

LAND AT HARTNOLL BUSINESS CENTRE, TIVERTON

PLANNING STATEMENT

PREPARED FOR MOON SELF STORAGE LTD

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Contents

1.	Introduction	Page 3
2.	Site Description and Planning History	Page 4
3.	Proposed Development	Page 6
4.	The Development Plan and Material Considerations	Page 7
5.	Key Development Considerations	Page 11
6.	Conclusions	Page 13

LAND AT HARTNOLL BUSINESS CENTRE, TIVERTON

PLANNING STATEMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning statement has been prepared by PCL Planning Ltd on behalf of Moon Self Storage Ltd and relates to a retrospective planning application for the retention of the use of the land for B8 storage purposes including the siting of storage containers and associated infrastructure on land within and adjoining Hartnoll Business Centre, Tiverton. Temporary consent is sought for a period of 18 months.

- 1.2 This Statement is submitted in support of the of the development and provides an assessment of the key planning considerations. The statement focuses on the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires decisions to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Such material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

- 1.3 The Statement should be read in conjunction with the supporting information submitted with this application.

2. Site Description and Planning History

- 2.1 Hartnoll Business Centre is an established employment site with a mix of industrial and storage uses, located to the east of Tiverton and the west of Halberton. The business centre is accessed from Junction 27 of the M5 Motorway via the A361 and Post Hill. The site consists of approximately 20 light industrial, warehouse and office units, the majority consisting of portal framed steel buildings with composite roof panels, alongside associated hardstanding for parking and storage.
- 2.2 The application site is in the south-eastern corner of the site, with a proportion situated within the consented boundary of the business park and the remainder extending just beyond into the adjacent field. It consists of an area of hardstanding on which storage containers are located alongside elements of open storage. The site is screened by existing hedgerows around its boundaries and by wider contextual landscaping from further views.
- 2.3 The site is situated in flood zone 1 (lowest risk) and not within any statutory designations (including Area of Outstanding Natural beauty, Site of Special Scientific Interest, listed buildings etc) and the nearest dwellings are over 200m away.
- 2.4 In terms of planning context, the site lies just to the east of the settlement limit for Tiverton and land allocated in the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan to form the eastern urban extension to the town (Reference TIV1-TIV5). In addition, there is a current planning application (reference 21/01576) subject to an ongoing appeal on land to the immediate west and south of the business park that seeks outline consent for its for up to 3.9ha of employment land and up to 150 dwellings with associated infrastructure and access.
- 2.5 The business park has had a lengthy planning history since the initial grant of consent in 2004 for the change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to workshops, landscaping and a new internal service road (reference

planning consent: 04/02199). However, this has largely related to the individual erection of buildings and change of uses across the site, not directly relevant to this application. The exceptions being application 10/01183 (retention for change of use of land to B8 storage compound, Unit C1 – allowed on appeal) and 10/01518 (retention of storage compound at Unit 5A – consent granted) in so much as they confirm the acceptability in principle of storage compounds on the business park.

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1 This retrospective application is for the retention of the use of the site for B8 storage purposes and the continued siting of storage containers and associated infrastructure for a temporary period of up to 18 months. It will enable the site to be authorised to continue operating out of the site whilst providing the opportunity for future review once the wider plans for the area are clarified through the ongoing planning processes.
- 3.2 The business provides secure and flexible storage solutions for a range of customers through the use of secure storage consisting of forty 20-foot long shipping containers as well as outdoor secure storage for boats and motorhomes etc. No hazardous or flammable materials are stored on the site. The site is accessed through the business park with adequate space for parking and turning. Whilst the site is secure with electric gates and CCTV present, units are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by secure code.
- 3.3 The northern element of the site falls within the consented business park whilst the southern portion does extend beyond the boundaries of the established business park. However, it is considered that the use of the site for storage is fully in accordance with the established uses of the business park, for which storage use has been consented in other areas.

4. The Development Plan and Material Considerations

4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions to be made in accordance with the development Plan (DP) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development plan comprises of the relevant policies in the Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033.

Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-233

4.2 The Mid Devon Local Plan (MDLP) was adopted in July 2020 and provides strategy for development across the District until 2033.

4.3 Policy S14 of the MDLP sets out the basis on which development in the countryside and appropriate rural uses will be supported, including “...appropriately scaled retail, employment, farm diversification, tourism and leisure related development...”

4.4 Policy DM18 of the MDLP focuses on rural employment development and supports the expansion of existing businesses subject to considerations of scale and use. The policy states:

“In countryside locations, planning permission will be granted for new-built employment development or expansion of existing businesses, provided that the development is of an appropriate use and scale for its location. Proposals must demonstrate that:

a) The development would not lead to an unacceptable impact on the local road network;

b) There would not be an unacceptable adverse impact to the character and appearance of the countryside; and

c) There are insufficient suitable sites or premises in the immediate area to meet the needs of the proposal”

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.5 The Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied.
- 4.6 Paragraph 8 of the Framework sets out the overarching objectives of sustainable development, which includes the economic objective to “help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure”.
- 4.7 Paragraph 81 of the Framework sets out that “planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities for development...”
- 4.8 Paragraphs 84 and 85 of the Framework further add that policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, as well as recognising that sites to meet local business needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements. This is subject to development being sensitive to its surroundings and not raising unacceptable impacts.

