

TWC/2021/0190

Maddocks Hill and Quarry, Little Wenlock, Telford, Shropshire
Change of use from former quarry to educational fieldwork centre including the erection of 3no. Iron-Age roundhouses, 1no. multi-purpose activity structure, warden's accommodation & 6no. camping pods ***AMENDED BUSINESS STATEMENT RECEIVED, AMENDED DESCRIPTION***

APPLICANT

Tree-Ring Services

RECEIVED

17/02/2023

PARISH

Little Wenlock

WARD

Wrockwardine

THIS APPLICATION HAS BEEN CALLED TO COMMITTEE AT THE REQUEST OF CLLR JACQUI SEYMOUR.

Online planning file: <https://secure.telford.gov.uk/planning/pa-applicationssummary.aspx?applicationnumber=TWC/2021/0190>

1. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to **GRANT FULL PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to conditions and informative, alongside the applicant entering into a S106 to obligate the educational use of the site.

2. APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The site subject to this application is located to the rural south of Wellington one mile from junction 7, 1.3 miles north of Little Wenlock, and approximately 1800m west of Lawley, within the wooded area to the east of The Wrekin. The site comprises a former disused quarry and surrounding wooded embankments, covering an area of 9.4 hectare. Much of the material generated during the operational phase of the quarry was used in the construction of the nearby M54 during the 1970s; it then closed in 1981 due to a reduced demand for material. The Wrekin Golf Club partially bounds the wider site to the north, with agricultural pasture to the south and west beyond wooded edges, being otherwise surrounded by mature woodland.
- 2.2 Vehicular and pedestrian access is gained by a track from the lane running at the bottom of The Wrekin through to Little Wenlock. This is a stoned vehicular access route which served the former quarry, the track shows sign of wear and tear, with areas of soil coverage in parts. The lane is designated as a Public Right of Way, forming part of a web of interlinked paths, including provision to the north - partly along the site boundary, a further path sits 170m to the south east. A group Tree Preservation Order covers the adjoining woodland to the north.

3. APPLICATION DETAILS

- 3.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the provision of an Educational Fieldwork Centre to run courses for subject matters including forestry, archaeology, experimental archaeology, biology, geography, geology, living history, woodland management, traditional woodland crafts, timber-frame construction, bushcraft and forest school.
- 3.2 The applicant is seeking to operate a mix of non-residential courses; as well as residential courses, the latter would be limited to adults and targeted at higher education participants. A daily maximum of 38 participants would be present, comprising a maximum of 20 residential students and tutors, and a maximum of 18 non-residential students and tutors. Residential courses are suggested to run on a week basis. Most courses would be run by part time tutors, estimated at 2-4 tutors per day.
- 3.3 Built development is proposed to comprise a three bay open fronted timber framed structure for multi-purpose activities. This is identified as a space for activities during inclement weather, a mess hall type area for meal times, and store for the equipment to be used for the activities. This would measure 8.7m long, 4m high, and 5.4m deep.
- 3.4 The erection of 3no. Iron-Age roundhouses is proposed with thatched roofs and wattle walls. These are identified as for practical teaching purposes. Two would amount to 6.5m high, by 8.45m wide, with the third measuring 4.5m high and 7m wide. 5no. timber domed camping pods (reduced from 6) are sought to accommodate residential students and their tutors, each comprising two bunk beds. These would measure 4.5m long, 3.6m high, and 3m wide. An adjacent timber toilet and shower block, measuring 7m long, just under 6m high, and 4.5m wide is included.
- 3.5 The site is proposed to be managed by a warden, the applicant is in turn seeking the installation of on-site accommodation comprising a single berth timber clad mobile home.
- 3.6 The warden would undertake site management duties, including the implementation of a conservation management plan of the woodland areas as accompanying the application; act as Activity Leader / Co-ordinator running the fieldwork centre; general maintenance and routine inspections of the facilities/services provided on-site; and for security reasons with the site to be open to students all year round. The applicant has identified that the accommodation would not be occupied when the field centre is not in use.
- 3.7 The entrance to the main element of the site (essentially the area beyond the initial access track) would be gated, and controlled by a combination lock. The code would then be provided to accompanying teaching staff, part time centre staff, the warden and emergency services. The warden's accommodation would then be sited to the south, with the activity centre building in line with the entrance, the pods and amenity block are then proposed on a relatively flat space to the north of the parking area.

