2022/0033

Mr Harry Wood
Installation of storage container

RSPB Old Moor Lane, Wombwell, S73 0YF

Site Description

Old Moor is an RSPB reserve located to the southeast of Darfield and Wombwell at the boundary of the borough with Rotherham. The site is a nature reserve with visitor facilities and associated office accommodation. The visitor centre is accessed via a long private road and the traditional stone buildings are screened by surrounding woodland. The buildings are arranged around a central courtyard with tables and chairs associated with the café.



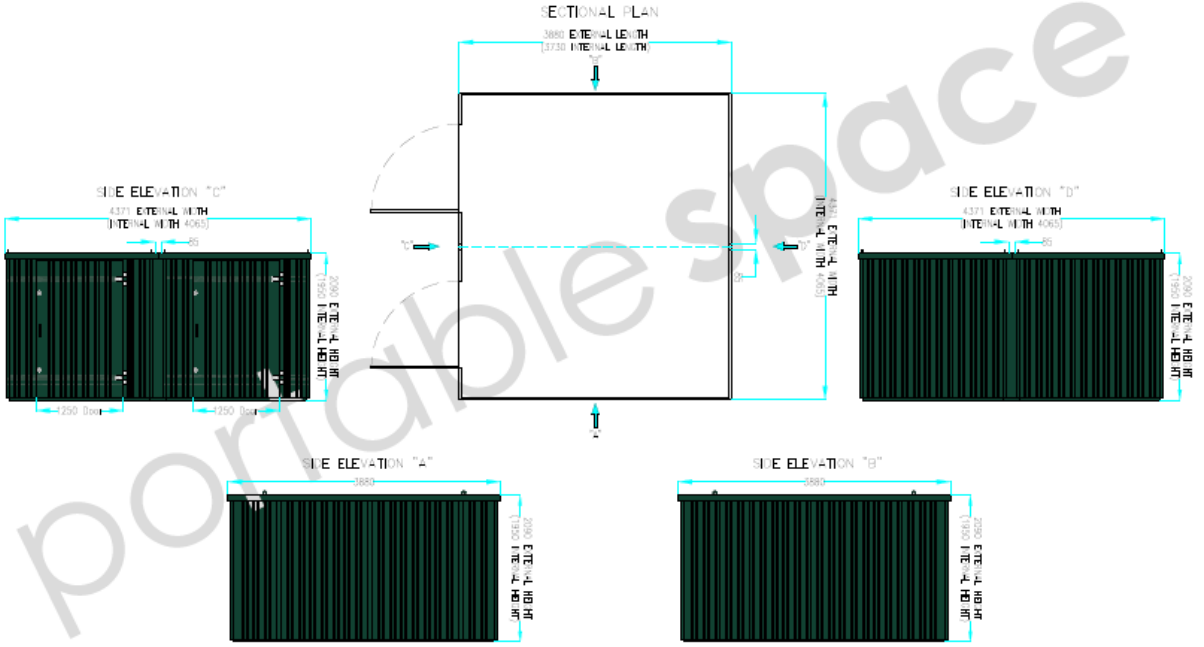


The application site is located to the South East of the visitors centre, well screened from the centre and Old Mill Lane, surrounded by hedges and hawthorns. The site area has a concrete base with an old wooden structure which was utilised for a smoking shelter and bike storage, but is now in a state of disrepair. The site falls just outside the SSSI boundary and is located within the green belt, with an area of high biodiversity value.

Proposed Development

The proposal is to replace the existing wooden structure with a green corrugated steel portacabin. The building will be located on an existing concrete slab and measure 3.88mx4.37m, and 2.09m in height with a flat roof and 2 doors to the front.

The RSPB have opted for the steel container to enable a more secure storage solution for bikes to work towards their travel ambitions. The area has recently endured anti-social behaviour incidents, therefore the security of the streel container with deadlock doors will offer them a solution to the recent events. Another wooden structure is not expected to offer the same security protection as the proposed.



Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the Core Strategy, saved Unitary Development Plan policies. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Local Plan

The new Local Plan was adopted at the full Council meeting held 3rd January 2019 after it was found to be sound by the appointed Planning Inspector following the examination process. This means that it now takes on full weight for decision making process in planning law terms as the development plan for the Borough. The site is allocated as Green Belt, Biodiversity or Geological Interest Site and Nature Improvement Area, within the Local Plan Proposals Maps and adjacent to Natural England designated Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) therefore the following policies are relevant:

Policy GB1 Protection of Green Belt
Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making
Policy Poll1 Pollution Control and Protection
Policy GD1 General Development
Policy SD1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
NPPF

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan

should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In respect of this application, relevant policies include:

Section 12: Achieving well designed places - The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. 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.

It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

Within section 12, paragraph 130 is the most relevant which indicates that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 goes on to outline exceptions to paragraph 148. The exceptions include:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
c) 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;
d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
e) limited infilling in villages;
f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
   – not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
   – not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

Consultations

Ward Councillors – No comments received
Highway DC – No Objections
Pollution Control – No Objections
Natural England – No Objections
Biodiversity Officer - No Objections, see comments:-

The ecological statement details that an existing concrete slab, previously used for storage will be used as the base for the proposed location of a new storage container which will be utilised as a bike store. Photographs submitted with the application support the statement. The impact upon biodiversity is therefore anticipated to be negligible.

The photographs provided as part of the application indicate that the existing concrete slab is surrounded by shrub bushes, some of which overhang the site boundary. This vegetation could be utilised by a range of nesting birds and the installation of the storage container could cause potential disturbance to birds if carried out during the nesting season (March – August inclusive). If the storage container is to be installed on the slab during this time checks of the vegetation should be made by an appropriately qualified ecologist prior to works to check for the presence/absence of active nests, with appropriate measures adhered to if active nest are identified.

Consultation with Natural England will be made due to the proximity of the proposals site to the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. Further consultation response may be required in regard to Biodiversity depending on Natural England's response.

Representations

A site notice was erected adjacent to the site; no representations have been received

Assessment

Principle of Development

Development within the Green Belt is considered acceptable in principle where it provides appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land) for outdoor sport and recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The site is a nature reserve run by the RSPB, with the existing stone buildings on site converted to offices used in association with the nature reserve, an on-site café, shop, reception, and educational facilities. The proposal can therefore be seen as appropriate facilities in connection with a recreational facility.

Planning permission for steel containers within the green belt is not usually encouraged, however, the impact of the container in terms of design, location and visual impact will be closely assessed below

Visual Amenity

The visual amenity considerations need to be taken into account with regards to the proposal. Planning permission for steel containers within green belt locations are not usually encouraged, however, there are a number of factors to consider when assessing this application. The steel container will replace an existing wooden shelter which has fallen into disrepair. The proposed container will be located on the existing concrete base, and the area is well screened from the centre and nearby street scenes by way of surrounding hedges and hawthorn bushes. The container will be green in colour and corrugated, which will also help to minimise the potential impact within the area. Furthermore, this is a security decision due to a number of recent anti-social behaviour incidents endured. The container will have deadlock doors to provide cycle storage which will offer more protection than currently experienced. To further minimise visual disruption the proposal will be conditioned for a

temporary timeframe of 5 years only to allow for the RSPB to look at more acceptable accommodation.

The proposal will be located to the Southeast of the existing collection of buildings, would not be visible from public vantage points and although not visually ideal, will be well screened within the surroundings. The proposal will also help the centre work towards their travel ambitions. It is considered that the temporary container is not expected to detract from the character of the wider area or openness of the Green Belt, by way of its siting and screening, therefore, the instillation of the container is acceptable and in compliance with Local Plan Policies GB1: Protection of Green Belt, D1: High Quality Design and Place Making and GD1: General Development.

Residential Amenity

There are no residential properties within close proximity of the site and therefore would not lead to the proposal having a detrimental impact in terms of residential amenity therefore it does not conflict with Local Plan Policies GD1: General Development and Poll1: Pollution Control and Protection.

Biodiversity

The site is located within a Biodiversity or Geological Interest Site and adjacent to a Natural England designated Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. Natural England were consulted and raised no objections. The LPA's Biodiversity Officer was consulted and has assessed the application, and as a result has no objections to the proposal.

As no issues have been raised and it is not considered to impact on the biodiversity of the area nor upon the features for which the SSSI had been notified and therefore, as such is in compliance with Local Plan Policy BIO1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Highway Safety

There will be no impact upon highway safety.

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions