

## **Regulatory Committee – 04 February 2020**

**Alterations to outdoor pursuits centre including extension of existing building, new smoke house training simulator, new openings to existing tower, road traffic collision simulator, confined spaces simulator to provide new fire and rescue training centre.**

**At:**

**Kingsbury Water Park Outdoor Education Centre,  
Bodmoor Heath Lane, Bodmoor Heath, Kingsbury,  
B76 9JB**

**NWB/19CC010**

Application No.: NWB/19CC010

Advertised date: 12 September 2019

Applicant(s) Ms. Alison Fowler,  
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Registered by: The Strategic Director for Communities on 03  
September 2019

Proposal: Alterations to outdoor pursuits centre including extension of existing building, new house training simulator, new openings to existing tower, road traffic collision simulator, confined spaces simulator to provide new fire and rescue training centre.

Site & location: Kingsbury Water Park Outdoor Education Centre,  
Bodymoor Heath Lane, Bodymoor Heath, Kingsbury,  
B76 9JB. [Grid ref: 420214.296650].

**See plan in Appendix A**

## **Recommendation**

That the Regulatory Committee authorises the grant of planning permission for alterations to outdoor pursuits centre including extension of existing building, new house training simulator, new openings to existing tower, road traffic collision simulator and confined spaces simulator to provide new fire and rescue training centre subject to the conditions and for the reasons contained within Appendix B of the report of the Strategic Director for Communities.

### **1. Application details**

- 1.1 The application proposes the redevelopment of a former outdoor pursuit and education centre that ceased to operate approximately 18 months ago. The provision of appropriate fire and rescue training facilities are required to be provided by Fire Authorities as stipulated by the Fire Services Act 2004, Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. The government sets out its expectations in the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England, with priorities being for Fire Authorities to: Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.
- 1.2 In order to achieve their objectives Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) require high quality and fit for purpose training facilities. Training facilities are currently located in Bedworth and Dunchurch but these sites offer limited ability to provide the full breadth of training services. Whilst the quality of training currently provided is high, the wide reaching requirements of training required by the Fire Service means that not all of the essential training can be provided within Warwickshire. As such WFRS currently have to utilise facilities in other areas of the UK, travelling as far as North Wales in some instances.
- 1.3 There is a single access point to the north of the application site located onto Bodymoor Heath Lane. The access was previously provided to serve the outdoor pursuits centre. The access is to be retained but the existing gates would be relocated to allow a vehicle to pull in off the road when the gate are shut.
- 1.4 The application proposes alterations and an extension of the existing outdoor pursuits training centre building to provide training facilities, changing and welfare facilities for the Fire and Rescue Service. The extension to the existing training centre building would follow the

general form of the existing single storey building and would create a visible entrance area. The existing timber boarding and profiled metal sheeting is proposed to be matched on the extension.

- 1.5 The existing building measures 27.4 x 12.7m, is of single storey nature and has a pitched roof 5.5m in height. The proposed extension element would be located at the northern gable end of the building and would measure 11.4 x 12.7m. The extension would continue the existing pitched roofline and proposes a porch and canopy structure at the entrance to provide some shelter and an obvious entrance point.
- 1.6 The main training centre building would consist of a reception area, control room, computer room, briefing room, 4no. pod rooms, incident command office, 2no. offices, operation policy room, operation instruction room, main lecture room, breakout area with refreshment area, male and female showers, toilets and changing areas.
- 1.7 The training centre would be used for lectures, theoretical training and virtual reality incident command training that is not possible to replicate in real life.
- 1.8 The existing climbing tower occupies a central location within the site and is proposed to be retained, with the addition of 2 new apertures for training purposes. The tower is 5.9m x 3.9m and 16m in height and represents the highest structure proposed on site. The tower would be used for ladder, hose and rescue training purposes.
- 1.9 To the west of the climbing tower it is proposed to site a 2 storey cold smoke house which replicates a typical detached dwelling, and would have a 2 storey training tower attached. The house would be filled with synthetic smoke, similar to that which is used in nightclubs in order to replicate various scenarios that involve entering smoke filled buildings and rescuing people. The smoke is cold, synthetic in nature and dissipates quickly ensuring there is no adverse impact on visual amenity or by way of pollution.
- 1.10 The smoke house would occupy a footprint of 6 x 7.4m (excluding the training tower 2 x 2.5m and 7m in height) and would measure 8.3m to the ridge of its pitched roof. The building has 2 floors, connected by a replica staircase, a roof void and imitation dormer window to allow for realistic training exercises to be performed.
- 1.11 A new tarmacadam surface would be provided from the access up to and surrounding the climbing tower, smoke house and appliance parking area which would accommodate up to 3 fire engines and a telehandler.
- 1.12 The tarmacadam surface would extend further to the west of the smoke house in the form of an imitation two lane highway. This area would be used to simulate road traffic collision (RTC) incidents and provide

extraction training. Further to the west of the replica highway, would be a 1.2m deep ditch, again to simulate incidents where a vehicle has left the highway. The ditch would be filled with water for some training exercises in order to simulate incidents where a vehicle has landed in water and its occupants are trapped.

- 1.13 2 small scale existing timber storage buildings are proposed to be retained on site to house training and associated equipment. 7 existing car parking spaces, including 3 disabled spaces, are to be retained on site in front of the main training centre building. 3 responding officer and 3 general parking spaces are proposed to be provided towards the northern boundary of the site to the east of the entrance. An additional overflow non delineated parking area would be available along the eastern boundary of the site behind the main training building.

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 North Warwickshire Borough Council Planning - Strongly objects to the grant of planning permission. The Council considers that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that it causes substantial actual Green Belt harm. Harms are also caused because of the visual and landscape impact as well there being no evidence that it would not harm the bio-diversity of the nature conservation interests site particularly in respect of water pollution, noise and lighting. It was also considered that harm would be caused to the recreational and leisure objectives of the County Council at the Water Park. In the final planning balance the Board considered that there were no considerations at all put forward by the County Council which would clearly outweigh the substantial cumulative harms caused, so as to amount to the very special circumstances needed to support these proposals.
- 2.2 Environmental Health Officer – No objection.
- 2.3 Environment Agency – No comments received at time of writing.
- 2.4 Kingsbury Parish Council – No comments to make.
- 2.5 Councillor Andy Jenns – No comments received at time of writing.
- 2.6 Ramblers Association - Public Footpath T23 lies 100m to the east of the application site and should not be affected by the application. Warwickshire Ramblers therefore have no objection to this application on footpath grounds.
- 2.7 HS2 Limited - Confirm that no part of red line boundary is within land safeguarding for phase 2b of HS2, as such we have no objection.
- 2.8 Flood Risk and Water Management – No objection subject to conditions.

- 2.9 Rights of Way – Public footpaths T3 and T4 are located a short distance to the east of the application site, as shown on the Definitive Map, the legal record of public rights of way. However, there are no recorded public rights of way crossing or immediately abutting the application site. The Rights of Way team therefore has no objection regarding these proposals
- 2.10 Highway Authority – No objection.
- 2.11 Ecology – No objection subject to conditions.
- 2.12 Site notices posted – 12 September 2019
- 2.13 Press notice posted on - 12 September 2019
- 2.14 6 nearest residential properties individually notified on 12 September 2019

### **3. Representations**

- 3.1 No representations have been received from members of the public in relation to this application.

### **4. Previous Planning History**

- 4.1 The application site is a former outdoor pursuits and education centre that has been disused for approximately 18 months. The site is occupied by one main education building, a climbing tower, two small storage buildings and areas of hard standing.

### **5. Assessment and Observations**

#### **Location**

- 5.1 The application site is accessed off Bodymoor Heath Lane and is located just to the south of the Kingsbury Waterpark Camping & Caravan Park, surrounded by the wider Kingsbury Water park. Kingsbury Water Park lies upon the River Tame and consists of fifteen lakes situated in over 600 acres of country park, managed by Warwickshire County Council. The M42 motorway is approximately 350m to the east of the site, with the nearest access point being junction 9, approximately 3.4km to the south.
- 5.2 The application site lies in an enclave outside of the surrounding Kingsbury Water park Local Wildlife Site which also includes the caravan park to the north. The site is enclosed by a palisade fence which is hidden by a mature hedge to the northern and western boundaries. The southern boundary and beyond is occupied by mature woodland which falls within the local wildlife site. The eastern boundary

is lined by mature deciduous trees and beyond it lies the residential property 'Moor Ash Barn'. Opposite this dwelling is 'Moorash farm' a Grade II listed building.

- 5.3 The site's surface is currently made up of a mixture of materials including rough grassland, hardstanding and tarmacadam. The site has been disused for approximately 18 months and shows signs of this but is generally in a good condition. The main building is suitable for immediate use and the climbing tower remains in a good condition.
- 5.4 The site is well screened by the existing mature hedge that surrounds it, with only the climbing tower visible from outside the perimeter. The tower would remain the highest structure on site should approval be granted, but the proposed cold smoke house would also be visible from outside the site given its height. All other aspects of the development would be well screened. The site access is proposed to be set back and widened meaning views into the site from the site entrance would be enhanced, but the impact would be limited to directly opposite the entrance.
- 5.5 The established woodland to the south provides further screening and ensures the redevelopment of the site would not have a significant impact upon the wider landscape.

### **Amenity Issues**

- 5.6 The development and its proposed operation poses potential impacts on amenity by way of noise, light and air pollution. As such these impacts must be appropriately assessed. Activities on site would consist of road traffic collision training, search and rescue exercises, hose and ladder training and breathing apparatus training along with associated activities such as vehicle movement and reversing alarms.

### Noise

- 5.7 In order to address the potential impact of noise, a noise assessment has been conducted and a report provided to support the application. The assessment focusses on the likely sound levels due to RTC training and hose training activities. These activities have the greatest potential to give rise to significant levels of off-site noise. Other sources such as vehicle movements, breathing apparatus alarms and issuing verbal commands may, at times, be audible at the nearest Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSR), however it is considered these sounds would be very limited in duration and unlikely to give rise to adverse effects.
- 5.8 Training activities could take place on any day of the week, but would tend to occur on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Training activities would primarily take place during the daytime from 1000 to 1530 hrs, with occasional evening training activities to support on-call

staff occurring from 1900 to 2100 hrs. Scenario-based training may last around two hours and would occur once a month, on average. Hose training sessions typically last 30 minutes. Hose training would occur around 3 to 5 times a year, with around 3 or 4 individual sessions on each day.

- 5.9 The assessment concludes that RTC training is unlikely to result in any significant adverse impacts, but that hose training may give rise to significant adverse impacts at Kingsbury Water Park Camping and Caravanning Club. However, these impacts must be considered in the appropriate context and weighed in the planning balance.
- 5.10 Hose training would be conducted in 30 minute periods up to 4 times a day on a maximum of 5 days per year. This equates to 10 hours a year where the visitors to the caravan park, and its staff, would experience adverse noise impact. Over the period of a calendar year this potential period of disturbance is considered negligible and outweighed by the need to provide effective statutory training for the County's Fire and Rescue Officers. In addition, a response of 'no objection' has been received from the Borough's Environmental Health Officer.

