

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Application: Electric quad outdoor motorsport facility with support building and car parking.

Address: Carr Hall, Whalley Road, Langho, BB1 9NB

Date: 5th April 2022

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The statement has been prepared to support an application submitted on behalf of Donelan Trading Ltd. The application relates to a full planning application for an electric quad outdoor motorsport facility with support building and car parking.

2.0 SITE

The application site is located on the A666, Whalley Road, Langho. The site is covered in trees and is situated immediately to the north east of an existing access drive to the Carr Hall development of a large dwelling and Class E & B8 buildings constituting an employment area.

Apart from the Carr Hall area, the land surrounding the site is rather poor-quality agricultural land, laid to grass and used for sheep grazing, hay / silage etc.

The development site includes an area of woodland to the north of Carr Hall. The wooded site is fenced off from the grassland areas and has no agricultural use and the wood is the subject of a tree preservation order by the Ribble Valley Borough Council. The site has very limited value for forestry and is included in the Green Belt.

To the southern boundary of the site is a slight hill, which screens the lower parts of the site from the wider area and particularly from Whalley Road.

The site is located in the Wilpshire parish, and falls within land designated as Green Belt, by the adopted HED DPD proposals map.

3.0 GREEN BELT POLICY

Key statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and paragraphs 149(b) of the National planning Policy Framework, specifically state that the use of land in the Green Belt for 'essential outdoor sport and recreation' is acceptable in the Green Belt, and that buildings that provide appropriate facilities essential for those users can be considered an exception to the general rule that new buildings are inappropriate if they harm the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal is to use the existing sloping wooded site as a recreational area, where electric quad bikes and other electric vehicles can be hired and used outdoors by children and adults, in a safe but interesting manner. Using the existing site attributes of topography for the public to enjoy activities in the open air, and utilise an area otherwise restricted in use by Green Belt Policy and Tree Preservation Order.

The electric quad bikes and other vehicles are moving items and therefore not permanent and as such cannot be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt. They are also free of emissions and as such are largely undamaging to the immediate or wider ecology or environment and also emit almost no noise.

The tracks proposed are not built, but use the existing surfaces and topography and no trees are to be removed and as such can have no effect on the openness.

A building to house the quad bikes etc. and to charge with electricity when not in use, is essential to allow them to function. The building needs to be quite tall and well ventilated to dissipate heat and any fumes emanating from the electric charging. The building also provides facilities for training, toilets, protective clothing, changing rooms etc. to allow the widest range of users to enjoy the site in a safe and responsible manner.

Electric quad bikes and other electric off road vehicles are one important way in which young children, and particular people suffering from physical or other disabilities can experience outdoor sport in open countryside in an independent manner.

A building in the manner of a modern agricultural barn is proposed to house these essential facilities and thus constitutes an exception in regard to Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and paragraphs 149(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposal will have no impact on urban sprawl as the site is a contained unit. The site is bounded by existing features, stream, fences etc. so the opportunity to expand the site is minimal and the site is well screened in the wider landscape through the natural topography and tree screening. The site is also some distance away from the settlement of Langho.

The surrounding area to the site already includes development in the Green Belt, as the site is adjacent to Carr Hall and the employment site. The area proposed for the quad track is currently not developed, but the proposal is to utilise the existing drive access and keep built form and impact on the Green Belt to a minimum which also reduces any visual effects on the Green Belt or it's openness.

As such, this development will be acceptable as it does not harm the openness of the Green Belt in a significant way and the building is an 'exception' in Paragraph 149(b).

4.0 ACCESS

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF also recognises that "sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be could adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, and does not have an unacceptable impact on local road and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable."

The site is easily accessible by public transport. There is a regular bus route along Whalley Road between Wilpshire & Langho and there are bus stops in both directions at the bottom of the entrance drive, max 30m from the site entrance.

There is also a railway station at Langho, some 0.78 of a mile northward along the A666 Whalley Road. Which gives access to and from Preston, Blackburn, Clitheroe and other places in between. The train journey between Ramsgreave and Wilpshire is 4 minutes on the Northern Line

The southern boundary of the site is designated Public Footpath 3-46 FP13, going eastwards from Whalley Road over the hill, to another public road which is designated LCC cycle route and the site could be accessed from here also. The site is a 9-minute walk from Langho Village Centre.

Altogether the site is in a location easily accessible using public transport, walking, cycling and by other motorised vehicles.

The proposal includes a car park, which comprises 23no spaces including 1 disabled parking space and 2 electric charging spaces.