- 3.8 The site does not benefit from mains electricity or gas, the applicant has duly proposed the provision of solar panels on the toilet and shower block. These would serve said building, together with heat and light provision for the pods. Panels are further proposed on the multi-purpose block, as well as the warden accommodation to serve each building respectively.
- 3.9 Parking provision would amount to 8no. car spaces, and two mini bus spaces, the centre would permanently operate a car for the warden and one 16-seater mini bus for students. The application material identifies that students and visitors will be encouraged to use the site mini bus and pick-up from the train station in Wellington, alongside staggered arrival and departure times.
- 3.10 Hard surfacing to create the proposed parking areas and pathways through to each of the proposed development areas is proposed to be constructed using permeable/porous materials to reduce rainfall run-off.
- 3.11 All courses are identified as being self-catered, utilising pack lunches, open fire cooking and cooking facilities within the multi-purpose activity building.
- 3.12 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). Foul drainage is proposed to be discharged to a package Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), with treated effluent discharging into the existing ditch line running in a north westerly direction within the north of the site. It is proposed that runoff from the roofs and hardstanding area within the development is picked up by filter drains and channel drains, and infiltrate to ground via 4no. soakaways.
- 3.13 The site boundary has been amended during the course of the application to include the full extent of the access track.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The planning application history for the site relates to its previous use and extension as a quarry, with approved applications from the 1970s and 1980s.

5. RELEVANT POLICY DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 5.2 Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 (TWLP).

6. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 The application has been publicised through a site notice, press notice and direct neighbour notification. Three stages of consultation have taken place, the second further to provision of amended plans, ecology evidence and submission of a Business Statement, and the third further to the submission of an amended Business Statement.

6.2 The Local Planning Authority received 42 representations objecting to the scheme on the basis of the First consultation, the following summarised issues were raised:

- impact on wildlife – impact on designated sites, in process of rewilding, need for more ecological evidence, displacement of deer
- impact on landscape designated sites and ancient woodland
- drainage concerns – wetness of site, timing of percolation tests, power supply to treatment plant, contamination concerns, polluting discharge onto neighbouring land, disruption to water table
- should be considered greenfield land
- lack of infrastructure - no mention of water supply, no mobile phone signal or GPS, no mains electricity and provision of solar panels questioned
- safety of visitors – quarry face and coverage in sales particulars, would need to be net
- highways and access concerns - negative impact on Public Right of Way, antisocial behaviour from reopening up track, already too much traffic in locality, Definitive Map Modification Orders submitted for close by routes and impact on prospective bridleways need to be taken into account, path through site already well used and should be declared a public right of way
- concerns regarding use of site and inappropriate to location - function as a multipurpose events space for hire, applicant operates Oakraven Field Centre - hired out for private weddings / birthdays / stags and Christmas parties / yoga / paranormal retreats / clay pigeon shooting / concerts / sports and social activities, future holiday accommodation usage
- should be left undisturbed and better locations, impact on tranquillity, usage of accommodation elsewhere, area already well served educational offering, opens up opportunities for further accommodation nearby
- warden accommodation not appropriate given designations applying to site
- inappropriateness of design - structures density, number, scale, impact of car park
- noise generation
- loss of trees
- queried whether area will be fenced
- queried whether weather conditions will preclude year round usage

Eleven representations supporting the proposal were made, the following summarised commentary was made:

- benefit to the area and local education system departments
- mental health and well-being benefits, participants connecting to and engaging with the environment
- demand for provision – including interest from Forest School teacher working in Shropshire, charity working with children and young adults
- endeavour preserves the existing natural habitats and manage the woodland in a sustainable and ecologically sensitive manner
- provide new employment opportunities and income within the area
- landscape first approach and working with the existing features of the site
- Oakraven Field Centre operated by applicant used by charity that works

- with particularly vulnerable children and young people
 - a brownfield development, quarries can be successfully repurposed, wildlife will adapt.
- 6.3 Eight objections were submitted for the Second consultation – additional summarised issues:
- Business Statement lacks academic plan or timetable, long holiday periods of Universities need accounting for
 - access of emergency vehicles with gated access
 - poor condition of access track not addressed
 - does not match planning precedent of Little Fawns Forest School
- 6.4 Thirty nine objections were submitted for the Third consultation – additional summarised issues:
- inaccuracy of additional ecological evidence – Peregrine falcons frequently seen at the site
 - no documentation on fire risk, what fuel is to be used
 - lack of economic / social benefit significance evidence from application
 - narrowness of track, poor visibility around bends, lack of safe passing places
 - views of The Wrekin from the site entrance
 - visual impact of elevated position warden accommodation.

7. STATUTORY REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.1 Councillor Seymour – Object (referral to Planning Committee)
- one Local Wildlife Site would be completely obliterated by the car parking area and another LWS, SSSI and AONB would all be considerably detrimentally impacted
 - original BOAT access route to the Quarry has, since the closing of the Quarry, been nothing but a source of local concern with incidents of drug taking and burnt out vehicles. To address this, a local farmer blocked the track with rocks. This caused further problems which, a few years ago, was resolved by the Rights of Way Dept modifying the track from a BOAT to a Bridleway and also amending the access to a lockable gate with pedestrian and horse access to the side. The kind of access that would be required to service the application facility could completely undermine this controlled access
 - no services of any kind currently anywhere on or near the site. Suggested in the application that power would be provided by the installation of solar panels. Bearing in mind the shaded nature of this site, which is surrounded by high cliffs and trees, there is no indication of how sufficient power could be supplied to provide lighting, heating and shower facilities for approximately 36 – 40 people
 - apart from a very small local stream, there is no water supply on or anywhere near the site and no mention as to how this would be accessed

- apart from the Warden's separate accommodation, there is no mention of a dining or kitchen area for the students or any mention as to how they would be fed for anything up to a week. Would they be expected to go off site? This would raise further questions either as to security of access via the locked gate or the provision of sufficient extra power and water facilities for cooking for 36 people
- although the applicants have acknowledged that a specialist foul drainage system would be needed, it appears that treated effluent would still be discharged into an existing ditch. This would seem inadequate for a settlement of up to approximately 40 people.

7.2 Little Wenlock Parish Council – Object:

First consultation

- site within Shropshire Hills AONB, and several landscape prime examples within TWLP - including archaeology, geology and wildlife
- very close to a schedule ancient monument
- Hatch Lane has a long history of antisocial and criminal behaviour and criminal activity. For this reason there are barriers at each end to prevent vehicular access without authority. This must be continued
- TWLP Housing Policy designates Little Wenlock Parish as an area for no open market development allowing only housing on exceptions sites in certain circumstances. Accommodation for an educational setting does not appear to be part of those exceptions
- access off Wellington Road onto Hatch Lane is poor, area busy with visitors to The Wrekin, condition is not that of highway but a public footpath.
- no mains water supply close by with property in the area using private supplies
- unclear how the waste water will leave the site, words in the application and local knowledge do not tally, no stream for example known on site
- site is going to need more than one member of staff to manage a field study site, understood the applicant has another "field study" site elsewhere that is used as a holiday let and not for study, concerns this may happen at Maddocks Hill Quarry.

Second consultation – comments remain the same.

Third consultation – reiterate objections to the application, unclear how the owner of the Maddocks Hill quarry site fits into the running of the sites used as examples in the business statement, fully support the statement of Councillor Seymour.

7.3 Highways, Drainage – Comment

7.4 Ecology – Support Subject to Conditions

7.5 Natural England – Comment:

Natural England are not able to fully assess the potential impacts of this proposal on statutory nature conservation sites or protected landscapes or provide detailed advice on the application.

7.6 Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team - No Comment

7.7 Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership – Comment:

AONB Partnership does not have a role to study the detail of all planning applications affecting the AONB, the planning authority has a legal duty to take into account the purposes of the AONB designation in making this decision.

7.8 Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Comment:

Originally objected to this planning application. Given the amendments, now support this application, subject to two comments:

- welcome the inclusion of a 'conservation management plan', would prefer if it contained more details and was more specific
- would also like to see the dingy skipper butterfly as a specific feature of the conservation management plan.

7.9 Shropshire Fire Service – Comment:

As part of the planning process, consideration should be given to the information contained within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's "Fire Safety Guidance for Commercial and Domestic Planning Applications" document. There should be sufficient access for fire service vehicles to within 45 metres of every point on the projected plan area or a percentage of the perimeter, whichever is less onerous. The percentage will be determined by the total floor area of the building. This issue will be dealt with at the Building Regulations stage of the development.