#### Air Quality

- 5.11 Air quality at the site is good, as is expected in rural areas. Nitrogen Oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) annual mean concentration at the nearest NWBC diffusion tube monitoring site, 0.8km to the south of site is well below the NO<sub>2</sub> annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO). The diffusion tube monitoring site is located approximately 215 m from the M42 and the application site is located approximately 360m from the M42. It is therefore considered that concentrations monitored at the diffusion tube are representative of concentrations at the site
- 5.12 The training activities to be conducted on site do not include the use of live fires or the generation of real smoke. The smoke proposed to be used in the cold smoke house would be synthetic in nature, similar to that produced by smoke machines in night clubs. The smoke is cold, does not pose a risk to human health if inhaled, and dissipates quickly into the atmosphere without posing a detrimental effect on the environment.
- 5.13 There would be limited vehicle movements associated with the proposed development, and those that would occur would not exceed the number associated with the site's former use as an outdoor education centre.
- 5.14 The two nearest Air Quality Management Areas are in Coleshill and the Birmingham conurbation. There would be no adverse impact upon the AQAs given the proposed activities on site and vehicle movements generated.

## Light Pollution

- 5.15 There would be limited evening training exercises conducted on the site which would require after dark illumination. Any external lighting would be subject to a condition approving details to ensure there is no adverse impact upon biodiversity and the rural environment.

## **Environmental Issues**

### Ecology

- 5.16 There are no statutory biodiversity sites of international importance within 5km of the site. There are however, six nationally important statutory designated biodiversity sites within 5km of the site boundary, the closest of which is Middleton Pool SSSI, which is located 1.7km north of the site. This site is designated for supporting an important assemblage of breeding birds and migrating waterfowl. Furthermore, there are three non-statutory designated biodiversity sites within 1km of the site boundary, the closest of which is Kingsbury Wetlands potential LWS, which surrounds the application site.
- 5.17 The proposed scheme involves the extension of the main building and hardstanding areas to facilitate the Fire Service's training. The external areas would be used for the fire engine pumps and hose, operation of ladders and road traffic collision training. Concrete sewer pipes would also be installed above ground with spoil from the ground works covering the pipes to create an embankment. The extent of the construction works and the nature of the training activities means that although an increase in the level of noise, light and human disturbance is anticipated, this would not be to a level that it could disturb the breeding and migrating birds that use Middleton Pools SSSI located 1.7km away.
- 5.18 Conversely, in the absence of mitigation, the levels of light, noise and human disturbance are considered to be sufficient to adversely affect the populations of waterfowl and other important assemblages of fauna that occur within the pLWS. As such, it is recommended that a light and noise abatement strategy is prepared and implemented during the construction and operational phases of the development. These provisions would be secured through a CEMP that would be required by planning condition.
- 5.19 Proposed lighting would be required to adhere to the principles of the Institution of Lighting Professionals and Bat Conservation Trust (2018) Bats and artificial lighting in the UK, Bats and the Built Environment series (Guidance Note 08/18). The measures to be included within the abatement strategy would be controlled by the County Planning Authority by way of planning condition.



- 5.20 The site contains species-poor, semi-improved grassland, lines of trees, hedgerows and ruderal habitats, all of which are of some value for nature conservation. However, the proposed development would only result in the loss of approximately 0.08 ha of species-poor, semi-improved grassland which, although it is assessed as having some conservation value, would be a loss sufficiently small that no adverse effects on the potential conservation status of this habitat type within the local area are anticipated. As such, it is considered on site compensation can be provided to ensure there is no net loss to biodiversity. A scheme to ensure the compensation measures are agreed and implemented would be included in the LEMP and secured via planning condition.
- 5.21 A preliminary badger survey has been conducted and it confirmed that there are no setts on-site and only limited foraging habitat, access to which is restricted due the fencing that surrounds the site. The survey extended 30m into the woodland habitat adjoining the site to the south, and no evidence of badgers was present. As such, no further badger survey work is required but a preliminary check would be carried out before commencement of development should Members be minded to grant approval.
- 5.22 Two records of bat roosts (originating from the same location) were identified within 2km of the site. These support brown long-eared and common pipistrelle bats. The limbs of trees bordering the site are deemed not to offer suitable habitat for bats. However, existing structures on the site, including the main building, store buildings and the climbing tower contain cracks and crevices that bats could occupy. These structures have undergone a preliminary assessment and been found not to house any bats at the current time.
- 5.23 There is a small amount of suitable habitat on-site which is likely used by foraging and commuting bats namely; the grassland, hedgerow and ruderal vegetation. The habitat meets the criteria of moderate suitability according to criteria set out by the Bat Conservation Trust on the basis of types of habitat present on-site and that are connected to it. Appropriate mitigation measures would be included in the CEMP required by condition should Members be minded to approve the development.
- 5.24 No records of dormice were identified within the 1km search area and the site does not contain suitable habitat that could support a population of this species. As such no further consideration of the species is deemed to be necessary.
- 2.25 No records of otter were identified on-site, however six records were identified within 1km of the application site boundary. The closest record is c. 400m south-west of the site along the Birmingham and Fazeley canal. The closest point of this water course is c. 185m west of the site and there are further water bodies in between the site and this

canal which may also be used by otter. Although the site does not support habitat suitable for this species, the adjacent woodland habitat provides areas that may be used for resting up and/or may contain holts. It is possible that the proposal could cause disturbance to resting otters, and they may seek to occupy the training ditch proposed as part of the development.

- 5.26 As such it will be necessary for an appropriate mitigation strategy to be provided via the CEMP planning condition. The strategy would be informed by further surveys and monitoring of the site which would form part of any planning condition. If holts or resting places are identified a Natural England Licence would be required to be obtained by the applicant before any work can commence on site.
- 5.27 The Biodiversity Impact Assessment concluded that the development would result in a minor loss of 0.08 to biodiversity. Given the minor loss and the fact that the applicant owns the significant surrounding landholding of Kingsbury Waterpark it has been agreed that suitable compensation can be provided within the area. The parameters of the compensation would be agreed and secured through the LEMP planning condition.

#### Flood Risk

- 5.28 The majority of the application site is situated within EA Flood Zone 1. A small area of Flood Zone 2 is present along the southern edge of the site. The only parts of the development in Flood Zone 2 are parking areas and car storage and as such are deemed suitable for construction in this location as defined by the NPPF.
- 5.29 An assessment of surface water, groundwater flood risk has shown that the site is at a very low to low risk of flooding from these sources. The site is at negligible risk from tidal or artificial sources of flood risk. The southernmost edge of the site is at risk of surface water flooding, but given the structures which will occupy this area, it is not considered inappropriate development.
- 5.30 The Outline Drainage Strategy prepared by Curtins details how surface water runoff from the site would be controlled and managed via SuDS so as to not increase off-site flood risk, and this would be secured via planning condition. Further details regarding necessary attenuation and discharge rates would be required by planning condition prior to the commencement of development should Members be minded to grant approval.

#### Visual and Landscape Impact

- 5.31 Given the application site's location in the Green Belt and its proximity to the water park the application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal. The site is located within the western

part of Kingsbury Water Park Country Park, south of an existing camping and caravan park. At 120ha the surrounding country park is characterised by open bodies of water surrounded by extensive woodland.

- 5.32 The site is an existing area of brownfield land previously used as a children's educational facility. It is well enclosed by dense woodland to the south and east with a 3m+ hedgerow forming the western and northern boundaries. The only feature visible from outside the site is an existing climbing tower which can be seen above the boundary hedgerow. The site is formed by a combination of hardstanding, a single storey pitched building, various climbing structures and timber shelters with an area of amenity grassland to the west. Due to the surrounding vegetation views out of the site aren't available.
- 5.33 It is considered that given the site's previous brownfield land use, and that the additional built elements are contained within the boundary of the site the development would not cause any significant material effects to landscape character. There would be a slight loss of amenity grassland, however this is not a rare landscape element and not of high quality. The valued landscape elements and features that exist within the site, such as trees and hedgerows along the boundaries, would be retained. The enclosed nature of the site ensures very few views of the site are accessible, reducing any impact on the wider landscape.

