

Planning Statement and Design & Access Statement

In support of

Full planning application for the change of use of existing building to indoor
leisure and events space together with new car parking area (part
retrospective)

At

‘Old Town Hall’
Gopsall Hall Farm
Gopsall
Atherstone
Leicestershire
CV9 3QJ

Applicant

Mr M Lain

Agent

Adam Jones BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

Providing planning solutions for
agriculture | equestrian | rural business | residential



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Rural Planning Co. are instructed by Mr M Lain to submit a full planning application for the change of use of an existing building to indoor leisure and events space together with new car parking area (“the proposals”) at ‘Old Town Hall’, Gopsall Hall Farm, Gopsall, Atherstone, Leicestershire, CV9 3QJ (“the site”).
- 1.2 This Planning Statement discusses the application site and its context (Section 2) before summarising the proposals themselves (Section 3) and then goes on to identify the most relevant local and national planning policy guidance (Section 4). The proposals are then examined against the planning policy guidance in respect of their compliance (Section 5). The overall conclusions of this Planning Statement are drawn at Section 6.
- 1.3 This full planning application is supported by the following documents:
 - Site Location Plan
 - Proposed Block Plan
 - Floorplans and Elevations
 - Planning Statement

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The application site comprises an existing building known as ‘Old Town Hall’ (“the subject building”), the immediately surrounding yard and a new car parking area (“parking area”) immediately to the north of the subject building.
- 2.2 The site is situated at the northern end of one of the yards at Gopsall Hall Farm, which over the years has diversified from a primarily agricultural enterprise to become an established mixed-use complex for camping and caravanning, caravan storage, weddings and events.
- 2.3 The site is accessed via a private drive off Ashby Road / B4116, which is approximately 1.2km in length with passing places. The private drive joins up with the new car parking area and the adjacent yard serving ‘Old Town Hall’.
- 2.4 The site is located between Twycross, Bilstone and Congerstone and is within a reasonable proximity of the A444. The site is also located within reasonable proximity to public footpaths (e.g. footpaths S79 and Q7) and long distance cycle routes.
- 2.5 Please refer to **Fig.1** below which illustrates the location of the application site and its relationship with the other buildings and yards at Gopsall Hall Farm.

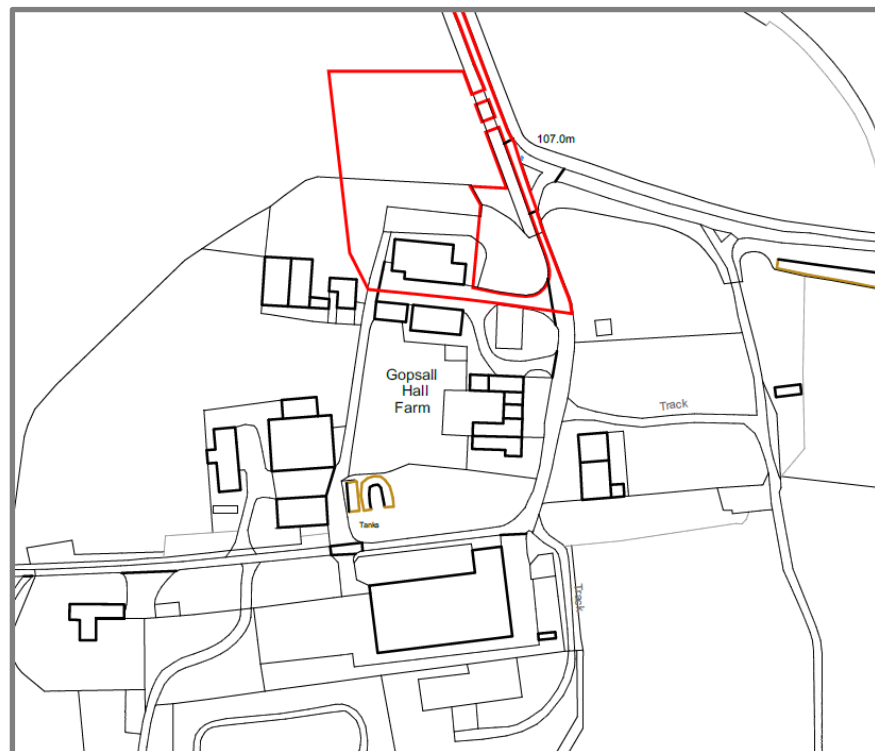


Fig.1 – Excerpt of Site Location Plan J1008900-01

- 2.6 With respect to landscape, historic and environmental designations, the site is not especially constrained in this regard. The site forms part of an established agricultural unit which has diversified to become a mixed-use enterprise, benefitting from being some distance from any designated sites. Intervening farmland and woodland clusters further act as physical buffers between the site and any sensitive receptors.