8. APPRAISAL

8.1 Having regard to the development plan policy and other material considerations including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- Principle of development and landscape character
- Site layout, scale and design
- Impact on the amenity of residential properties / adjacent uses
- Highways impacts
- Drainage

- Ecology and Trees
- Stability
- Other matters

Principle of development and landscape character

- 8.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (TWLP) which was adopted in January 2018. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material planning consideration.
- 8.3 Maddocks Hill Quarry falls within the Wrekin Forest Strategic Landscape, with approximately a third of the site sitting in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) along its northern edge. TWLP Policy NE7 identifies that the AONB will be given the highest level of protection, with the former protected from development which could cause detrimental change to the quality of the landscape. The western portion of the site is a Local Geological Site – Maddocks Hill Quarry to be appropriately managed under TWLP Policy NE1. The site is considered greenfield in nature.
- 8.4 In assessing the proposal against this policy basis, the LPA have been especially mindful of the specific site setting and composition of what is being sought. It is noted that the provision of residential accommodation has been raised, the applicant has wished to pursue this element, the LPA has then had to consider any harm derived, and the suitability of any mitigation.
- 8.5 The nature of the site is such that the built development elements of the application sit within the flat quarry base, it is essentially a basin. As the application material identifies, the built structures and education activities are proposed to take place set 25m below the adjacent ground level to the north east and 45m below the adjacent ground level to the east and south east.
- 8.6 These intervening areas have been revegetated since the cessation of quarrying activities, with wider protected woodland (subject to a group TPO) to the north, and an earth screening bund to the west. This sits at the entrance to the quarry, installed following its closure which is approximately 5m in height, this is now populated by a mixture of native and naturalised tree and shrub vegetation, with birch and hazel being the predominant species. The pods and amenity block are proposed in one of the natural glades on site where the underlying ground conditions has limited grow of tree planting, or where it has been cleared as part of the ongoing woodland management of the former quarry.
- 8.7 By its very nature, the use entailed necessitates a rural location. Given the applied, specialist and outdoors emphasis of the courses to be on offer; the unique attributes of this site, are considered to align with the principle of what is being sought. Of note is the nature of the structures, being of a temporary form dispersed through the site, with modest elements visible in the

immediate environs to the adjacent Right of Way - bearing in mind the mature vegetated buffer, and physical position of the site. The LPA are of the opinion that the proposal will not diminish landscape character, views or visual amenity in accordance with the aforementioned TWLP policies and the AONB Management Plan. The application identifies the geological baseline of the site, with further protective control permissible through condition.

- 8.8 Collectively these elements, when balanced with the basis of the centre as a specialist Educational facility, the principle of development is considered acceptable. Notably this proposal would not be considered against the housing policies of the Local Plan acknowledging comment of Little Wenlock Parish Council. With this context being key to the acceptability of the proposal, the LPA wish to control the ongoing use of the site in this regard. As identified within the Business Statement accompanying the application, the applicant has shown a willingness for the future educational use to be controlled through condition. Latterly the applicant has further agreed to take forward the LPAs request for this to be controlled through a S106 agreement, this is considered to represent an active and positive commitment to what is being sought, and would also make the land use of the site clear to any subsequent purchaser as relevant through a charge on the land. The form of activities would look to be limited, for instance excluding more potential sport based activities and roleplay that do not have a direct link to the locational attributes of the site, appreciating local representation.

Site layout, scale and design

- 8.9 Policy BE1 of the TWLP outlines that development should respect and respond positively to its context, and should enhance the quality of the local built and natural environment.
- 8.10 As set out to Members above, the proposed development is of a dispersed form, with an emphasis on timber and natural materials, and at a scale (maximum height of 6.5m to the pitched roundhouses) sitting within a treed backdrop, that whilst introducing built form in an otherwise natural setting, minimises its influence.
- 8.11 The car park and pathways would be constructed using Cellweb TRP to create a load bearing surface fit for purpose, whilst avoiding damage to the tree root system of adjacent trees. The car park sits between two treed areas within a flatter part of the site. Ideally, the car park would be a softer shape, but is led by the space available to secure a sufficient number of spaces with associated turning to enable vehicles to depart in a forward gear, whilst minimising encroachment to the adjacent trees. A control can be placed on the ultimate surface finish to ensure in keeping provision. This would extend to the form of finish in terms of highway improvement works along the access track to again ensure sympathetic provision within the Strategic Landscape and AONB.
- 8.12 The applicant has confirmed that other than the entrance gate, additional boundary treatment is not proposed, this would be subject to conditioning to avoid the provision of industrial style fencing around the area of the site structures, and wider site boundary.