Principle of Development

- 4.9 The application site falls in part within the established boundary of the Hartnoll Business Centre where a range of light industrial, warehouse and storage uses exist and are consented. Whilst part of the site falls outside of the boundary this only represents a modest extension to the business park into land that is well screened through existing landscaping and is not subject to any designation or identified as being sensitive to development.

4.10 The policy context set out above provides significant local and national planning policy support for economic growth objectives generally and specifically for the appropriate expansion of existing rural businesses. The retention of the existing use represents the continuation of a modest but successful rural business on a site for storage purposes that complements the other uses operating from the business park.

4.11 It is of a scale and where traffic generation into and out of the site would be low in comparison with the business park as a whole and would not give rise to any unacceptable impact on the local road network. Whilst the site does extend beyond the existing boundary of the business park it will continue to be seen as part of the established employment site and benefits from existing landscape screening to reduce any impact on character and appearance of the countryside. Because part of the existing use sits within the southern extremity of the business park and there is no further space for the business to expand within the boundary, it is considered that this modest expansion is justified and supported by Policy DM18 of the MDLP.

4.12 It is also important context that the proposed scheme for the expansion of the existing Hartnoll business park southwards and facilitating residential development that is subject to an ongoing appeal process (application reference: 20/01576), was resisted by the Council on the grounds of the residential element and not the principle of expanding the business park. As a matter of fact the Council's position is recorded in the officer report on that application as:

"The proposed extension to the existing employment site is considered to be acceptable in principle subject to appropriate landscape mitigation."
(paragraph 11.4, page 48)

4.13 A temporary consent for the storage use of the application site would enable the current use to be regularised whilst providing an opportunity for future review to enable the outcome of the wider planning processes to be fully considered at the appropriate time.

4.14 The principle of the development clearly accords with the Development Plan, in particular Policies S14 and DM18 of the MDLP.

5. Key Development Considerations

Transport and Access

- 5.1 The application site will continue to utilise the existing access and internal roads to and within the business park, all of which are of a good standard to serve the variety of business uses within the park. Sufficient space exists within the site for parking and the safe manoeuvring of vehicles to serve the development.
- 5.2 The level of regular traffic generated by the storage use is low and given the generally long-term rental of the storage containers the level of churn and turnover is infrequent, meaning daily vehicular movements are limited. In overall terms the additional movements created by the business will be a very small proportion of the movements into and out of the business park as a whole and will not give rise to any significant harm in terms of highway capacity or safety to the existing highway network.
- 5.3 The application meets the requirements of Policies DM3 and DM5 of the MDLP and guidance set out in the Framework to ensure development has safe access to the transport network and would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in residual cumulative impacts that are severe.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.4 The site is visually well contained by existing screening around the perimeter of the business park with the southern and western boundaries characterised by existing native species hedgerows and a belt of tree planting on an embankment, purposely planted to assist the screening of the site. Existing native species hedgerow and scrub planting also form the northern and eastern edges and as a result the application site is not prominent in views, particularly because of the generally low lying topography and the presence of wider landscaping along nearby routes (Post Hill, Crown Hill, Manley Lane etc).

5.5 The storage containers are generally sited around the edge of the application site and benefit from the existing boundary screening and at single storey height are less prominent than other larger steel framed buildings within the site.

5.6 The existing use therefore benefits from being well screened and having limited visibility beyond the context of the wider employment site. The existing landscaping assists the site in integrating with its surroundings, minimising any adverse effects on landscape quality and maintaining the character of the countryside. Therefore, the application complies with Policies S14 and DM1 of the MDLP.

Ecology

5.7 The application relates to the continuation of an existing use within the wider business park and its minor expansion beyond its boundary. Ecological information submitted with the application identifies that the site is of low ecological value. There is no evidence of bats or nesting birds within the site and no requirement for additional mitigation. The application accords with Policy S1 of the MDLP in minimising impacts on biodiversity.

Flood Risk and Drainage

5.8 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk) and as the site is less than 1ha in area a flood risk assessment is not required. Surface water drainage will be managed in accordance with the existing arrangements on site. This is in accordance with Policy S9 of the MDLP and the need to reduce the risk of flooding from development.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The application seeks temporary consent for the retention of an existing self-storage business within an extended area of the established Hartnoll Business Centre. The temporary consent would provide an opportunity for the business to regularise its current operations, whilst at the same time enabling the Council to review in light of the wider planning context and ongoing proposals to extend the business park and provide facilitating residential development.
- 6.2 This Statement sets out how the continued use of the site accords with the relevant policies of the MDLP which supports rural employment opportunities where this is of an appropriate scale and use. It demonstrates that the continued storage use of the site in the context of the established business park would not raise any adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area or raise any unacceptable highway capacity and safety concerns. The application also raises no additional technical issues such as flood risk, drainage or ecology.
- 6.3 The application therefore accords with Policies S1, S9, S14, DM1, DM3, DM5 and DM18 of the MDLP as well as being supported by Framework, which attributes significant weight to supporting economic growth and productivity objectives (which this application would deliver). Therefore, in accordance with paragraph 11(c) of the Framework the application should be approved without delay.