

**APEDALE HERITAGE CENTRE, APEDALE COUNTRY PARK**  
**DR JOHN ROWLANDS**

**20/00308/FUL**

The application is for full planning permission for the erection of a steel storage building within the grounds of the Apedale Valley Light Railway.

The site is located within the open countryside and an Area of Landscape Regeneration. It is also within the Green Belt, as identified within the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

**The 8 week period for the determination of this application expires on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June but the applicant has agreed to an extension of time until the 26<sup>th</sup> June.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PERMIT subject to conditions relating to the following matters:-**

- 1. Time limit condition**
- 2. Approved Plans**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Prior approval of external lighting**

**Reason for Recommendation**

Whilst the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, and it is acknowledged that there would be harm to openness, there are considered to be very special circumstances to justify the development. The building would be of significant benefit to the Apedale Valley Light Railway, an established leisure and recreation attraction that is of local and national heritage significance. The development would provide appropriate facilities for the storage of heritage rail artefacts and would contribute to the vitality of this use. It is therefore considered that very special circumstances exist that justify approval of planning permission. In all other respects the development accords with local and national planning policy.

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

The development is considered to be a sustainable form of development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Key Issues**

Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a steel building within the grounds of the Apedale Valley Light Railway. The application site is located within the open countryside and an Area of Landscape Regeneration. It is also within the Green Belt, as identified within the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The application is a re-submission of a recently approved scheme (Ref. 20/00003/FUL). The alterations to the application comprise revisions to the siting and scale of the building.

It was concluded under the previous application that despite representing inappropriate development in the Green Belt, very special circumstances existed that outweighed any resulting harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As the use of the building would remain unaltered, and it would continue to be used for the storage of heritage railway artefacts and associated equipment, these same very special circumstances remain applicable to this revised application. It is therefore not considered necessary to revisit the principle of the development with regards to the location of the site in the Green Belt.

Therefore, the key issues in the determination of this planning application are considered to be;

- Design of the proposal and its impact on the appearance of the Community Park and Area of Landscape Regeneration, and
- Implications with regards to coal mining and land instability

#### Design of the proposal and its impact on the appearance of the Community Park and Area of Landscape Regeneration

Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 127 of the framework lists 6 criterion, a) – f) with which planning policies and decisions should accord and details, amongst other things, that developments should be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

Policy CSP1 of the Council's Core Spatial Strategy 2006-2026 requires that the design of the development is respectful to the character of the area.

The proposed building would be sited to the north-east of the main Heritage Centre building. The structure would be 7m northwards of the location approved in the previous scheme. Despite this change, the building would remain well screened from wider public vantage points and would be sited in a practical location to assist with the maintenance and function of the Light Railway.

The overall form and appearance of the building would be similar to that already approved. It would maintain a functional appearance driven by the practical requirements of the building. The main alteration is to the scale of the building with the depth being reduced from 42m to 24m whilst the width would increase from 9.1m to 10.6m.

The material and colour finish of 'juniper green' are considered to be appropriate for both the function of the building and in relation to the appearance of the wider landscape. As such the revisions to the appearance of the building are not considered to be harmful to the appearance of this Area of Landscape Regeneration.

The Environmental Health Division (EHD) has raised no objections to the proposal but has noted that given the nature of the area and the significance of the items to be stored within the building, it is likely that it will be required to be illuminated externally for either security or safety purposes. Due to the inherently dark nature of the surrounding area during the night, EHD has recommended a condition to secure full details of any external lighting prior to its installation. Such a condition is considered to be reasonable and appropriate.

The development is therefore seen to comply with Policy N22 of the Local Plan, Policy CSP1 of the Core Spatial Strategy and the requirements of the NPPF.

#### Implications with regards to coal mining and land instability

The application site is identified as falling within a Development High Risk Area with regards to former coal mining activities. The application is supported by a Ground Investigation Report, Coal Mining Report and Coal Mining Risk Assessment (CMRA).

The initial consultation response from the Coal Authority sought clarification from the author of the CMRA as to whether previous conclusions would still be applicable to the revised siting of the building. However, further comments received on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May identify that the submitted report details that "Probable underground coal mining at shallow depth is not considered to present an instability risk to the development. There is no further action required". As such The Coal Authority are satisfied that the development poses no risk and so raises no objections to the proposal. They have also confirmed that no pre-commencement conditions are required in relation to further site investigations in light of the revised siting and conclusions of the CMRA.

Therefore the development is considered to comply with the requirements of the NPPF.

## 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  
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change

#### [Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan \(NLP\) 2011](#)

Policy S3: Development in the Green Belt  
Policy N22: Areas of Landscape Regeneration  
Policy C13: Additional Facilities at Apedale Community Country Park

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

#### National Planning Policy

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (February 2019)

[Planning Practice Guidance](#) (March 2014)

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document](#) (2010)

#### Relevant Planning History

98/00381/FUL - Development of mining museum including erection of associated buildings and high gauge railway – Approved

06/00600/FUL - A. Full planning permission for the use of land as a Railway Heritage Museum, the erection of a storage building for railway artefacts, the construction of a narrow gauge railway line, platforms and associated works. B. Outline planning permission for the erection of a Railway Heritage Museum building and water storage towers – Approved

09/00493/REM - Details of the erection of a railway heritage museum building and water storage tower granted outline planning permission 06/00600/FUL, and associated landscaping – Approved

20/00003/FUL - Erection of a steel building for the storage of railway artefacts including rail vehicles – Approved

#### Views of Consultees

The **Environmental Health Division** raises no objections subject to a condition to control the installation of external lighting.

The **Coal Authority** raises no objections to the application.

The **Staffordshire Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor** draws the applicant's attention to options that should be considered to reduce and prevent anti-social behaviour and any resulting damage to the application site.

The **Staffordshire County Minerals Planning Authority** had no comments to make on the proposal.

No comments were received from **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust** and given that the period for comment has ended, it must be assumed that they have no comments to make.

### Representations

Four representations have been received in support of the application with their comments summarised as follows;

- Proposal will enhance the site and provision of storage for heritage artefacts
- It will contribute towards the preservation of the industrial heritage and history of the local area
- The Railway is a significant local and national visitor attraction
- Proposal will enhance Apedale Community Country Park.

### Applicant's/Agent's submission

The submitted plans and supporting documents can be viewed on the Council's website using the following link: <https://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/plan/20/00308/FUL>

### Background papers

Planning files referred to  
Planning Documents referred to

### Date report prepared

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020