

PLANNING STATEMENT

**IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION
FOR ERECTION OF 3G TEAM SWING ACTIVITY EQUIPMENT**

**THE KINGSWOOD ACTIVITY CENTRE,
PEAK VENTURE
HUDDERSFIELD ROAD
PENISTONE
SOUTH YORKSHIRE
S36 7GF**

Introduction

This Planning Statement is submitted by **HLL Humberts Leisure** on behalf of Kingswood Learning and Leisure Ltd (Kingswood) in support of their planning application for erection of a Team Swing at their Activity Centre near Barnsley.

Kingswood

Kingswood Learning and Leisure Ltd (Kingswood) was founded in 1980 and is the country's leading provider of educationally based residential school trips and summer camps by the Camp Beaumont brand that operated throughout the school holiday period. Nationwide, Kingswood currently hosts over 3,000 schools annually bringing in an excess of 130,000 children to the network of centres which run on the basis of combining adventure activities with curricular based learning in ICT, environmental studies, history and language.

Kingswood has nine residential centres in the UK and one in France and employs 500 people across the group with 450 working on the centres. Further details of the Kingswood educational activity programmes can be found on their website: www.kingswood.co.uk

HLL Humberts Leisure

HLL Humberts Leisure is a firm of specialist advisors in leisure business and property. The company operates out of five offices nation-wide with over 60 staff dealing with all aspects of the leisure industry.

HLL Humberts Leisure has extensive experience of providing development consultancy, planning advice, planning applications, planning appeals and expert witness evidence at inquiry for developments in the leisure and tourism sector.

The Site's Surroundings

The Kingswood Peak Venture Centre is located immediately to the north of the small town of Penistone, about 10 km (6 miles) south west of Barnsley. The northern boundary of the Peak District National Park is approximately 6 km (4 miles) to the south east. The M1 Junction 37 is approximately 8 km (5 miles) to the east. Access to the property is directly off the A629 Penistone Halifax Road. There are rail links from Penistone to Sheffield and from Sheffield to London with a journey time of approximately 4 hours.

The property is situated in open countryside adjoining farmland to the north east and southern boundaries. The western boundary is marked by the A629. There are two bungalows on the northern boundary of the property and a former caretaker's house, now in separate ownership, on the southern boundary. To the north east of the property there is a dilapidated farmhouse and range of farm buildings, which we believe is unoccupied. Scout Dike Reservoir is on the opposite side of the A629.

The property was purpose built in the mid 1960s and comprises a central, two storey block providing classrooms and hall with kitchen to the rear, and single storey accommodation wings. The site extends to approximately 5.2 hectares (12.8 acres) and comprises 202 child bed-spaces. Externally, the property provides a range of activities including zip wire, night line, caving and archery.

Photo 1 – An aerial view of the activity centre and surroundings



The above photo shows the main complex of buildings at the front of the site and tree belts to the rear. Also evident are the adjoining bungalows and farmhouse to the top of the photograph. The reservoir is visible to the bottom left.

The Application Site

As illustrated by the enclosed Site Location Plan and aerial photograph above, the proposed site for the Team Swing lies to the north east corner of the site, at the furthest distance from the houses to the south and north west of the property. The site is essentially flat ground and the application site is concerned with land to the rear of the Hoyland Moor Plantation which forms the south east boundary of the Peak Venture site.

You will note that the area required is larger than the swing structure itself, the reason for this being the need for adequate clearance either side of the swing to meet health and safety guidelines.

Planning History

Despite searches with the LPA it has not been possible to identify any planning history prior to 2003. However for the purpose of this application we have looked at solely the planning applications for the outdoor activities. The table below shows those applications for outdoor activities deemed relevant to this proposal.

PP Ref	Description of Proposal	Decision	Date of decision
B/05/1425/PU	Erection of reception centre, activity barn, caving system with associated parking and landscaping	Approved	11 December 2006
2006/1839	Formation of outdoor children's obstacle course	Approved	14 December 2006
2006/1363	Formation of quad bike track	Refused	17 January 2007
2007/0204	Formation of quad bike track	Approved	3 May 2007

Table 1: Outdoor Activity Planning History

Recent permissions have sought to upgrade the aging facilities with the addition of an activity barn for indoor pursuits, a quad bike track, caving system and obstacle course. A high ropes course, climbing tower and zip has also been built, but this constituted permitted development not requiring express permission.