5.0 PROPOSAL

The intention is to create, using existing materials and topography a varied and exciting off road driving track, through the existing sloping woodland which will only be used by electric powered quad bikes / buggies that will be available for hire from the site.

Quad biking is a relatively safe and popular activity in the countryside, and gives opportunities to get out in the open air and experience a different environment and in a manner where self-control and independence can be exercised in the real world, particularly by young people and persons with physical disabilities, in a manner that is not generally available to them in urban environments.

The facilities will be open and accessible by all, subject to modest levels of training provided on site, and this will include the support facilities such as reception, waiting / training space and disabled accessible toilets all on the ground floor, with further changing rooms and training space on the first floor. The tracks will be able to be set so that different abilities would be able to complete the track comfortably.

The remaining part of the building is a large barn like space, necessary to securely store the electric quad vehicles and re-charge them regularly. This area needs to be spacious and well ventilated to dissipate any heat and fumes generated by the charging process. Also, to facilitate the maintenance of the quad bikes and to ensure that they are safe to operate at all times.

The Carr Hall site has the benefit of three wind turbines situated on top of the hill, behind the Carr Hall buildings. Carbon free electricity generated by these turbines will be used to charge the electric quad bikes, providing an almost totally carbon free and ecologically friendly facility, by which all manner of people can enjoy an activity in the open air and in the countryside.

6.0 TREES AND ENVIROMENT

The land is currently a long-established wood in the Green Belt, subject of a Tree Preservation order and on a sloping site which has no uses for agriculture or forestry. Public footpath 3-46 FP13 passes across the southern boundary of the site (the drive to the Carr Hall development) but apart from this there is no public access to the site.

The appended Arboriculture Report confirms that no trees need to be removed, to provide the tracks through the woodland, or to provide the support building or car park. It also confirms that no damage to valuable trees protected by the Preservation Order is likely, as no excavation is required to produce the tracks. The proposed building and car parking is on open land. The tracks are not fully surfaced with anything as the wood has little topsoil, and is already stony and this existing surface

will be supplemented in places which crushed sandstone providing an entirely natural and porous surface.

The car park and quad service yard will likewise only be surfaced with crushed stone and remain entirely permeable. Car park and tracks where necessary will be delineated and contained by treated timber path edgings staked into the ground and none of these installations will have a detrimental effect on the trees or the immediate or wider environment.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Section 38(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act confirms planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan for the area, unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

The adopted development plan is the Ribble Valley Local Development Framework comprising the following:

- Core Strategy 2008-2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley (adopted 16th December 2014)
- Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document and Map (adopted 16th October 2019)

The National Planning Policy Framework (rev 2021) sets out that the purpose of planning is to help sustainable development. The Framework is clear that local Councils should be positive and proactive in encouraging sustainable growth and addressing barriers to investment and sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It makes clear that where plans are not in place or up-to-date development should be allowed unless this would compromise the key principles for sustainability in the Framework, including protecting the Green Belt.

Paragraph 147-149 of the NPPF (2021) indicate types of development that are inappropriate in the Green Belt, and those that may be appropriate. Development in the Green Belt is considered inappropriate (and thus can be only in very special circumstances) unless it falls within one of the exceptions identified in Paragraph 149.

Paragraph 149 refers to the erections of buildings and states that the following is an exception to inappropriate development: “The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or 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 purpose of including land within it.”

The proposed outdoor electric motorsport use is an outdoor recreation facility that falls within this exception to Green Belt Development. The proposal addresses a gap in the market for environmental and sustainable energy innovation with recreation and corporate event industry. This adventure facility will be for the use of 100% electric vehicles. This will provide an excellent outdoor recreation centre within Ribble Valley, that will attract local residents and tourists alike.

The location of the leisure facility on this site enables it to be sustainable, green proposal. The site is already served by the wind turbines, which will be used to charge the quads. Grey water storage tanks will be used to flush the toilets and to wash the electric quads.

Additionally, the noise and amenity impact would be minimal, as the vehicles would be electric.

Therefore, from the foregoing, the proposed development is for a type of facility which is deemed by the NPPF (2021) to be appropriate in the Green Belt.

The proposal will provide an excellent outdoor recreation centre within Ribble Valley that will attract local residents and tourist alike, and will be available to a wide range of public users irrespective of age or disability. This complies with Policy DMB3 (Recreation and Tourism Development) which states that planning permission will be granted, for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the borough.

This policy also states that recreation and tourism development are often well suited to rural areas and there is a need to have in place effective measures to ensure facilities and infrastructure can be enhanced in a sustainable way. It is important to note that this part of Ribble Valley is not currently served well by outdoor recreation facilities. As it is outside the AONB it has the capacity to absorb such development, without harm to the wider landscape. This proposed use is most sustainable due to its location and the low impact nature of the proposal.

