

Supporting Statement in relation to the expansion of existing caravan storage facility

Seale Lodge Farm, Overseal

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Expansion of existing caravan storage facility – Seale Lodge Farm, Overseal

Project	Seale Lodge Farm, Overseal
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Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Site and Planning History	3
3	The Proposed Development	5
4	Planning Policy Context	6
	National Planning Policy Framework	6
	South Derbyshire Local Plan Part 1 (2016)	6
	South Derbyshire Local Plan (1998)	7
5	Planning Considerations	8
	Principle of Development	8
	Impact upon Character of Countryside	9
	Impact upon Residential Amenity	9
	Impact upon the Highway Network	9
6	Conclusions	10

1 Introduction

- 1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.
- 1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jon Imber, has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

2 Site and Planning History

- 2.1 Seale Lodge Farm lies on the A444 at Acresford. It comprises a farmhouse occupied by the applicant and his family, several industrial units and a caravan storage compound. The site lies on the edge of a small, dispersed settlement approximately 1.5km south of Overseal.
- 2.2 The application site comprises the existing caravan storage compound and part of the paddock to the north. Surrounding land uses include a residential property to the south, agricultural land to the north and east and commercial units and the applicant's farmhouse to the west.
- 2.3 The existing caravan storage compound is enclosed by a timber fence approximately 1.5 metres in height. The paddock boundaries consist of a tall, well established coniferous hedgerow to the east, deciduous trees to the north and a row of coniferous trees to the west. The site is relatively flat.
- 2.4 The site is accessed via a surfaced track connecting to the A444. The access onto the

A444 is shared with the applicant's farmhouse and the commercial units to the west. It is well sighted and designed to accommodate larger vehicles.

2.5 The caravan storage compound on the site was approved in 2007 under Planning Permission 9/2007/0838. Condition 4 of the permission restricts the number of caravans stored at the site to a maximum of 23. The condition was applied solely to define the scope of the permission.

2.6 There are no specific designations affecting the site within the adopted local plan.

2.2 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following photograph.



Figure 1 - Aerial photograph of site

3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The applicant's caravan storage business has proven very popular and is currently operating at capacity, meaning that the applicant is currently having to turn away potential clients. It is therefore proposed to expand the storage facility to accommodate this demand.
- 3.2 Pre-application advice was sought from the Council earlier this year with a view to expanding the existing caravan storage into the field to the east. In its response, the Council raised concerns that the expansion of the facility into the field to the east would take it further from the existing collection of buildings at Seale Lodge Farm and harm the character and appearance of the countryside. However, the response did suggest that extension of the existing facility in a less intrusive manner could be acceptable in principle.
- 3.3 Accordingly, this application seeks to expand the existing caravan storage facility keeping it entirely within the paddock in which it currently stands.
- 3.4 The proposals involve extending the existing compacted stone surfacing to provide increased storage capacity. The application site also includes the existing storage compound so that if permission is granted, it would no longer be subject to the limit of 23 caravans, allowing it to be used more efficiently.
- 3.5 The applicant controls land to the east, west and north of the application site, and there is scope to provide additional landscaping should the Council require it.

- 3.6 The proposals do not affect the existing site access arrangements.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Paragraph 14 advises that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Local Plan; and also in circumstances where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 4.3 Paragraph 19 of the NPPF states that *“The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”*
- 4.4 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that planning should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. It also encourages the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

South Derbyshire Local Plan Part 1 (2016)

- 4.5 *“Policy E7 Rural Development*
Development proposals which diversify and expand the range of sustainable employment activities on land outside of settlement boundaries will be supported by

the Council provided they support the social and economic needs of the rural communities in the District.