The quad bike track was initially refused, then approved with conditions stipulating hours of use of 9am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 1pm on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays. (2007/0204). The permission for the obstacle course (2006/1839) and activity barn (as part of App Ref: B/05/1425/PU) have not been implemented.

The above recent consents complement the existing, extensive outdoor facilities available on site and provide a large range of outdoor activities for visiting students.

The Proposal

The enclosed plan (ref: 699 39SWI) details the dimensions and shape/form of the structure. You will note that the structure is between 13 and 17 metres in height and occupies an area of approximately 1312 square metres. Participants are clipped in from a special mounting trolley that is 1 metre above the ground and this gives a maximum pendulum of 18 metres or 60 feet.



Figure 2: Photograph of the Team Swing Activity

The purpose of the team swing is to provide an additional team building exercise on the site in a safe environment, to complement the existing activities at the centre. The addition of this equipment will further enhance the range and quality of activities on the site, ensuring that Kingswood Peak Venture remains a premium residential education centre. Furthermore, this facility will provide an additional activity for the children staying at the site.

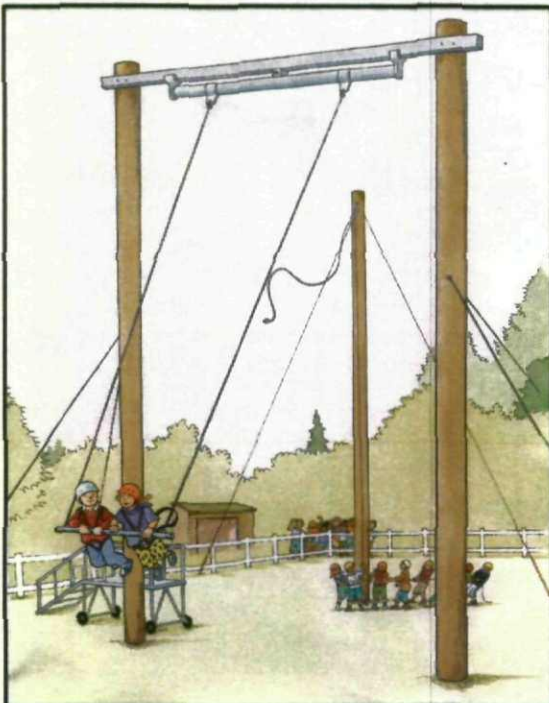


Figure 3: Illustrative Image of the Team Swing Activity

The structure is to be constructed using timber poles, steel fixtures and with steel support wires. The timber poles would extend between 1.2 and 2 metres deep into the ground and be encased in concrete in order to anchor the whole structure.

Unitary Development Plan Policy

The relevant adopted plan for the site is the Barnsley Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The Proposals Map illustrates that the site in its entirety falls within the Green Belt and that the site is located outside of the Penistone Community area boundary. The reservoir land to the south of the A629 is a Nature Conservation site also.



Map 1 – Extract from Barnsley MBC UDP Proposals Map

In September 2007 the Secretary of State ordered that only certain policies be 'saved' from the current UDP whilst the LPA work towards the adoption of the Local Development Framework. The following 'saved' policies apply:

Saved Policy GS7

'Without prejudice and subject to the application of policies GS8, GS8A, GS8B, GS8C, GS8D, GS8E and GS9 in this plan, development within the Green Belt will not be permitted unless it maintains the Openness of, and does not conflict with the purposes of including Land in, the green belt'

Under Policy GS7, only a few forms of development are considered acceptable and one of them is to provide opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation. Peak Venture is recognised as a local centre for its activity opportunities and it is therefore considered that the act of erecting an activity structure would not change the nature of the existing centre. The location and scale of the structure would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or prejudice the aims of including land within it. Furthermore, the proposals would encourage outdoor activity and recreation, as well as contributing to the local and tourist based economy.