- 8.13 The form of access gate and bin store would further be subject to a design confirmation condition to ensure sympathetic provision given the rural character of the site, and appreciating this stretch of the western edge could be glimpsed in the wider landscape as raised in local objection. The multi-purpose building is set approximately 30m from the site edge, and given its composition, would appear agricultural in nature where glimpsed within the wider landscape. The car park spaces would be set behind the northern stretch of earth bund along the western edge. The warden accommodation would be marginally elevated to the site entrance, but again would sit in the context of the earth bund and landscaping to the west, with the backdrop of the raised slope beyond the south in the context of the broader landscape setting. Nonetheless, the earth bund would benefit from strengthened planting as detailed through condition.
- 8.14 The LPA are satisfied that each structure serves a specific purpose as relevant to the proposed operation of the facility, the quantum and form of built development is duly considered acceptable.

Impact on the amenity of residential properties / adjacent uses

- 8.15 The position of the built development area of the proposal is such that residential development sits 740m to the north, 521m from the beginning of the entrance track, 360m to the south west, and just over 900m to the south east, these properties are a notable distance. Nonetheless, the tranquillity of the AONB and the rural setting of the site, together with proximity to a network of Public Rights of Way are influencing factors for the site. The imposition of a condition would therefore be recommended as to no amplified music being audible beyond the site boundary.
- 8.16 Protection of dark skies within the AONB, as well as in regards to ecological influences, is also recognised as a key attribute in this location. Lighting amenity would therefore be protected through the implementation of any proposal through future control as to provision of any external lighting (beyond hand held / head torch devices).

Highways impacts

- 8.17 The proposed fieldwork centre itself would be located a noteworthy distance – approximately 410m – along the access track, which also serves as a Public Right of Way. Further to review of the application and supporting information relating to the condition of the Right of Way (Right of Way), the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have identified some concerns over sustained vehicular use of the track associated with the proposal, in particular the condition of the ROW and any impact the proposal will have.
- 8.18 The applicant has stated that they expect most students to arrive by mini bus to limit use. The applicant further intends to stagger arrival and departure times between residential and non-residential fieldwork participants, as well as any off site (identified as taking place during the daytime) visits for residential courses. This would be a difficult measure to limit or enforce, an appropriately worded condition to protect the ROW would therefore be necessitated. This would relate to provision of a highway improvement scheme in liaison with TWC Rights of Way prior to commencement of

development on site, and a condition ensuring the timely delivery of parking provision.

- 8.19 As previously stated within this report, the LPA would be mindful as to the finish treatment of the track relating to the setting of the site within the AONB. The width of the entrance point has not raised concern on highway safety grounds given the form of vehicles that would access the site. Refuse arrangements would be conditioned to ensure adequate access can be secured.
- 8.20 The LPA acknowledges that there are various pathways through the site, a number of which have been applied to become bridleways through the submission of Definitive Map Modification Orders as referenced in local representation. The site has been inspected by the LHA, such that the interpretation of a north-westerly claimed route cannot have been used by horses due to the steep slopes that it is shown to cross – a bund adjoining Hatch Lane, and the gulley further to the north-east. The only route that can have been used is the line of the existing Footpath 55 as it is shown on the Definitive Map. The application has in turn demonstrated that the line of this route, and the other routes claimed in the vicinity of this site, will not be obstructed or made inconvenient for public use by the development should they be confirmed to exist by due legal process. In particular the applicant has amended the block plan to identify the accommodation of a route and alternative entrance point arrangements.
- 8.21 It is acknowledged that vehicular access is gained along a public right of way. However, the Local Highway Authority have not formally objected to the proposal subject to a condition requiring improvements to the surface of the track. On this basis the LPA consider that a highways refusal would be difficult to sustain in this regard.

