



PEAK VENTURE

**PROPOSED RETENTION OF FOUR PORTACABINS FOR USE AS
RECEPTION AND OFFICES AND A LUGGAGE STORAGE AREA
AT PEAK VENTURE, HUDDERSFIELD ROAD, PENISTONE**

PLANNING STATEMENT

July 2016

The logo for axis is a dark blue square with the word 'axis' written in white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In June 2016, Kingswood commissioned Axis to seek planning permission for the permanent retention of the portacabins at its Peak Venture site, and also for the retention of a luggage storage area.

1.1.2 Planning permission had previously been granted by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) for the 4 portacabins, originally in 2007 for 1 year and then renewed for 3 further years in 2008 and 2011. Each of the consents was conditional upon being only for temporary periods, after which the portacabins should be removed. The most recent consent expired in August 2014.

1.1.3 Given the minor nature of this application, occupying just 0.1 hectares with an occupied floor space covering 108 square metres, a formal Design and Access Statement has not been submitted. Nevertheless, this planning statement provides useful information relating to the design and access elements of the scheme.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 Kingswood is a leading educational activity provider operating 9 centres around the UK and one in northern France.

1.2.2 It provides residential educational and adventure activity breaks of 2 to 5 days periods for school children aged 8-18 and other paying guests with a focus on courses and activities that deliver elements of the national curriculum which are difficult to teach in the classroom environment.

1.2.3 Kingswood provides instruction in computing with website design, earth sciences and a wide range of outdoor activities. The children visit the centres in groups of twelve upwards and are accompanied by their teachers and parent assistants at a ratio of one adult for every ten children. They visit at every time of the year except Christmas and the summer holidays.

1.2.4 Kingswood also operates a camp for seven weeks in the summer, this running in a similar way to an American children's summer camp. Children aged 6 – 16 are normally unaccompanied by adults, so Kingswood staff look after the children in all respects.

2.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Peak Venture Centre

2.1.1 Kingswood's 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 from the A629 Penistone Halifax Road.

2.1.2 The property is situated in open countryside adjoining farmland to the north east and southern boundaries (see drawing 1985-01-01 for site location). 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, in separate ownership, on the southern boundary. To the north east of the property there is a dilapidated farmhouse and range of farm buildings, currently unoccupied.

2.1.3 The Peak Venture Centre comprises the buildings and grounds of the former Scout Dike Activity Centre, originally built, owned and operated by BMDC. The Centre was purpose built during the mid-1960's and comprises a central two storey block providing classrooms and hall with kitchen to the rear, and single storey accommodation wings to either side. Barnsley subsequently transferred the running of the Centre to a trust in 2001.

2.1.4 The Peak Venture Centre extends to approximately 5.2 hectares (12.8 acres) whilst the application site itself only covers an area of 0.1 hectares.

2.2 The Application Site

2.2.1 The application site is located to the rear of the existing main centre buildings on an area of hardstanding within the coach and car parking area. The luggage storage area is located against the north eastern elevations of the portacabins. The site layout is shown on planning drawing 1985-01-02.

2.3 Current proposal

2.3.1 The current proposal seeks planning permission for the retention of four portacabins for use as reception and office facilities, together with an adjacent luggage store.

- 2.3.2 The portacabins are single storey (2.5m) in height and cover a total floor area of 108 square metres (each structure being 9 x 3m) and are of steel construction with windows on each elevation.
- 2.3.3 The luggage store has dimensions of 11.40m in length, 2.1m in width and 2.3m in height and is orientated with its back to the north eastern elevation of the portacabins and is open-sided to the north east. The store is required to house luggage from visiting schools.
- 2.3.4 The elevations of the proposed portacabins and luggage store can be seen on planning drawing 1958-01-03.

2.4 Planning History

- 2.4.1 As noted above, the site has been used for similar outdoor education uses since its construction in the mid-1960's. The following planning permissions are of relevance to the current application:

2007/1083 – permission granted 13/08/2007 subject to a condition that the cabins be removed from site within 1 year;

2008/1187 – permission granted 29/08/2008 subject to a condition that the cabins be removed from site within 3 years; and

2011/0711 - permission granted 04/08/2011 subject to a condition that the cabins be removed from site within 3 years.

- 2.4.2 The principle of the proposed development has already been established as acceptable by BMBC by virtue of the above planning permissions.

2.5 Kingswood need for proposed structures

- 2.5.1 The portacabins were intended to provide a temporary reception and office for the Peak Venture Centre whilst various options for future permanent development at the centre were assessed by Kingswood. Following a detailed appraisal of Kingswood's options, it has been decided that the existing portacabins offer the most cost-effective solution to providing the space required for reception and office facilities.

- 2.5.2 The reception and office facilities form an essential element to the operation of the site, and the only other realistic alternative to this application would have been to apply for a brick-built extension to the existing main centre

building. This would involve significantly financial outlay for Kingswood which would in-turn result in the need to increase admission prices for visiting schools.