Saved Policy GS8

Within the Green Belt, the construction of new buildings will not be permitted, except in very special circumstances, unless it is for the following purposes:

- a) *Agriculture and forestry;*
- b) *Essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries, or for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it;*
- c) *The replacement of existing dwellings in compliance with policy gs8e.*

The proposal complies with this policy on the basis that it is to strengthen the recreational value of an existing developed site, is small scale and will not result in any detrimental harm to the character of the Green belt.

Saved Policy GS9

Development within the green belt, or conspicuous from it, should not by reason of its siting, materials or design result in significant Harm to the visual amenity of the green belt.

The design of the structure and the materials used is considered to be most appropriate for a countryside location and is highly suitable for a site that is read visually against a backdrop of trees. By locating the team swing towards the north east corner of the site it is contained well within the site and is screened by the Hoyland Moor Plantation.

Saved Policy GS31

Development of rural recreation facilities and visitor attractions within the Upper Don area will be promoted subject to policies for the protection and enhancement of the Green Belt, Areas of Borough Landscape Value, Sites of Nature conservation Importance and the built environment.

The proposal is in accordance with this policy on the basis that it provides for a small scale recreational activity, which will also benefit the local community and strengthen a well established rural business development.

The proposed team swing does not encroach into the tree plantation area and is concerned solely with land to the north, adjacent to the existing tree plantation area, not within it. It is further submitted that the application site will be extremely well screened and as such there is no need for additional landscaping. For this reason, we are not supplying a Tree Survey or landscaping details with the application. The submitted Site Plan and Location Plan illustrates the position of the proposed Activity Swing in relation to the existing tree plantation.

National Planning Policy

National and regional planning policy currently takes the form of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) which are slowly replacing the PPGs. In addition, there are Good Practice Guides (GPGs) to support the PPSs with the only GPG so far being on Planning for Tourism.

With regard to this proposal, it is considered that the relevant national planning policy notes to take account of are PPG2 on Green Belts, PPS7 on Sustainable Development in the Rural Areas and PPG17 on Sport and Recreation.

I now refer to these three national planning policy notes in turn.

(1) PPG2: Green Belts

PPG2 sets out the objectives of land-use in the Green Belt and states a general presumption against inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances.

Para. 3.15 deals with visual amenity and states that *"The visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design."*

The proposed team swing is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt as it will provide an essential facility for an outdoor educational centre. The acceptability of an activity structure for this purpose in this location has already been established through the granting of planning consent for the obstacle course and the quad biking track.

The proposed structure would be screened from view by the existing tree plantation along the north south boundary of the site. The proposed activity swing would not detract from the openness of the Green Belt in this location and would not conflict with any of the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The proposed activity swing therefore accords with PPG2 'Green Belts'.

(2) PPS7: Sustainable Development in the Rural Areas

The policies within this statement apply to the rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.

PPS7 is very important in that it offers support to new economic development in the rural environment. Paragraph 5 of the PPS states that: "Planning Authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas". This lends support to proposals at residential educational centres in the countryside, which provide local jobs and support the rural economy.

The PPS also includes support for tourism and leisure related facilities in paragraphs 34 to 40. This is important as educational activity centres can be considered to be a tourist and leisure use for the purposes of the policy statement. Paragraph 34(ii) advises that in areas statutorily designated for their landscape, nature conservation or historic qualities, there will be scope for tourist and leisure related developments. Local Planning Authorities are required to support leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors, and which utilise and enrich, but do not harm, the character of the countryside.

In relation to tourist and visitor facilities, it is noted that PPS7 states:

"The provision of essential facilities for tourist visitors is vital for the development of the tourism industry in rural areas. Local planning authorities should:

- (i) plan for and support the provision of general tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres. Where new or additional facilities are required, these should normally be provided in, or close to, service centres or villages;*
- (ii) allow appropriate facilities needed to enhance visitors' enjoyment, and/or improve the financial viability, of a particular countryside feature or attraction, providing they will not detract from the attractiveness or importance of the feature, or the surrounding countryside." (Para. 35)*
(my emphasis)

It is considered that PPS7 lends support to the carefully planned expansion of the Kingswood site through the upgrading and provision of new outdoor facilities.

(2) PPG17: Sport and Recreation

PPG17 sets out the Government's policy for sport and recreation in terms of land use. The guidance identifies sport and recreation as being activities with major land use implications.

The PPG refers to the enhancement of existing sporting facilities with the general advice being that such sites should be located within or close to existing settlements (as this site is), be accessible and that the new development should be well related to the existing use or local sporting needs.

PPG17 protects existing playing fields but allows development that can be considered ancillary to their use, such as changing rooms and sports facilities (para. 15). Likewise, open spaces are protected but small-scale structures are allowed *"where these would support the existing recreational uses (for example, interpretation centres, toilets, and refreshment facilities), or would provide facilities for new recreational uses"* (para. 16). These policies ensure that further development of amenities to complement and expand the existing sports and recreation activities on the site are supported in principle, subject to them ensuring the existing recreational quality of the open space is not eroded.

It is considered that the Peak Venture Centre is an established, sustainable and easily accessible educational and recreational premises, located 5 miles to the west of the M1, junction 37. Further sport and recreation uses would accord with the substance of PPG17.

Policy Summary

It is considered that the proposal complies with the relevant local planning policies and that there is additional support for the proposal from relevant national planning policy guidance. Planning consent has already been granted for the erection of other activity structures on the site. Further special circumstances exist comprising the fact that the proposal would encourage outdoor activity and recreation, as well as contributing to the local and tourist based economy, and the location and scale of the Team Activity Structure would not harm the openness of the Green Belt or prejudice the aims of including land within it. The scale, siting and design of the structure does not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Justification

Aside from the planning policy justification above, you will note that the proposal is for a relatively small-scale recreational activity, which will be sited to the rear of the existing tree plantation, to minimise any intrusion to the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, the site is well screened by existing protected trees and this plus the position of the team swing alongside the boundary of the site minimises any visual impact on neighbouring landowners.

It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in planning terms and should therefore be approved, in order to ensure that Kingswood Peak Venture remains a premium residential education centre within the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The following Design and Access Statement is in accordance with the requirements of Section 62 and Section 372A of the 'Town and Country Planning Act' 1990 as inserted by the 'Planning and Compulsory purchase Act' 2004, and Article 4c of the 'Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order' 1995.

Context: The proposed team swing is set within a long established educational & recreational activity centre. The site currently accommodates a number of buildings, each performing a separate function associated with the operation. Existing buildings include lodge accommodation, assembly buildings and classrooms. The proposed team swing is to be sited just to the north east corner of the site.

Amount: The proposal is for a small-scale development comprising of a Team Swing as illustrated by the enclosed plans and illustration/photo shown on page 5 above.

Layout: The proposed siting of the team swing has been carefully chosen in order to minimise any visual impact to adjoining landowners. The site is located to the rear of the existing tree plantation, and would therefore be screened from any potential views from the A629. Furthermore, the site is located the furthest from the nearest surrounding residential properties.

Scale: The structure would not be overly dominant to views from the surrounding area particularly given the screening to the site boundaries and the presence of similarly tall structures on the site. The tall nature of the team swing is required in order to provide for the enjoyment and safe operation of the team swing.

Landscaping: The site is totally screened by existing established boundary trees. It is not considered that there is a need for further planting.

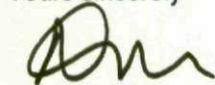
Appearance: The team swing will be constructed using timber poles and this is considered to most appropriate for a countryside location. As shown on the photograph no. 2, the team swing has a natural and attractive appearance and is highly suitable for a site that is read visually against a backdrop of trees.

Access: The site is level and therefore there is easy access to the activity. The swing itself is reached via a small movable platform. This typically has short steps but a ramped version could be provided to ease use of the swing by the disabled.

Next Steps

I trust that the enclosed is satisfactory for you to register planning application and I look forward to receiving confirmation of this effect. However, should you require any further information or have any questions then please do not hesitate to contact me either by email simon.davis@humberts-leisure.com or by telephone on 07970 824284 (or 01756 799271 if unavailable).

Yours sincerely



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HLL Humberts Leisure
Enc

cc Johnathan Marshall