The Council will support proposals for the re-use, conversion and replacement of existing buildings and development of new buildings where:

- i) it is supported by a sound business case;*
- ii) the local highway network is capable of accommodating the traffic generated;*
- iii) development will not give rise to any undue impacts on neighbouring land;*
- iv) it is well designed and of a scale commensurate with the proposed use*
- v) visual intrusion and the impact on the character of the locality is minimised.”*

South Derbyshire Local Plan (1998)

- 4.9 Environment Policy 1 of the 1998 Local Plan is saved pending the adoption of the emerging Local Plan Part 2. It states: -

“ENVIRONMENT POLICY 1: DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

A. OUTSIDE SETTLEMENTS NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- (i) IT IS ESSENTIAL TO A RURAL BASED ACTIVITY; OR*
- (ii) UNAVOIDABLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE; AND*
- (iii) THE CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE LANDSCAPE QUALITY, WILDLIFE AND HISTORIC FEATURES ARE SAFEGUARDED AND PROTECTED.*

B. IF DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE IT SHOULD BE DESIGNED AND LOCATED SO AS TO CREATE AS LITTLE IMPACT AS PRACTICABLE ON THE COUNTRYSIDE.”

5 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application site lies on the edge of a rural settlement outside of any development boundary. Environment Policy 1 of the South Derbyshire Local Plan 1998 is therefore relevant.
- 5.2 Saved Policy EN1 restricts development in the countryside to that appropriate in its location. Caravan storage is a land intensive use which lends itself to a rural rather than urban location. Furthermore, Paragraph 28 of the NPPF makes it clear that the Government considers that the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas is development appropriate in the countryside.
- 5.4 The proposals would boost the rural economy. Paragraph 19 of the NPPF assigns significant weight to this economic benefit in the overall planning balance.
- 5.5 The site benefits from excellent access to the M42 junction. The A444 provides access to the towns of Swadlincote and Burton upon Trent. The nature of caravan storage is such that there is minimal demand for the site to be accessible via public transport. The site is therefore sustainably located for its intended use.
- 5.6 The proposals therefore constitute the sustainable expansion of an existing rural business which is appropriate within the countryside. The proposals accord with Saved Policy EN1 of the 1998 Local Plan and Paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The principle of expanding the existing caravan storage facility is therefore considered acceptable.

Impact upon Character of Countryside

- 5.7 The site is well screened by established vegetation and the proposed extension of the storage area would not be readily visible from public vantage points. Even if the site were visible, it would be viewed in the context of both the existing storage area and the nearby industrial units.
- 5.8 In accordance with the Council's pre-application advice, the expansion to the storage area has been kept close to existing built development and as such it would not encroach into the surrounding countryside.
- 5.9 The applicant controls land to the east, west and north of the application site, and there is scope to provide additional landscaping should the Council require it.

Impact upon Residential Amenity

- 5.9 Caravan storage is not inherently noisy. For most of the year the caravans remain on the site, with noise and disturbance limited to the periods when they are picked up or dropped off. The proposed expansion lies on the opposite side of the compound to the dwelling to the south, and as such any minimal additional noise or disturbance associated with the increased use of the site is unlikely to be sufficient to impact upon the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling.

Impact upon the Highway Network

- 5.10 Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where its impact upon the network would be severe.

- 5.11 The proposals utilise the existing access onto the A444. This access is shared with the commercial units to the west and was designed specifically to accommodate movements by larger vehicles. It features wide kerb radii and good visibility in both directions. The access emerges onto a section of road with a 40mph speed limit. The site benefits from excellent access to the strategic highway network, meaning caravans can access the M42 without travelling through nearby towns and villages.
- 5.12 The proposals therefore safeguard the safe and efficient use of the highway network.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed expansion of the existing caravan storage facility at Seale Lodge Farm is required to facilitate the sustainable growth of an established rural business. The proposed use is appropriate to its rural setting. The broad principle of the development therefore accords with Saved Policy EN1 of the 1998 Local Plan.
- 6.2 The proposed expansion would not harm the character or appearance of its rural surroundings, the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings or the safe or efficient use of the highway network. The proposals therefore satisfy all relevant criteria of Policy E7 of the Local Plan Part 1.
- 6.3 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable economic development which accords with Policies En1 and E7 of the 1998 and 2016 Local Plans respectively, and Paragraphs 19 and 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In accordance with the presumption in favour of such development established by Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework it is therefore respectfully requested that the application be approved.