The proposal also complies with Policy EC3 (Visitor Economy) which states that proposal that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged, including the creation of new accommodation and tourism facilities through the conversion of existing buildings, or associated with existing attractions. Significant new attractions will be supported, in circumstances where they would deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to local communities and employment opportunities.

It is notable that the Ribble Valley Borough Council through the Ribble Valley Tourism Association awarded 'Inch Perfect Trials' at Whitewell a prestigious 'Experiential Tourism Award' in 2019 for a very similar and very successful development providing off road trial motorcycling experiences in open countryside within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and with the disadvantage of petrol-powered bikes/vehicles and subsequent noise. It is clear from this that the Ribble Valley Borough Council support such developments in accordance with Policy EC3.

8.0 BUSINESS AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal will provide significant economic potential through the provision of jobs, increased spending in the local economy, enhancing tourism and leisure provision in this part of the Ribble Valley where there are few existing facilities.

The maximum group size will be 25 people at both the full and half day experiences. At peak operation the facility will be open 7 days a week, with 7 members of staff working on rota basis. Some of whom are likely to be young people, school leavers.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses; sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.

The project will promote economic prosperity by creating conditions for business growth including leisure facilities to satisfy a growing population and attract visitors from further afield. The delivery of a purpose-built leisure facility in an area with limited other leisure resources is a planning merit of the proposal. The site perfectly lends itself to the activity proposed and will be delivered in a location

that is highly accessible to large areas of the surrounding population. The privately funded project will be utilised by various local grounds including schools and businesses. The benefits of the proposal will be economically far reaching and are directly encourage by national and local planning policy.

9.0 FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

The site is in Flood Zone 1 and therefore not likely to suffer from flooding from rivers or sea.

An existing watercourse flows in various culverts down the site from behind Carr House, down the north eastern side of the entrance drive and then turns north along the western boundary of the site. The watercourse continues towards Langho and eventually reaches the river Ribble.

The existing woodland surface is unchanged by the development and quad tracks are entirely existing porous surfaces, as is the proposed car park and quad compound close to the proposed support building.

Rainwater from the profiled steel roof of the building, is to be collected in a rainwater harvesting tank, located in an existing depression immediately to the north west of the building and adjacent to the watercourse, but at higher level. The grey water will be used to flush toilets and wash down the quad bikes etc. The tank will be fitted with an overflow pipe running into the watercourse and this will be fitted with a restrictor, releasing water at no more than 5 litres / second.

This installation will reduce any increased run off rainwater from the building to a level comparable with the run off rate from surrounding agricultural land. The use of woodland for the quad track riding has no effect in the run off rainwater.

Therefore, the proposal will have no determinantal effect on flooding either on site, in Langho or any downstream sites.

10.0 CONCLUSION

This application is for full planning permission for an Electric Quad Motorsports Adventure Facility and support building, at Carr Hall, Whalley Road, Langho.

Paragraph 149 refers to the erection of buildings and states that the following is an exception to inappropriate development: "The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or 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 no conflict with the purposes of including land within it."

The proposed outdoor electric quad motorsport falls within this exception to Green Belt Development. This will provide an excellent recreation facility within Ribble Valley that will attract local residents and tourists. The location of the development on this site enables it to be a sustainable, green proposal and the noise and amenity impact would be minimal as the vehicles would be electric. Therefore, it is established that the proposed development is for a type of facility which is deemed by the NPFF to be appropriate in the Green Belt.

The support building is essential to the running of the outdoor recreation facility and therefore also an exception to the Green Belt policy as set out in paragraph 149 of the NPFF.

The harm of the support building on the openness of the Green Belt is limited, by the design of the building being of modest agricultural barn scale and appearance. The development would be absorbed into the landscape and there will be little impact beyond the site. It is considered that the development would not be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and therefore is not considered to be inappropriate development.

The proposed development is appropriate in Green Belt terms as assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt. It would not have any adverse impact on openness and would not conflict with any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. It therefore complies with the Green Belt policies set out in the NPFF. Furthermore, as the development complies with the NPPF and it also accords with Key Statement EN1 in the HED and DPD.

The proposal will also bring a number of benefits to the areas by delivering an innovative and unique leisure and tourism use to the Ribble Valley, in line with the Councils strategy. The proposed development will provide appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. The proposal will also create employment for the area and provide benefits to the local community.

On this basis, the proposal accords with the NPFF and the Development plan and the application should be approved.