- 2.5.3 The retention of the existing portacabins offers the most cost effective option for Kingwood allowing the Centre to continue to operate efficiently and competitively.
- 2.5.4 In light of the above, Kingswood is seeking to retain the portacabins in-situ permanently.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL

3.1 Planning Policy Framework

3.1.1 Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that a planning application be considered against the policies within the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This has been re-stated by the National Planning Policy Framework which was published in 2012 (NPPF).

3.1.2 The Development Plan for Barnsley includes the Core Strategy, the Barnsley Education Sites Development Plan Document (DPD), the Joint Waste Plan and the remaining saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan. Those policies of relevance to the proposed development within the above documents are appraised within Section 3.2 below.

Other Material Considerations

3.1.3 There is no strict definition of what constitutes a ‘material consideration’ in planning legislation, although case law indicates that any consideration, which relates to the use or development of land is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. One such material consideration is the NPPF. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that: *“At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking... For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay...”*

3.1.4 Another key material consideration in relation to the determination of the planning application is the economic and social benefits of the Peak Venture Centre which the proposed development would make a valuable contribution towards securing for the future, these are outlined below.

3.1.5 The proposed portacabins provide essential reception and office space at the site. As such, the retention of the portacabins would help to ensure the longevity of the business at this site. The centre provides the following benefits:

- Provision of educationally rich activities which meet curriculum standards and teachers' objectives;
- Allowing children to learn safely outdoors, learning about healthy lifestyles and active minds;
- Students learn how to take risks in a safe and secure environment. Young people learn through having fun, with engaging and inspiring challenges, learning more about themselves and their classmates;
- Students learn to work as a team, demonstrating support, tolerance and encouragement for others. Time away from home inspires confidence and independence; and key life skills development includes decision making, leadership, initiative and problem solving;
- The experience equips children with valuable social skills for their future, broadening their horizons to the opportunities available and non-academic ways of learning; increasing their appetite for learning and in turn, raising standards of attainment;
- The site provides employment and training opportunities for local communities – providing foundations for long-term economic regeneration of wider area;
- The site is an attraction of new people (visitors and some staff) to the area – supporting the local economy; and
- The site is fully accessible to disabled visitors, teachers and staff with provision of disabled access rooms and disabled parking.

3.2 Planning Policy Appraisal

Saved Policies of the UDP

- 3.2.1 Until all the Local Development Framework documents are in place, some parts of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) are being 'saved' to ensure comprehensive planning policy coverage remains in place. Saved parts of the UDP, such as the Proposals Map, remain in force and will be used in determining planning applications until replaced.

3.2.2 The site is shown on the extant UDP Proposals map as being located within the Green Belt. However, the relevant Green Belt (GS7) within the UDP has not been saved. As such, the proposals must be assessed against the Green Belt policies within the Core Strategy, as detailed below.

Core Strategy

3.2.3 The adopted Core Strategy supersedes a number of the Unitary Development Plan Policies. Policy CSP34 'Green Belt' explains that in order to protect the countryside and open land around built up areas the extent of the Green Belt will be safeguarded and remain unchanged. The supporting text to this policy states that National guidance in PPG2 sets out some uses which are generally accepted in the Green Belt. PPG2 was replaced in 2012 by the NPPF which contains a section (Section 9) on 'protecting Green Belt land'. The NPPF is clear that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt unless they relate to, amongst other things, the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and/or recreation.

3.2.4 The NPPF explains that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- 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.

3.2.5 The proposed retention of four portacabins within the grounds of a well-established outdoor education centre would not conflict with the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt outlined above.

3.2.6 The proposed development would not extend the urban boundary, being fully contained within the previously developed envelope as defined by the existing site boundary. The Green Belt would not be materially injured by the proposed development and that whilst localised change would occur,

this would not be detrimental by virtue of the lack of significantly adverse landscape and visual effects.

3.2.7 Consequently, it is concluded that the proposed development would be in accordance with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy in accordance with the NPPF.

3.2.8 The proposed development meets several objectives for including land within Green Belt as set out within the NPPF, including providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, albeit in the context of a residential outdoor education centre.

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The principle of the proposed development has been determined to be acceptable by BMBC through the approval of previous planning permissions, albeit they were temporary in nature.
- 4.1.2 This statement has demonstrated that the permanent retention of the portacabins and the luggage storage area at the Peak Venture site would not give rise to conflict with the site's Green Belt location. The proposed development accords with the Development Plan and other material considerations.
- 4.1.3 The proposed development would support the ongoing success of Kingswood's Peak Venture site, for which there are clear social and economic benefits, as set out within this statement.
- 4.1.4 In light of the above, the proposed development is demonstrably sustainable in accordance with the NPPF for which there is a presumption in favour. The NPPF is clear that sustainable development which accords with an up-to-date development plan should be granted planning permission without delay.
- 4.1.5 There exist no material considerations to outweigh the benefits of the proposed development. In light of the above, the Applicant requests that BMBC grant planning permission for the development.