

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Regulatory Committee
Date:	28 April 2010
Title:	Mixed activity use with activity spaces, short stay residential rooms, education provision and ancillary services including camping and external Activity Centre at Runways End Scout Activity Centre, Forge Lane, Aldershot GU11 2RE. (Application Number10/00087/HCC) (Site Ref: RMR 001).
Reference:	1583
Report From:	Head of Planning and Development

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This proposal is a partnership between Hampshire County Council, Rushmoor Borough Council and the Blackwater Valley Scout Association, the aim being to deliver a modern youth adventure centre. The County Council are in the process of purchasing the land from the Ministry of Defence. Planning permission is therefore required to construct an improved Youth Activity Centre with new buildings including a 40 space residential building, support services for the site, refurbishment of an existing scout hall, provide a climbing tower and other facilities at the Runways End Scout Centre, Forge Lane, Aldershot. (Application No. 10/00087/HCC).
- 1.2. Issues: Improvement of an existing facility, consideration of impact of the development and, compliance with the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.3. Reason for decision: It is considered the proposal would be in accordance with Policies ENV 3 (Strategic Gaps), ENV 17 (Development on smaller sites and changes of use) and ENV 21 (Access for people with disabilities) of the adopted development plan (summary attached in Integral Appendix C) in that the provision of the improved Youth Activity Centre and its associated related developments would not detract from the immediate environment and that the proposed buildings would be of a scale compatible with existing development.

2. Existing Site and supporting documents

- 2.1. The site which is approximately 3.2 hectares (eight acres) as shown on the attached location plan, is triangular in shape and currently Ministry of Defence (MoD) owned land but leased to the Scouts. Most of the site has tree coverage although there are areas within the site that have several small scale store buildings and there is the large Scout Hall plus a climbing wall, particularly in the north western approximate third of the site. There are areas of openness where tree cover is limited or absent, one such area being used as an existing camping area. In the south-east corner of the site is a small store used for canoes as this is approximately 50 metres away from Wharf Bridge on the Basingstoke Canal. The northern boundary adjoins an existing footpath and an overflow channel from the Canal. North and west of this channel is military accommodation. All the site boundaries have a combination of weldmesh and deer proof fencing.
- 2.2. Two tarmac surfaced military roads, Forge Lane and Laffan's Road, adjoin the site's respective northwest and southern boundaries. Opposite Laffan's Road is further woodland. and there are three separate vehicular entrances, two on Laffan's Road, one on Forge Lane. However, there is no direct vehicular access from the main dual-carriageway A325 Farnborough Road to the site although Forge Lane is off this "A" highway (see location plan).
- 2.3. Land Contamination – a full geotechnical/ground survey has been undertaken identifying that the site does not lie within an Environment Agency Source Protection Zone. The report concludes that no significant contamination was present and therefore no remedial actions are necessary.
- 2.4. Tree Safety Audit – the findings indicate that numerous trees within the site will need some remedial work to be carried out, particularly those that have been given a "Priority 1" rating where it is considered urgent safety works should be done within three months (some felling/removal of deadwood including branches as these trees are close to areas of potential activity when the Centre is in use). The majority of trees have been rated "Priority 2" where intermediate works of a non-urgent problem have been identified but it is considered need to be managed within six months/re-inspected.
- 2.5. Flood Risk Assessment – conclusion of the report indicates the site lies within Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Maps which means the site is at low flood risk with a 1 in 1000 or less chance of being flooded in any particular year from an extreme flood event from external sources. The site is therefore acceptable on the grounds of flood risk for the development on the scale proposed to proceed.
- 2.6. Biodiversity – An ecological assessment has been undertaken for the site and given its current use as an activity centre and operational as Scout usage, it is considered there is limited ecological interest. However, consideration has been given to nesting birds, reptiles, bats, and protection of the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Japanese Knotweed has been found on the site and because of its invasive nature and legal status, removal of this non-native

plant is important and has to be carried out before other development takes place on the site.

3. Proposal

3.1. **Purpose** - The aim is to deliver a modern youth adventure centre which will include a “drop-in” youth centre, residential accommodation and office/meeting space for a wide range of support services. It will bring together activities and a support venue providing a wide range of challenging outdoor activities, indoor sports, variety of environmental education and a multi-agency to tackle social issues. The Centre will help the young people by encouraging them to be more aspirational, help their achievements and build their self-esteem, in addition to raising their educational skills and tackle issues such as youth crime and anti-social behaviour etc.