Drainage

- 8.22 The development proposal will comprise 1710m² (0.17ha) hard area excluding the existing access road, in the form of building roofs and hardstanding area. This is an increase in the impermeable area from the existing greenfield site.
- 8.23 The applicant proposes to manage the surface water run off within the site to ensure no increase in runoff or flood risk through the installation of 4no. soakaways designed for the 1:100 year event plus 40% to allow for climate change in line with the NPPF / Environment Agency requirements. The application material identifies that should the drainage system and SuDS fail under extreme events or blockages, floodwaters should be directed towards the landscaped areas around the built development within the wider site, with potential flood flow routes are indicated within Drainage Strategy plan within an updated Drainage Statement. Foul provision would be directed to a package treatment plant.
- 8.24 Further to the addition of further and updated information regarding the drainage approach, including evidence around the flow of the onsite ditch, the original objection on drainage grounds has been removed such that a

standard condition requiring implementation of the drainage scheme be imposed.

- 8.25 Acknowledging neighbour concerns, utilising soakaways would help the water table not cause issues with it. Further, relating to concerns about the runoff from a septic plant, it is identified that a treatment plant is not the same. A treatment plant treats the effluent to a suitable quality before discharging it, therefore there should not be any concerns regarding quality and harm to land or livestock. On this basis, the LPA is satisfied that the scheme accords with the requirements of TWLP Policies ER11 and ER12 in ensuring that a satisfactory drainage arrangement can be implemented and flood risk managed.

Ecology and Trees

- 8.26 The woodland adjacent to the commencement of the northern end of the track lies within The Wrekin and The Ercall SSSI, the eastern edge of the site lies within the Limekiln Wood Wildlife Site, and the western end within the Maddocks Hill Quarry Wildlife Site. The eastern end of the site and land to the north comprises Ancient Woodland.
- 8.27 The application was originally accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Assessment. Further to initial concerns, additional assessment relating to Dingy Skippers, Peregrine Falcons and Biodiversity net gain was undertaken. This in turn has amended representation to support subject to conditions.
- 8.28 The biodiversity net gain assessment for this application has identified that with the provision of off-site enhancements on land still owned by the applicant, the scheme will achieve a 5.80 unit (49.81%) net gain in area biodiversity units and a 1.23 biodiversity unit gain in hedgerow units. This satisfies Policy NE1 of the Local Plan which indicates that the Council will not support any application which results in a net loss of Biodiversity.
- 8.29 A biodiversity enhancement and management plan is requested which would outline how the net gain position will be reached and managed for a 30 year period, as well as a monitoring plan which states monitoring intervals across this period with regular reporting to the LPA. This should also identify triggers for further management intervention should the monitoring surveys identify that the net gain position of 49.81% is not going to be met at the end of the 30 years. This is particularly key given the commentary for further specific actions from the conservation management plan made by Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT).
- 8.30 Relating to the species subject to additional assessment, the Ecological Addendum makes the case that the habitat on site has changed markedly since the most recent records of Dingy Skipper were recorded. It is also stated that on numerous visits throughout the season, this species was not observed at any point, and that its food plant was also noted to be only occasional across site. This is considered to represent a fair assessment of the site, with consideration be given to restore some areas of the site to more appropriate condition for this species, noting commentary from SWT here.

- 8.31 The Addendum makes the case that there are no suitable nesting features or locations on the site for Peregrine Falcon. Reference is made to a lack of features which are inaccessible to predators, when compared to adjacent sites. This is also considered a fair assessment of the site and no further conditions or recommendations around this species are required.
- 8.32 A requirement to provide roosting and nesting opportunities for bats and wild nesting birds throughout the site is identified, to mitigate for active use of the site in an area that is currently undisturbed. Were external lighting to be erected on the site this would be controlled to minimise disturbance to bats.
- 8.33 Policy NE2 seeks the protection and retention of trees, hedgerows and woodland with biodiversity value, visual amenity value and landscape value to be retained, protected and appropriately managed. The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan. This quantifies the loss of trees, alongside protection measures for retained trees adjacent to the car park.
- 8.34 Through the setting out of appropriate mitigation measures for the development by the applicant, alongside conditions to control delivery mechanisms and further potential detrimental influences, the LPA is satisfied that the proposal satisfies the requirements of the NPPF and TWLP in regards to biodiversity and trees.

