

Application **16/25315/COU** part of former airfield runway for storage of commercial vehicles and up to six commercial vehicle auctions per year.

Monday 12 June 2017 at 11.00am

1. Mr Chairman, members.
2. What is happening at Hixon Airfield is a desecration and an insult to the memory of the thousands of men and women who were stationed there between 1942 and 1945
3. To consider dumping a huge scrap metal yard on a 1/3rd of a mile former runway from which thousands of brave air crew took off....some never to return..... is nothing short of scandalous.
4. But to get onto the application itself....what you saw on your site visit today
5. is not how it will look in the future if you approve this application today
6. THIS IS HOW IT WILL LOOK...365 DAYS OF THE YEAR FOR AS LONG AS THE LANDOWNER WANTS TO LOOK LIKE.
7. BUT!!! what I find most baffling is that last September, an almost identical application (16/24410) was withdrawn because planning officers were RECOMMENDING REFUSAL due to a whole host of planning POLICY infringements.
8. The officer report described the visual impact as EXCESSIVE, PROMINENT, UNSIGHTLY. INCONGRUOUS AND INTRUSIVE.
9. The proposal would HARM THE APPEARANCE OF THE LOCALITY AND ITS VISUAL AMENITY.
10. IT WOULD NOT ASSIST RURAL SUSTAINABILITY.
11. IT WOULD NOT PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER OF THE BOROUGH
12. IT WOULD NOT BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION POLICIES.
13. IT IS NOT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
14. The proposal would not support Policies SP6(i) and SP7 (ii) and (iii) and it would conflict with Policies E2(d) and (g) in the Plan for Stafford as well as paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

15. SO HOW CAN ALL THOSE REASONS FOR REFUSAL IN SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR..... BE RESOLVED BY PROMISING TO PLANT A FEW TREES?
16. PLANNING POLICIES ARE SURELY NOT DEPENDENT ON WHETHER A COUPLE OF DOZEN TREES ARE IN LEAF IN SUMMER?
17. I refer you to the report Staffordshire Police Architectural Liaison Officer who said about the landscaping proposals,
18. ...*"All shrubs and hedges adjacent to the building and perimeter fence should have a maximum growth height of 1m. Tree branches should be pruned up to a minimum height of 2.5m, thereby maintaining a clear field of vision around the site."*
19. That is not going to screen the vehicles is it?
20. The officer report says a very large previously permitted industrial building (ostensibly to store wings for Air Bus aircraft) will eventually block views of the runway from New Road.
21. I addressed this committee four years ago when that application was being considered.
22. I said then that such a building with such a use would never happen....and lo, it hasn't happened and it won't happen. Because....
23. Air Bus wings go from North Wales to France and Germany via the Irish Sea not to Hixon via the A51.
24. That building is not there.
25. Members: You cannot presume whether or not that building will be built.... you can only make a judgement on what you definitely know....
26. and what you know for certain is that there is no such a building there today and there is a huge uncertainty it will be built for the purpose for which it was approved.
27. Apart from the visual impact of this proposal, there is the serious threat of ground pollution caused by leaking fuel, oil and hydraulic fluids from the scrap vehicles.
28. Most of these vehicles cannot move under their own power, they have to be lifted or towed
29. Mr Chairman, members...

30. This application is to all intents and purposes the same as application 16/24410 which officers were recommending for refusal last September.

31. The officer report for that application concluded..” *Recommendation – Refuse: The intensive storage of large commercial vehicles, large trailers and coaches on this extensive site would harm the appearance of the locality and its visual amenity. It would thus not assist rural sustainability as it would not protect or enhance the environmental character of the Borough and nor would it be in accordance with environmental protection policies. The storage use would thus not be sustainable development. If approved, it would not support the plan-led strategies set out in Policies SP6(i) and SP7(ii) and (iii) of The Plan for Stafford Borough, and it would conflict with Policies E2(d) and (g) of that Plan as well as with paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

It is considered that the storage use would be contrary to the policies of The Plan for Stafford and it would not conform with the advice and core planning principles of the NPPF. Negotiations with the applicants would not have resolved the issues.

32. Mr Chairman, members...This application basically asks you to permit a six acre eyesore (about 3 and half football pitches) of scrap vehicles strewn across flat open countryside.

33. And how many jobs will this huge area of land create?

34. Apart from the six auction days each year how many jobs will be created?

35. And what about the quality of those jobs?

36. Moving rusting scrap lorries around is hardly one of the high skilled jobs we would like to see generated in Hixon or across Stafford Borough is it?

37. But is that all this Borough aspires to now?

38. Grabbing whatever we can regardless of the consequences?

39. A few low skilled jobs, a few days of the year, damaging the visual and physical environment for no good reason?

40. This application will have minimal benefit to the local community

41. It will not satisfy the employment aspirations of local young people

42. 30% of Hixon residents have a university degree or higher qualification

43. This application will not provide the quality or quantity of employment opportunities that would out-weigh the visual and environmental impact in the community.
44. If permitted, it will blight the landscape for years to come and will detract from the rural character of Hixon village and residents of Stowe-by-Chartley, in particular residents in Stowe Lane.
45. Hixon Airfield is an undesignated Heritage Site, it has one of the best-preserved Second World War control towers in the Country.
46. Hixon Airfield is an undesignated Heritage Site: Staffordshire County Council archaeologist says it needs protection not further violation
47. But you can refuse this application today... and you should refuse this application today because the officer report for planning application 16/24410 just six months ago gives you all the reasons you need to do so.
- 48.** I urge you to refuse this application.