### **Heritage**

- 5.34 The application site holds no known heritage features and is not covered by any statutory designations. The nearest heritage asset is the Grade II listed 'Moorash Farm' approximately 72m to the east of the application site. The setting of the listed building is unaffected by the proposal given it is some distance from the site and screened by mature trees along the site's eastern boundary and the intervening dwelling Moorash Barn.

### **Planning Policy**

- 5.35 Planning law requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the development plan consists of the saved policies of the North Warwickshire Local Plan 2006 and the Core Strategy 2014. As such, the development proposal must be assessed in accordance with the relevant policies.

#### Local Plan 2006 (Saved Policies)

- 5.36 Core Policy 1 - Social and Economic Regeneration states that *'The Local Plan will support the economic and social regeneration of the area, primarily by seeking to ensure local people have access to a*

*range of high quality employment, housing, shopping, leisure, education and other community facilities.*' The proposed development includes an element of community use, given that it will be available for visits for educational purposes and as such accords with the policy.

- 5.37 Core Policy 3 - Natural and Historic Environment states *'All development decisions will seek to protect or enhance biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment, and existing landscape and townscape character.'* The supporting information submitted has demonstrated that there would not be an adverse impact upon biodiversity given the proposed mitigation and compensation measures that would be secured by way of planning condition.
- 5.38 Core Policy 6 - Local Services & Facilities states *'The Local Plan will protect and support local services and facilities across the Borough and will ensure community involvement in the consideration of the means of achieving this.'* The proposal seeks to ensure the County's fire service has appropriate training facilities in order to be able to adequately protect and serve the local population. In addition, locating the training facility in this location would allow fire fighters to respond to emergencies in the local area and wider county quickly due to the accessible transport network. As such, the proposal is deemed to support a local service.
- 5.39 POLICY ENV2 - GREEN BELT states *'The outer extent of the West Midlands Green Belt in North Warwickshire is shown on the Proposals Map. Within this area, Government Policy Guidance Note 2 Green Belts applies. Areas within Development Boundaries are excluded from the Green Belt.'* Aspects of the development are not considered to constitute 'inappropriate development' for the reasons outlined later in this report. The remaining aspect can be justified as to merit 'very special circumstance' for its location in the Green Belt and as such is in accordance with Green Belt policy.
- 5.40 POLICY ENV3 - NATURE CONSERVATION seeks to protect nationally important ecological sites, regional and locally important sites and rare, endangered and other species of ecological importance. The proposal does not impact upon any national designations such as SSSI or SAC. The site is surrounded by the Kingsbury Water Park which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. As a result the site has the potential to be utilised by various fauna that reside in the LWS, appropriate surveys have been conducted to assess impact and it has been concluded that any impacts can be mitigated for appropriately through the use of planning conditions. Consequently, the proposal accords with the policy.
- 5.41 POLICY ENV8 - WATER RESOURCES states:  
*'The water resources of the Borough will be safeguarded and enhanced, and development protected from floodwater by:*

- *Preventing the contamination of any watercourse or aquifer, as advised by the Environment Agency.*
- *By applying the sequential test approach, as outlined in table 1 of PPG25, when considering the proposed location of development*
- *Ensuring new development has satisfactory surface and foul water drainage systems by requiring, where feasible the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).*
- *Not permitting development that would prevent maintenance access to watercourses*
- *Requiring remediation measures where pollution has already occurred.'*

5.42 The proposal creates additional hardstanding which would increase surface water run off. An outline drainage strategy has been produced which demonstrates the additional flows can be suitably attenuated within the site and discharged to the existing outfall. Details of necessary SUDs to facilitate the discharge of water from the site would be secured via planning condition. There would be no live fires on site and any car bodies used for training purposes would be fully stripped down. These measures would ensure no contaminants enter the water course when surface water is discharged from site.

5.43 POLICY ENV11 - NEIGHBOUR AMENITIES states:  
*'Development will not be permitted if the occupiers of nearby properties would suffer significant loss of amenity, including overlooking, loss of privacy, or disturbance due to traffic, offensive smells, noise, light, dust or fumes. Occupiers of the development itself should also enjoy satisfactory standards of these amenities.'* Air Quality and Noise Assessments have been conducted to support the application and concluded that there would be no adverse impact on sensitive receptors as a result of the development proposal. The EHO raised no object to the application.