Stability

- 8.35 The application is accompanied by a Slope Stability Appraisal Report. This identifies that the site areas inspected do not have any major instability issues and it is considered the risk from slope instability (such as major failure/collapse) is low. Whilst the site does show signs of minor instability with debris from the slopes covering part of the slopes and present at the base of slopes. Access by foot across this materials is very difficult. It is considered the risk to visitors on this unstable debris is medium to high. It is not recommended visitors are allowed to access the slopes based on this risk. The clearance of vegetation on slopes is not recommended, which can assist in the stabilisation of the slopes.
- 8.36 The clearance of the slopes and base of the slopes could be carried out, but if undertaken, catchment fences will be required placed to protect visitors from falling debris. Regular (e.g. six monthly) inspections of the areas are recommended to check for any significant degradation of slopes and instability. If required, as part of the inspection works, 'rock combing' can be carried out to remove loose or unstable material from the rock faces.
- 8.37 Elsewhere in the assessment it is identified that there is the potential for natural ground movement to occur that may be of concern. The assessment identifies a number of further investigative steps be taken, and these would be conditioned to ensure compliance with TWLP Policy BE9.

Other matters

- 8.38 The suitability of solar provision given the surrounding treed context of the centre has been raised with the applicant, evidence has been provided from a specialist contractor as to the quantity of provision necessary to meet the needs of the centre, the plans have been updated accordingly in this regard to provide an off grid compatible scheme.
- 8.39 The means of water supply has been raised in public representation, and whilst this is not directly a planning matter, the applicant has confirmed that drinking water will be provided by bottled water, with rainwater harvesting to provide all other water for the site, where not readily available the applicant intends to provide Industrial Grade Deionised/Demineralised Water Storage containers will be kept on-site to provide additional supply.
- 8.40 No comment has been raised by Shropshire Council Historic Environment Team as to the potential influence of the site to a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Group of Round Barrows at Willowmoor Farm 165m south west).
- 8.41 Lack of mobile phone signal / GPS is not a material planning consideration.
- 8.42 A concern as to fire safety has been further raised, whilst no objection has been received from the fire authority, the applicant has confirmed that any open fire cooking would only be undertaken in an agreed designated area comprising a fire square with large logs. It is intended that the course leader would take control of the operation, with all accompanying students and staff briefed before lighting any fires. Fire areas would be surrounded by large logs, not be left unattended at any point, be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place, and extinguished at the end of a session.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The LPA considers that this application represents a particularly balanced decision. The educational merits, specialist nature, and rural locational needs, are balanced with the specific designations applying to this site and its surroundings. Relating to the latter, the topography and form of the built development elements of the proposal, alongside wider elements that can be suitably controlled by condition (including occupation of the warden accommodation, form of highway improvement, ecology net gain), with a commitment to a sustained educational use by the applicant from agreement to a S106 in this regard, are suggested to Members to provide a scheme that merits favourable consideration.

10. DETAILED RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is that **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the following:

A) The applicant entering into a Section 106 agreement with the Local Planning Authority, with terms to be agreed by the Development Management Service Delivery Manager, relating to:

i) The land use for the site (excluding access track) shall be for the purpose of educational use.

B) The following conditions (with authority to finalise conditions and reasons for approval to be delegated to Development Management Service Delivery Manager):-

A04 Time Limit Full

B029 Details of gate and treatment of exposed edge to earth bund

B029 Details of refuse arrangements and bin store design

B029 Details of boundary treatment (were any proposed beyond gated entrance in the future)

B049 Highway Improvement Works

B129 Landscaping detail earth bund south of entrance gate

B141a Erection of artificial nesting/roosting boxes

B142 Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan

B145 Lighting Plan

B149 Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring Plan

BCustom Geological report

C013 Parking, Loading, Unloading and Turning

C029 Operation of site in accordance with recommendations of Slope Stability Appraisal Report

C030 Drainage prior to first use and occupation

C074 Tree protection and no further tree removal in surveyed area

C091 Ecological Survey – working in accordance with protected species survey

C119 Construction Method Statement

C038 Development in accordance with plans

D13 Noise Levels

DCustom Restricted occupancy warden accommodation – timing and not primary residence.