- 2.7 Although the site falls within the ‘open countryside’ in planning terms, the site is not found within a Green Belt, National Landscape (formally known as ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’) and is not within 500 metres of any designated sites such as SSSI’s, ESAs or BAP Priority Habitats.
- 2.8 There are no designated heritage assets within close proximity of the application site, the nearest being the Grade II Listed ‘Garden Temple at NGR 354059 500 Metres South of Gopsall Hall Farm’ (List Entry no. 1267970) and further to the southwest, the Grade II Listed ‘Gopsall Hall Farmhouse’ (List Entry no. 1074216). Please refer to **Fig.2** below for satellite mapping showing locations of the nearest designated heritage assets relative to the application site.

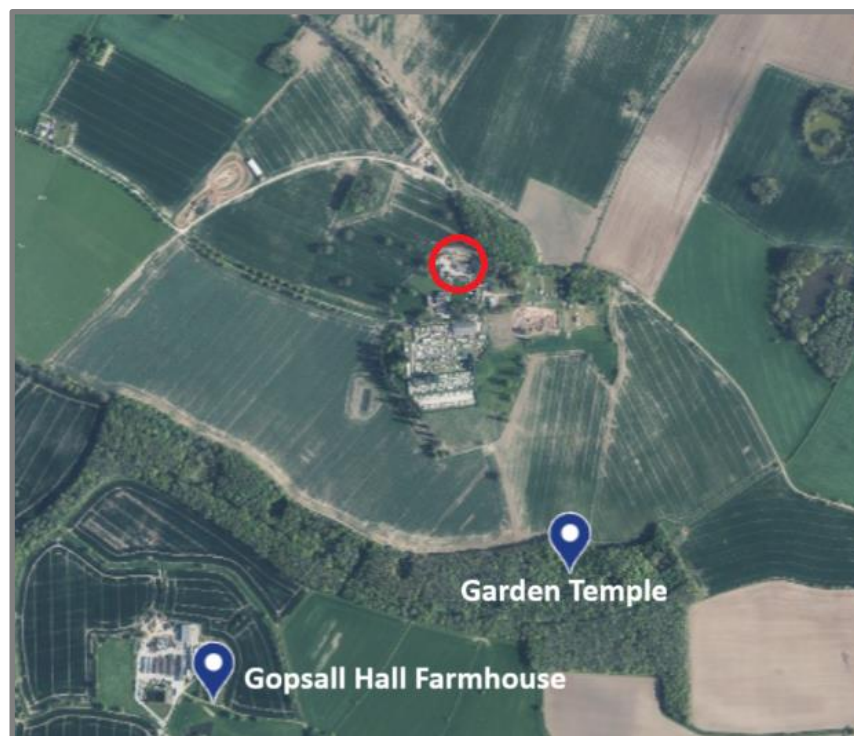


Fig.2 – Excerpt of Site Location Plan J1008900-01

- 2.9 As set out previously, adjacent areas of the wider Gopsall Hall Farm site (to the southeast of the subject application site) are used for holiday and leisure purposes.
- 2.10 Planning permission was granted in 2018 for the conversion of an existing barn to form leisure facilities and the siting of 16 touring caravan pitches and 6 glamping pitches (ref: 18/00294/FUL). This planning permission expanded upon the existing camping and caravanning facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm which were consented much earlier.
- 2.11 Most recently, planning permission was granted in early 2025 for a further 10 glamping pods with external covered decking areas, new access and parking and other associated works (ref: 24/01092/FUL).
- 2.12 When considering the previous planning applications at Gopsall Hall Farm, Officers determined that the new facilities would enhance, extend and retain the existing cultural and tourism facilities which in turn would help support the rural economy and help generate increased visitation and additional income to the wider borough.