5.44 POLICY ENV13 - BUILDING DESIGN states:  
*'New buildings and extensions or alterations to existing buildings will only be permitted where;  
 The scale, massing, height and appearance of the proposal positively integrates into its surroundings and  
 The materials and detailing used respect and enhance local distinctiveness.'* The proposed extension is subsidiary in scale and mass to the existing training building and is the same height and retains a complimentary appearance given its linear design and the finish material.

5.45 POLICY ENV14 - ACCESS DESIGN states:  
*'The design of access to and within development should demonstrate that priority has been given to pedestrians, cyclists and those using public transport.  
 Development will only be permitted where vehicular access to the site is safe and the local road network is able to accommodate traffic to and*

*from the development without problems of congestion, danger or intimidation caused by the size or number of vehicles, and without adversely affecting the character of the surrounding environment. Development will not be permitted if its layout and design does not provide safe and easy access for all potential users including those with particular access requirements.'*

- 5.46 The application proposes to redesign the access to ensure it is suitable for fire service appliances to enter and wait off the public highway should the gates to the site be closed. The proposed development would not create additional vehicle movements that would be detrimental to the highway network. The Highway Authority have raised no objection to the proposal.

#### Core Strategy 2014

- 5.47 NW1: Sustainable Development – requires planning applications to accord with the policies within the core strategy, and applications should be approved without delay unless material consideration indicate otherwise. As previously discussed, the proposal would not create adverse impacts on amenity or the environment and as such accords with the policies of the core strategy.
- 5.48 NW3: Green Belt – applies the national Green Belt policy as defined by the NPPF which is discussed below. The development is considered to accord with this core strategy policy.
- 5.49 NW10: Development Considerations – states a number of criteria that developments must meet in order to obtain planning permission. The proposal is located on brownfield land, does not lead to unacceptable impacts upon amenity or the environment and incorporates sustainable drainage solutions and protects ground water quality. For these reasons the proposal complies with the policy.
- 5.50 NW13: Natural Environment – requires proposals to protect the natural environment including landscape character, wildlife and to guard against climate change. The proposal would not have a negative impact on landscape character as previously discussed and would not have an adverse impact on the environment due to the proposed mitigation measures to be secured via planning condition.
- 5.51 NW15: Nature Conservation – requires the protect of flora and fauna and their natural habitat as well as sites of national and local importance. As previously discussed, the proposal complies with this policy.
- 5.52 NW21: Transport – requires that opportunities for improvements which could be made, be secured. The proposal includes the alteration and improvement of the site access for the purpose of the development.

## National Planning Policy Framework 2019

### Green Belt

- 5.53 Given that the application site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt it is necessary to ascertain whether the proposed development constitutes 'inappropriate development' as defined by the NPPF and if so, permission should be granted only if the harm to Green Belt policy, and any other harm, is outweighed by 'very special circumstances'.
- 5.54 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should consider new buildings in the Green Belt as inappropriate development but makes a number of exceptions which include '*the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*'.
- 5.55 The floor area of the existing training building is approximately 348m<sup>2</sup> and the proposed extension would create an additional floor area of approximately 145m<sup>2</sup>. It is clear that the proposed extension does not exceed the area of the existing building and is a modest extension that follows the same linear design as the original building thus not significantly altering the mass or appearance of the structure. It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that this aspect of the development does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 5.56 However, the development also includes the creation of a further area of hard standing and training ditch feature with associated car storage area. It is also necessary to consider whether this aspect of the development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF states that certain forms of development do not constitute inappropriate development, provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, and the categories include '*engineering operations*'. These works are considered to be engineering operations meeting the test of appropriateness and as such do not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 5.57 However, the erection of the cold smoke house would constitute a new building in the Green Belt and represents inappropriate development as defined by the NPPF. As such, it is necessary to consider the purposes which the Green Belt serves:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.58 The site is brownfield in nature and has been vacant for approximately 18 months, as such the proposal seeks to re-use a previously developed site, and does not create significant new structures. As such the proposed change of use and additional structure would not affect the openness or permanence of the Green Belt. In addition, the proposed development would not conflict with any of the purposes of the Green Belt as defined above.