3.2. To maximise the use of these facilities and to accommodate a wide range of interests of children, young people and families, the proposed development is intended to combine adventurous activities and support services including:

- (i) climbing and abseiling tower;
- (ii) high and low-ropes course;
- (iii) caving system;
- (iv) indoor multi-activity hall;
- (v) indoor bouldering;
- (vi) canoe store;
- (vii) residential accommodation (40 beds) and six staff and educational/meeting rooms/office space;
- (viii) shower/toilet services block for the camping zone; and
- (ix) camp fire amphitheatre.

3.3. The facilities would provide and enable the following:

- (i) outdoor adventure and sport comprising archery, canoeing, climbing, caving, abseiling, table tennis, pool, jogging, cycling, and environmental programmes;
- (ii) team and personal development to include high and low-ropes courses, residential and camping accommodation, social areas including a barbecue/campfire amphitheatre, a chill-out zone including the Wii interactive Fitness Suite, confidential information/advice and other support services to address their concerns;

- (iii) the Centre will support outdoor learning to develop young people through the Uniformed movements, Outward Bound, Queen's Scout Award and Duke of Edinburgh Award. (The British Army are keen to support this project with their considerable expertise.);
 - (iv) the headquarters of major businesses are based in Rushmoor (eg Nokia, QintecQ, etc.) and are working with young people by providing mentors and resources as part of the successful "Get With" holiday programme which will be based at the Centre;
 - (v) regional Agencies such as Sport England are focusing their attention on Aldershot and see the Centre as important in tackling their priorities.
- 3.4. The management of the venue will be through Hampshire's "excellent-rated" Outdoor Activities Service working closely with Children Services and supported by Rushmoor Borough Council - (which achieved one of the best Audit Commission assessments for its provision of cultural services and work with young people) – together with the Blackwater Valley Scout Association. The Centre will provide pre-booked day courses to organised school and youth groups with these groups being transported by coach/minibus and not individually.
- 3.5. **Buildings and associated works** – The proposed development will comprise several buildings totalling 961 square metres of floorspace and are to be positioned to reduce impact on the trees. The existing Scout Hall is to be refurbished and will become the Reception/Administration building for the Centre. There will be a new Residential Block for 40 No. children and six No. staff that will be situated towards the north-western part of the site where it will be away from the more activity based parts of the site. This block will also have dining, sleeping and washroom facilities. There will be a new multi-purpose hall which will be for indoor activities and a new Camping Services building providing toilets and washing facilities including accessible ones. A separate new maintenance building housing on-site plant will be located in the north west of the site. A new building for a Canoe Store with drying room and changeable facilities, again, including accessible ones is to be provided towards the south-eastern corner of the site. In addition, it will be necessary to provide a new access step to the canal basin together with a removable Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant hoist for use by those with physical impairments. Work on the site particularly to the edge of the canal will need a high level of management and sensitivity given that the canal is in a Conservation Area and part within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 3.6. Regarding the new steps to be provided at the Basingstoke Canal, consideration of the potential impact on the SSSI has been undertaken including mitigation measures to protect the area during construction and operational phases of the development. The report for this has been included with the planning application details.

- 3.7. Car/coach parking and road works** – a new vehicular entrance/exit will be constructed off Laffan's Road to serve the development. This access, which will link to the new reception, will allow up to eight mini buses to park and there is room for at least two or three full size coaches to drop-off/pick-up. The new access point is designed to be a one-way traffic movement so that coaches can turn with relative ease back on to Laffan's Road. Laffan's Road is not built to normal road width (as it is a military one), it is tarmac surfaced and therefore it is intended to slightly widen the road in various places to form proper passing bays. In addition, in order to allow the full size coaches to turn from Forge Lane into Laffan's Road, it will be necessary to widen the existing corner of this junction. A car parking area for up to 18 cars will be provided off Forge Lane but within the application site. All traffic is routed back to the A325 via Forge Lane.
- 3.8. Frequency of visitors/mode of transport** – the site is currently leased to the Blackwater Scouts Association who will still have a presence at the site when all the modifications have been completed. Their usage will continue at their current level mainly weekends, primarily from March to October, with spring and summer school holidays and evening weekday meetings. The Scouts operation at the site would dovetail with organised school use, although there may be occasional overlap during some school holidays and occasional weekends. Primarily, the school use will be from Monday to Friday on a daily basis initially one school group (based on an average class size of 30) with arrival from 9.30 am and departure at approximately 4:00 pm. Two school groups per day is envisaged in years two to three. The residential aspect for school use would be one group (30) per week arriving at 10.30am onwards on a Monday, departing 2.30pm on a Friday. These groups would normally be brought in by coach or mini-buses which would use the drop-off/pick-up facility.
- 3.9. Drainage (Foul and Surface Water)** – it is proposed to discharge all foul water flows to a private sewerage treatment plant on the site that will discharge cleansed liquids to ground; other sewerage would be removed periodically by a licensed waste contractor. The MoD will not allow a private sewer to cross their land. The sewerage treatment plant discharge quality will be determined by the Environment Agency who will also have to issue a Discharge Consent. Regarding the surface water, this is intended to be discharged into the Basingstoke Canal overflow channel (approximately two metres wide by two metres deep) which follows the north-east boundary of the site. New headwalls are to be constructed with engineered spillways to restrict water flow into the channel. The discharge is to be assisted by underground tanks to hold back and attenuate surface water run-off. Discharge Consent for this surface water will also be required from the Environment Agency.
- 3.10. Works to the edge of the Basingstoke Canal** – the nature of the proposed works are minimal and are concentrated in a location where the bank edge is mainly mown grass, concrete and sheet metal piling. The extent of the works consist of the formation of steps to provide safe and improved access to the