3.0 The Proposals

- 3.1 This planning application seeks full planning permission for the following elements:

Change of Use of 'Old Town Hall'

- 3.2 The first element proposed under this application is the change of use of 'Old Town Hall' ("the subject building") to indoor leisure and events space in connection with the established tourism and leisure facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm.



Fig.3 – Photograph of the front (western) elevation of 'Old Town Hall'

- 3.3 'Old Town Hall' is a characterful building which in recent times has been used for a mixture of agricultural storage and covered indoor / events space. The building is believed to have been originally constructed to house electrical plant and apparatus in connection with the local electrical power grid, before becoming redundant and then being re-purposed for agricultural storage use and more recently for events.
- 3.4 The internal floor area of the subject building measures approximately 275 square metres, with a large hall (approximately 155 square metres) accessible via the main front entrance and a number of smaller storage or multi-purpose rooms to the side and rear of the building. Please refer to **Fig.4** below for illustration.

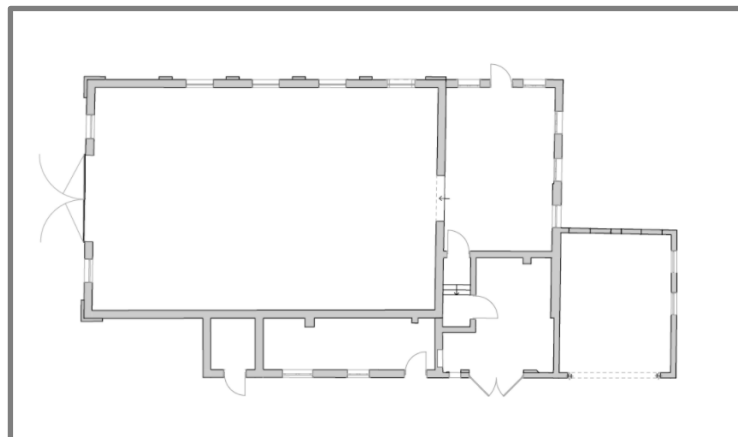


Fig.4 – Excerpt of the accompanying existing floorplans drawing

- 3.5 The subject building is constructed with a mainly mixed red brick exterior and dark slate tiles for the roof, with various openings at each elevation, some being of purely utilitarian function and appearance and others having a more decorative quality. Please refer to the accompanying plans and elevations drawing (ref: J1008900-03) for details.
- 3.6 No external alterations or extensions to the subject building are proposed as part of this application, and the current intention is to utilise the building in its current form. The proposals involve the change of use of the building only.
- 3.7 The proposed usage of the building would be in connection with the established use of Gopsall Hall Farm as a mixed-use tourism and leisure facility. 'Old Town Hall' would provide valuable indoor leisure and events space to complement the existing facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm.

New Car Parking Area (Retrospective)

- 3.8 The second element proposed under this application is the formation of a new car parking area which is already in place a short distance north of 'Old Town Hall'. The formation of the car parking area was largely completed by November 2024.
- 3.9 The new parking area measures approximately 50m x 40m and is surfaced with crushed stone aggregate. The car parking area is permeable. Please refer to **Fig.5** below which provides a photograph of the car parking area with 'Old Town Hall' in the background.



Fig.5 – Photograph of the new car parking area

- 3.10 The new car parking area is intended to be used in conjunction with 'Old Town Hall' as a pragmatic and safer alternative to parking in the adjacent farmyard. The farmyard around 'Old Town Hall' is more spatially constrained and is better suited to being used for circulation space for guests and visitors rather than a shared space between vehicles and pedestrians which would give rise to unnecessary conflicts.
- 3.11 The new car parking area is accessible directly off the private drive off Ashby Road / B4116 which avoids vehicles having to travel into the farmyard or enter the wider Gopsall Hall Farm site, which for practical and organisational reasons is a far better arrangement than any alternative.

4.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

- 4.2 The Development Plan for the purposes of this planning application is the Hinkley Bosworth Local Plan 2006-2026 which is made up of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted December 2019) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (adopted July 2016).

Core Strategy DPD

- 4.3 The most relevant Core Strategy policies in relation to this application are:

Policy 23	Tourism Development
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Development Management Policies DPD

- 4.4 The most relevant Development Management policies in relation to this application are:

DM1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DM4	Safeguarding the Countryside
DM10	Development and Design
DM17	Highways and Transportation
DM18	Vehicle Parking Standards
DM24	Cultural and Tourism Facilities

- 4.5 These policies are examined and discussed in greater detail in Section 5 (Planning Assessment) of this document.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) was first published in March 2012 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The latest update to the NPPF was published on 12th December 2024 and this version is referred to in this Planning Statement hereafter.

Sustainable Development

- 4.7 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies the three dimensions to sustainable development which include economic, social, and environmental roles. Paragraph 8 states that these roles are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.
- 4.8 Among the numerous ways in which sustainable development can be delivered through the planning system, Paragraph 8 makes explicit reference to the following objectives

which are considered pertinent to this application:

- “[helping to] build a strong, responsive and competitive economy.”
- “... Ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth...”
- “Making effective use of land.”

4.9 Whilst the above examples of ways for delivering sustainable development are not an exhaustive list, given that they are expressly cited as specific examples in Paragraph 8 they are considered to represent clear planning objectives.

Decision Making

4.10 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply to plan-making and to decision taking. For decision-taking this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay...”

4.11 As set out previously in this Planning Statement, the planning system is “plan led” and planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.12 Section 5 of this Planning Statement provides an assessment of the proposals against the relevant policies contained within the Development Plan and in doing so reaches a conclusion as to whether the proposals accord with the Development Plan.

Proactive Engagement

4.13 Paragraph 38 of the NPPF encourages that Local Planning Authorities work proactively with applicants to secure sustainable developments, stating that:

“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in positive and creative ways... and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”

Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

4.14 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF is clear in its support for the rural economy and sets out that policies and decisions should enable the following:

“a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;

b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;

c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; ...”

- 4.15 As will be seen by clauses a) to c) of Paragraph 88, broad support is given to the sustainable growth of all types of businesses in rural areas (including tourism and leisure).
- 4.16 Additionally, proposals involving the conversion of existing buildings are identified as being integral to these aims and are afforded explicit support by the NPPF.
- 4.17 Paragraph 89 of the NPPF goes on to explain that planning policies and decisions should recognise that public transport options will typically be fewer in rural locations, but that this should impede or preclude new development outside of existing settlements where it will meet local business and community needs. The paragraph reads as follows:

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.”

5.0 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 This section of the Planning Statement provides an assessment of the proposals against the relevant planning policy guidance from the Development Plan and confirms whether the general expectation of these policies have been met.
- 5.2 Policy DM1 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD states that *“Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*

Principle of Development

- 5.3 The application site forms part of the wider Gopsall Hall Farm site, which has become an established tourism and leisure complex with a range of associated facilities.
- 5.4 Core Strategy Policy 23 (Tourism Development) seeks to ensure that tourism facilities complement the tourism themes of the Borough alongside limiting any impact on the character of the area and landscape. The policy goes on to explain tourism and leisure development will be encouraged where it adds to the economic wellbeing of the area.
- 5.5 The application site is located very close to various long-established historic and tourism-orientated attractions such as Twycross Zoo (approximately 3km from the site), Bosworth Battlefield (approximately 8km from the site) and Market Bosworth Country Park (approximately 7km from the site). The proposed facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm would complement and support the continued vitality and viability of these nearby attractions.
- 5.6 The application site is located within the ‘open countryside’ in planning terms, albeit the site forms part of established tourism and leisure complex. Policy DM4 within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD sets out that to protect its intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character, the countryside will first and foremost be safeguarded from unsustainable development.
- 5.7 Policy DM4 goes on to identify ways in which development within the countryside can be seen to meet sustainability objectives and therefore be in accordance with the policy requirements, which one such example under clause DM4(b) being:

“The proposal involves the change of use, re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting, or diversification of rural businesses”
- 5.8 Policy DM4 at clause (c) also goes on to explain that development proposals that would significantly contribute towards economic growth and/or job creation will also be supported.
- 5.9 It is submitted that the subject application proposals would contribute towards all the abovementioned objectives, seeing as they involve the change of use and re-use of an existing rural building, the diversification of a rural business and would also encourage economic growth and support future job creation.

- 5.10 Indeed, the proposed change of use of 'Old Town Hall' a unique indoor leisure and events space would meet the requirements of Policy DM4 and accords with the guidance set out at Paragraph 88 of the NPPF.
- 5.11 Both the re-use of 'Old Town Hall' and the accompanying new car parking area would make meaningful contributions towards the diversification and future growth of an established rural enterprise, which in turn encourage economic growth in the local area and the creation of permanent and temporary jobs.
- 5.12 Policy DM24 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD seeks to support the development of new cultural and tourism facilities across the Borough, whilst also reducing reliance on private cars.
- 5.13 Whilst it is acknowledged that the rural location of the site means that there will be a degree of reliance on private vehicles, it must be borne in mind that Gopsall Hall Farm is an established tourism and leisure complex with existing facilities that would be complemented by the subject application proposals. Recent planning applications at Gopsall Hall Farm (including for new tourist accommodation and the change of use of barns for leisure facilities) have previously been accepted by the Council as complying with the Development Plan, inclusive of Policy DM24.
- 5.14 Additionally, there is express recognition in the NPPF that *"planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport."* This means to say that existing rural businesses (such as the enterprise at Gopsall Hall Farm) may well be found in locations that are not well served by public transport. However, this should not preclude or prejudice support for applications which seek to grow or diversify local businesses.
- 5.15 In view of the above, it is considered that on balance, the application proposals would not conflict with Policy DM24 or the Development Plan when read as a whole.
- 5.16 Accordingly, the subject application proposals would accord with the requirements of Policies DM1, DM4 and DM24 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD, Policy 23 of the Core Strategy and the guidance contained within the NPPF, and the principle of development is acceptable.

Design and Appearance

- 5.17 Policy DM4 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD requires that development should not have an adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside and does not undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements.

'Old Town Hall'

- 5.18 The proposed change of use of 'Old Town Hall' to indoor leisure and events space would not involve any external alterations to the building or otherwise have any tangible visual impact on the character of the countryside or undermine physical or perceived open character between settlements.

New Car Parking Area

- 5.19 The new car parking area occupies a flat area of land to the north of 'Old Town Hall' which was formally an area of arable farmland. The parking area is surfaced with crushed stone aggregate which is a visually neutral (and permeable) material best suited and most appropriate for the proposed use.
- 5.20 The new car parking area would be read in the context of the adjacent concrete farmyard area which surrounds 'Old Town Hall' and is physically and functionally well-related to the existing Gopsall Hall Farm complex.
- 5.21 The car parking area is flanked by a small pocket of woodland to the east just beyond the private drive serving Gopsall Hall Farm which effectively screens mid to long distance views from the east and the north.
- 5.22 There is a further wooded cluster to the northwest (approximately 150 metres from the car parking area) which screens mid to long distance views from that direction.
- 5.23 To the south of the car parking area is the Gopsall Hall Farm complex, with intervening buildings and yards. The adjacent grassed area to the west and south is at a slightly raised elevation relative to the car parking area and results in some visual softening.
- 5.24 Please refer to **Fig.6** below which shows the approximate location of the car parking area relative to the wooded areas described above.



Fig.6 – Satellite image showing location of new car parking area

- 5.25 While short distance views of the car parking area are achievable from within the application site (such as from the area surrounding 'Old Town Hall'), longer distance views of the car parking area are not readily achievable given topographical features and differential ground levels which help assimilate the car parking area into the landscape.

- 5.26 Please refer to **Fig.7** below which provides a selection of photographs taken from the edges of the new car parking area facing northeast and northwest.



Fig.7 – Photographs taken from the perimeter of the new car parking area

- 5.27 The loss of a small area of arable farmland (approximately 2,000 square metres) which immediately adjoins the farmyard surroundings ‘Old Town Hall’ and the cluster of adjacent farm buildings at Gopsall Hall Farm is not considered to result in an unacceptable degree of harm to the beauty or character of the rural landscape. Nor would the formation of a car parking area beside an existing farmyard undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements.
- 5.28 Taking the above together, it is submitted that the proposals would not conflict with Policy DM4 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD and are acceptable in design terms.

Residential Amenity

- 5.29 Policy DM10 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD requires that development does not have a significant adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of nearby residents and occupiers of adjacent buildings.
- 5.30 As discussed previously in this Planning Statement, the application site forms part of an established tourism and leisure complex which benefits from being a considerable distance from any neighbouring properties.
- 5.31 As mentioned previously in this Planning Statement, ‘Old Town Hall’ has been used for events purposes in recent times without issue and the subject application proposals simply seek to regularise that use.
- 5.32 The application site is almost 1km distance from the nearest off-site residential property (a pair of dwellings known as ‘Kennel Cottages’ to the west of the site). There are no other sensitive receptors in the locality which is rural and predominated by agricultural uses.
- 5.33 Leisure and events activities taking place at ‘Old Town Hall’ would be contained within the building, which is itself robust and traditionally constructed. The degree of separation from ‘Old Town Hall’ and the nearest off-site residential property, coupled with the level of containment inside the building, either avoids or substantially minimises the types of impacts listed in Policy DM10 (lighting, air quality, noise, vibration and visual intrusion).

- 5.34 Accordingly, the proposals would meet the expectations of Policy DM10 and are acceptable in residential amenity terms.

Highways

- 5.35 Policy DM17 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD states that all new development should in be accordance with the highway design standards.
- 5.36 Policy DM18 of the same DPD requires that development provides appropriate parking provision.
- 5.37 The application site is accessed via a private drive off Ashby Road / B4116, which is approximately 1.2km in length with passing places. The private drive joins up with the new car parking area and the adjacent yard serving 'Old Town Hall'.
- 5.38 As Officers may already be aware that the access referred to above was upgraded following the grant of planning permission 16/00810/FUL on 24th November 2016. This access is used as the primary access to Gopsall Hall Farm and the upgrades subject of planning permission 16/00810/FUL factored in the mixed-use of the site, including the tourism and leisure elements as well as caravan storage.
- 5.39 The new car parking area has been designed to ensure that there is sufficient car parking capacity (plus ample turning and circulation space) to serve 'Old Town Hall'.
- 5.40 As explained previously in this Planning Statement, the new car parking area is intended to be used in connection with activities at 'Old Town Hall' as a pragmatic and safer alternative to parking in the adjacent farmyard. The farmyard around 'Old Town Hall' is more spatially constrained and is better suited to being used for circulation space for guests and visitors rather than a shared space between vehicles and pedestrians which would give rise to unnecessary conflicts.
- 5.41 The change of use of 'Old Town Hall' from agricultural use to indoor leisure and events space in connection with the established tourism and leisure use of the wider site would not materially alter the way in which Gopsall Hall Farm is operated. The ability to use 'Old Town Hall' in connection with this established use would simply complement the existing facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm.
- 5.42 In view of the above, it is submitted that the proposals would not result in unacceptable highways impacts and the way in which the site is operated would remain largely unchanged. The (recently upgraded) site access is in accordance with highways design standards and the new car parking area would provide appropriate parking provision. On this basis there is not considered to be any conflict with Policies DM17 and DM18 of Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of an existing rural building to indoor leisure and events space together with a new car parking area. The application is part-retrospective on the basis that the car parking area has already been constructed, and the subject building has been used for events purposes.
- 6.2 The application proposals are in connection with Gopsall Hall Farm, which is an established tourism and leisure site. Over the years, Gopsall Hall Farm has diversified from a solely agricultural enterprise to a mixed-use complex for camping and caravanning, caravan storage, weddings and events.
- 6.3 As set out previously in this Planning Statement, the building known as 'Old Town Hall' would be used as covered indoor space in connection with the established use of the wider site Gopsall Hall Farm complex. The option of re-using 'Old Town Hall' for this purpose would complement the existing leisure facilities on the site and would enable greater all-year-round functionality and flexibility for visitors and guests.
- 6.4 The new car parking area proposed as part of this application would serve 'Old Town Hall', offering a far more pragmatic and safer alternative to visitors and guests parking in the adjacent farmyard.
- 6.5 It is demonstrated in this Planning Statement that the proposals would involve the re-use of a rural building to support and enhance an existing leisure and tourism business, which in turn is well located in relation to other nearby attractions in the area, such as Twycross Zoo, Bosworth Battlefield and Market Bosworth Country Park. The proposed facilities at Gopsall Hall Farm would complement and support the continued vitality and viability of these nearby attractions, as well as support the wider rural economy. The benefits associated with the proposals are afforded substantial weight.
- 6.6 The proposals are assessed against the policies and guidance contained within the Local Development Plan and the NPPF, and it is submitted that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and broadly conforms to the expectations of the relevant policy guidance in relation to technical matters.
- 6.7 in view of the forgoing, the Local Planning Authority is respectfully requested to grant full planning permission, subject to any necessary planning conditions.