5.59 As an existing educational facility, it has numerous benefits and already meets the majority of the specifications that Warwickshire Fire and Rescue require from a training centre. The site and building would require minimum modification to bring it up to the full required specification and by adapting an existing Warwickshire County Council asset, represents an efficient use of public finances.

5.60 The site would continue to be used as an educational and training facility with some enhancements to make it fire specific. The elements that already exists on site would remain offering opportunities for Warwickshire Fire & Rescue instructors to carry out some youth engagement as well as fire service training activities.

5.61 The proximity to the Lea Marston Environment Agency site (also proposed for fire service training facilities) also offers opportunities for multi-agency / partner training. The application site would have a comprehensive incident command management simulation suite and a multi-agency, multi-use meeting/conference room.

5.62 The Lea Marston site is a large off-road site which means the Fire Service could run larger scale command and control exercises at Kingsbury and set up real time exercises on the Lea Marston site at the same time without affecting any of the local road network; this is something that is currently very difficult and complicated to achieve.

5.63 These types of training opportunities would/could involve number of other partner agencies for example; neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, the Environment Agency, Police, and Ambulance Service.



- 5.64 The venue would also be available for local community groups to book and utilise when not in use for fire training purposes. This would ensure that the site is retained as a community asset. Given the above factors it is considered that 'very special circumstances' would exist in this instance and that these outweigh the limited degree of harm caused.

#### Sustainable Development

- 5.65 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, for decision taking this means approving proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan, or where no relevant policies exist, in accordance with the NPPF. The proposal accords with the saved policies of the Local Plan and the Core Strategy as well as the relevant sections of the NPPF.

#### Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

- 5.66 Paragraph 92 of the NPPF states that to provide services the community needs, planning decisions should: ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of community facilities and services. The location of the fire service training centre at this site would make use of brownfield land in an accessible location within the County allowing fire and rescue officers to respond effectively to emergencies while based on the site.

### **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The proposal seeks consent for the provision of a new fire and rescue training centre including main training and incident command centre, climbing tower, cold smoke house and imitation dual carriage way with associated ditch and car storage. The provision of appropriate training facilities for the fire and rescue service is vital in order that they can perform their function adequately, which in turn ensures the safety of Warwickshire residents. Currently the Fire and Rescue Service have to visit numerous sites out of County in order to fulfil the relevant training criteria at significant monetary cost to the Council. It also places additional pressure on the Service in terms of staffing levels when officers are out of the County and puts extra strain on the fire fighters themselves.
- 6.2 The application site is a former outdoor education centre which ceased to operate approximately 18 months ago. The site is brownfield, surrounded by Kingsbury Water Park and within the West Midlands Green Belt. It has been concluded that aspects of the proposal do not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The cold smoke house element does constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined by the NPPF. However, the development is nevertheless considered to be justified by 'very special circumstances', and therefore complies with policy.

- 6.3 There would be no significant adverse impact on residential or visual amenity by way of the proposals given the site's secluded nature and lack of nearby sensitive receptors. Potential impacts on species of interest would be mitigated for via a planning condition, as would any necessary biodiversity compensation measures. A further condition requiring the sustainable drainage of the site would also be required to ensure surface water is discharged appropriately.
- 6.4 The proposed development would provide a vital training facility for the Fire and Rescue Service and accords with planning policy for the reasons previously stated in this report. As such the proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions listed below.

## 7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Submitted Planning Application – Planning reference NWB/19CC010
- 7.2 Appendix A – Map of site and location.
- 7.3 Appendix B – Planning Conditions.

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