hump as a traffic calming measure. In addition a designated passing place is proposed within the site providing a safe place for vehicles wait while giving way to vehicles entering the site. Such improvements, together with associated signage, have been agreed between the applicant and the Highway Authority prior to the application being made.

A parking barrier is in place within the site in order to ensure that only hospital staff uses the parking as agreed within their lease with the bowling club.

The Highway Authority has viewed the proposal and raises no objections to the proposal on highway safety grounds providing that the improvements as referred to above and shown on the proposed plans are implemented.

The design of the development and impact on the character of the area

Policy CSP1 of the Core Spatial Strategy outlines how the design of new development is assessed which includes amongst other requirements the need to promote and respect the areas character and identity.

Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

The additional car parking spaces have already been provided on site. The car parking area is acceptable in appearance, and cannot be viewed beyond the site on the A34 due to the significant planting of mature trees around the site, or from the Lyme Valley for the same reason.

The widened access would be viewed from the A34, but would not be visually harmful given the context of the area.

Is the impact on residential amenity acceptable?

The Framework states within paragraph 9 that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in peoples quality of life, including improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure. The impact upon the amenity of surrounding residents has to be taken into consideration. Paragraph 17 sets a core principle that planning should seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

The proposed alterations to the access and provision of additional parking on site would not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties. The closest residential dwelling is 35m away from the site.

It is noted that the Environmental Health Division raise no objections to the proposal, however request that no external lighting is put in place without prior approval from the Local Planning Authority. Whilst there is existing lighting of the car park which is beyond the control of the LPA it would be reasonable and appropriate that any additional lighting proposed in future requires prior approval.

Do the required very special circumstances exist to justify inappropriate development?

The NPPF states in paragraph 88 that when considering planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other circumstances. Inappropriate development by definition is harmful to the interests of the Green Belt. However, beyond that, no element of 'other harm' has been identified associated with the change of use of land.

The Bowling Club states that the additional income from the parking on site is to facilitate the running of the club. Whilst no financial information has been submitted to support this claim, it is accepted that local sports facilities are facing financial difficulties and that any additional income that can be generated improves viability and goes towards ensuring that such facilities continue to be provided for the benefit of the wider community. In addition, as set out above, the additional car parking provided has had a very limited impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

On balance, in the absence of any identified harm relating to highway safety or residential amenity, it is considered that the required very special circumstances can be considered to exist in this case.

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 ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy

Policy CSP1: Design Quality

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan 2011 (NLP)

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 (PPG) (2014)

Relevant Planning History

The club has been on the site for a long time, and has been granted permission for extensions over the years. The existing parking on site was granted approval in the 1960s.

Views of Consultees

Sport England: Confirm that a Statutory consultation was not required as part of the application process.

National Grid: No objections however highlight advice the applicant should follow.

Highway Authority: No objections subject to conditions relating to the following:

- Provision of the car park as approved and thereafter retained.
- Access improvements, traffic calming and passing places implemented and retained.
- Emergency parking/turning space signed and marked and thereafter retained.

Environmental Health Division: No objections, and request a condition relating to external lighting

Representations

None received, the application was advertised by Press Advert and Site Notice.

Applicant/agent's submission

Application forms and plans have been submitted which are available for inspection at the Guildhall and via the following link

<http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/plan/17/00808/FUL>

Background Papers

Planning File
Development Plan

Date report prepared

12th December 2017