canal for users, together with the installation of a new demountable DDA compliant hoist to assist physically impaired users access to the water. Improvements to the surrounding surfacing will also be made. All works in close proximity to the SSSI will be managed to minimize any impact on the Canal edge and the surrounding habitats. This part of the site is also within a Conservation Area but it is considered these small works would not detract from the character of it.

4. Development plan

- 4.1. Rushmoor Local Plan Review 1996-2011 (adopted August 2000) shows the site as being within the defined Strategic Gap and having some existing development on it. The relevant Policies are ENV 3 (Strategic Gaps), ENV 17 (Development on smaller sites and changes of use) and ENV 21 (Access for people with disabilities).

5. Consultations

- 5.1. **Rushmoor Borough Council** has no objection in principle subject to conditions.
- 5.2. **Environment Agency** has no objection in principle but have advised that any surface water strategy should try to utilise sustainable drainage techniques and that surface water run-off should be controlled as near as possible through the Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) approach.
- 5.3. **Natural England** has no objection in principle subject to conditions including clearance of trees and areas of scrub should be avoided during the bird breeding season and, no equipment, materials or machinery to be stored within the SSSI.
- 5.4. The **Highway Authority** has no highway or transport objections subject to conditions including modification to the corner of Forge Lane with Laffan's Road to allow coaches to turn properly. In addition, they have advised there is a weight restriction to traffic 17.5 tonnes on the use of the narrow bridge on Forge Lane. It is considered that the Gross Vehicle Weight of most coaches is below this 17.5 tonnes.
- 5.5. **The Local Member Councillor Wall** has been informed.

6. Representations

- 6.1. No representations from the general public have been received.

7. Commentary

- 7.1. The existing site as a Scout Association Activity Centre is an established use within the defined Strategic Gap as indicated on the adopted Local Plan. The

proposed development accords with the Local Plan. It is acknowledged that the proposed use as a much improved Youth Activity Centre will be more intensive than at present but is not considered would damage the overall character of the site. There are no objections from the consultees. Taking into account all considerations, there is on balance, no substantive reason to withhold planning permission which is recommended.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. That planning permission for a mixed activity use with activity spaces, short stay residential rooms, education provision and ancillary services including camping and external Activity Centre at Runways End Scout Activity Centre, Forge Lane, Aldershot GU11 2RE (Application Number10/00087/HCC), be granted subject to the planning conditions in Integral Appendix B.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Maximising well-being:	yes
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Mixed activity use with activity spaces, short stay residential rooms, education provision and ancillary services including camping and external Activity Centre at Runways End Scout Activity Centre, Forge Lane, Aldershot GU11 2RE. (Application Number 10/00087/HCC) (Site Ref: RMR 001).

Location

Environment Department,
Hampshire County Council,
Elizabeth II Court West (1st floor)

CONDITIONS

Time Limits

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date on which this planning permission was granted.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 (as amended) of the Town and Country Planning act 1990.

Highways

2. Before the development is commenced, full details of the road improvement works to Laffan's Road to include the junction works with Forge Lane, provision of passing bays, and the new entrance/exit for the sites' Reception area, as indicated on the submitted planning application drawings RJ509664/01A and P6218-P.006, shall be submitted in writing to and approved by, the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety and to ensure adequate access is provided.

3. Measures shall be taken during the construction period to ensure that mud and spoil from vehicles leaving the site are not deposited on Forge Lane or Laffan's Road. In the event mud and spoil are deposited on these roads, it shall be cleaned off on each day of working.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

4. No development hereby permitted shall commence until the visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 40 metres at the new site accesses and the junction of Forge Lane/Laffan's Road have been provided. The visibility splays shall be retained and maintained free from obstruction.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

Car/Coach Parking

5. Before the development is brought into use, the proposed car park for up to 18 vehicles and the proposed coach parking facility, shall have been properly constructed and made available for use. These parking areas shall be retained for that purpose at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate parking facility is provided.

Japanese Knotweed

6. Before development is commenced, a scheme detailing the treatment and removal of Japanese Knotweed from the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To comply with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Nature conservation

7. Removal of trees and scrub shall be limited to outside of the breeding bird season (that is, outside of the period March to August inclusive), unless immediately following inspection by the County Council's Ecological Adviser to confirm absence of nesting birds. In addition, measures shall be taken to ensure protection is given to reptiles that may be found during such clearing and to ensure that foraging/commuting bats have access to those areas they frequent.

Reason: In the interest of nature conservation of the site.

8. Prior to commencement of works a reptile mitigation scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the scheme unless otherwise approved by the LPA.

Reason: To comply with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

9. Prior to commencement of works a detailed plan for the proposed caving experience works to existing bunkers should be provided to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the plans.

Reason: To avoid impacts on bats (protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1984

Trees on the site

10. Measures shall be taken to protect those trees on the site that are not required to be removed as part of the proposed development during the construction period.

Reason: To retain the natural features of the site.

Hours of Working

11. Construction or demolition work within the site shall only take place between the hours of 0800 to 1800 on Monday to Saturday with no working on Sundays or public holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenities of neighbouring residential properties and to prevent adverse impact on traffic and parking conditions in the vicinity.

External Lighting

12. Before the development is commenced, details of the proposed external lighting to be provided for the site, shall be submitted in writing to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory development.

Drainage

13. Before the development is commenced, details of the proposed sewerage treatment plant to be installed on site, together with proposed headwalls and surface water storage, shall be submitted in writing to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Environment Agency. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory drainage regime for the overall site.

Works to the Edge of Basingstoke Canal

14. The proposed steps and associated works to the edge of the Basingstoke Canal and operational running of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures and Construction Method as submitted with the planning application. No equipment, materials, or machinery shall be stored within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and all precautions shall be taken to prevent pollution of water courses.

Reason: In the interest of protecting the SSSI and water courses.

Biodiversity Enhancement

15. Overall site enhancements within the site shall include provision of bird boxes to suit a range of bird species and bat boxes together with native species of planting and the surface water drainage pond to be designed with wildlife in mind. A scheme detailing these measures shall be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority and such measures shall have been implemented before the enhanced Youth Activity Centre becomes operational.

Reason: In the interests of nature conservation of the site.

Note to Applicant:

Discharge Consent will be required from the Environment Agency for the discharge of surface water to the overflow channel of the Basingstoke Canal and in connection with the sewerage treatment plant to be installed on the site.

Assent will be required from Natural England for works within the SSSI.

*Annexe to Reason for Conditions
(as required by Article 22 of the Town and Country Planning
(General Procedure) Order 1995 – as amended)*

RUSHMOOR LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 1996-2011 (Adopted August 2000)

Policy ENV 3 (Strategic Gaps)

Strategic gaps will be maintained between Aldershot/Farnborough and the County Boundary (the Blackwater Gap).

Within the strategic gaps development, which would diminish visually or physically the amount of open and undeveloped land will not be permitted.

Policy ENV 17 (Development on smaller sites)

Development on smaller sites and change of use, which is in accordance with other policies of the local plan, will be permitted provided that:

- (i) the development does not result in any demonstrable harm to amenity;
- (ii) the scale, layout, materials and design are consistent with the character and appearance of the area and the relationship with adjoining development;
- (iii) adequate consideration has been given to the design of spaces around and between buildings, with use of hard and soft landscaping; and
- (iv) existing landscape features are used to advantage and, where appropriate, new landscaping is included.

Policy ENV 21 (Access for People with Disabilities)

Proposals for development which will be open to public, or used for employment and education purposes, which are in accordance with other plan policies, will not be permitted unless they include adequate access and facilities for all people with disabilities.