

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL  
HORTICULTURE SERVICE

**MEMO**

To: Planning Service  
Fao Chris Johnston

Your Ref: SMD/2015/0665

From: Trees and Woodlands Officer

Our Ref: SM/5100/P.29

Direct Dial: 5788

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**  
**Ashenhurst Mill, Middlecliff Lane, Bradnop**  
**Construction of Two Alpine Style Holiday Cabins and**  
**Re-surfacing of Forestry Track**

This application is an amended re-submission of a previously refused similar application, SMD/2014/0754 which sought planning permission for 4 cabins, together with improvement/re-surfacing of the forestry track. The current application has omitted the previously proposed southern-most two cabins and now proposes just two cabins to be sited in the same positions as the previously proposed northern-most two cabins.

With regard to the retained two proposed cabins and the forestry track, the issues are the same. My comments below are therefore essentially lifted directly from my previous memo dated 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015, but edited to omit reference to the previously proposed southern-most two cabins.

The application site lies along a narrow, intermittently wooded valley running south from Ashenhurst Mill. None of the trees or woodlands areas are protected by TPOs, and the site is not within a Conservation Area. A rough, largely un-made old track runs along the valley; the application proposes to re-surface/improve this track to allow forestry access for vehicles/movement to carry out forestry extraction of Jackfield Plantation at the southern end of the site, whilst also providing access off this track for the proposed 2 holiday cabins. There is no public right of way along this track, and indeed no public right of way along the valley or through the application site.

Improvement of the track would have little or no impact on significantly sized trees, and would involve some digging out and infilling along the existing track with surfacing in hard core or similar.

The proposed position for the 2 cabins is a semi-wooded area on the east bank of the brook. A detailed tree survey for this area has again been submitted, as previously, identifying the major trees and peripheral understorey to be retained, but also some trees to be removed either to allow access to/accommodate construction of the 2 cabins, or due to their poor form/condition, or as thinning to benefit other trees to be retained. The principal trees to be removed comprise 4 multi-stemmed mature coppiced Lime trees, which all have major bark wounds and underlying decay to the stems (thought to be likely to be due to deer browsing/bark stripping), and a multi-stemmed

mature coppiced Sycamore which is over-dominating more desirable native species. A number of tall but spindly/insubstantial/suppressed trees are also identified for removal. In general, the trees in this area of the application site are individually of poor quality and low significance, although collectively they contribute to the woodland character and biodiversity value.

I have no objection to the tree removal as outlined above. The cabin positions are otherwise clear of the Root Protection Areas of the major trees to be retained. The generally wet ground conditions are likely generate a piling type foundation for the cabins, which would potentially cause less damage/disruption to the area than fully excavated strip footings.

The narrow valley is visually contained, and the cabins would not be visible from publicly accessible areas close by eg Ashenhurst Lane and the various public rights of way linking Bradnop, Ashenhurst, Lowe Hill, Birchall and Leekbrook, nor from high ground further to the north-east (beyond Bradnop up towards Morridge). There would therefore be no visual impact on views from the surrounding countryside arising from the proposed development.

The opportunity should be taken to secure some relevant landscape and biodiversity enhancement in association with the application if approved through production and implementation of an appropriate woodland management strategy for the wider site (other than Jackfield Plantation for which larger scale forestry operations would be controlled and conditioned as necessary through Felling Licence provisions administered by the Forestry Commission – see below). Whilst a fully detailed, tree-by-tree management plan giving precise and rigorously timetabled prescriptions would be somewhat excessive and disproportionate to the scale of the proposed development, it would nonetheless be useful for planning permission if granted to serve as a mechanism to initiate some thought and action towards beneficial site management.

I therefore have no objection to this application, but would request that the following conditions be imposed if planning permission is granted:


1. No trees, shrubs or hedgerows shall be removed other than those whose removal is directly required to accommodate the approved development, unless otherwise approved by the LPA. There shall be no removal of any trees, shrubs or hedgerows during the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive), unless otherwise agreed by the LPA and in this case only following careful inspection by a competent person to establish that such trees, shrubs or hedgerow are not in active use by nesting birds.
2. Before the commencement of development (including any site clearance, stripping or site establishment) temporary protective fencing and advisory notices for the protection of the existing trees to be retained in the area around the two cabins and new bridge shall be erected in accordance with guidance in British Standard 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*, and shall be retained in position for the duration of the period that development takes place. Within the fenced areas there shall be no excavation, changes in ground levels, installation of underground services, provision of hard surfacing, passage of vehicles, storage of materials, equipment or site huts, tipping of chemicals, waste or cement, or lighting of fires unless otherwise agreed by the LPA.

3. Before the commencement of development (including any site clearance, stripping or site establishment) a woodland management strategy shall be submitted to and approved by the LPA, setting out a broad strategic approach to the management of the woodland within the extent of the application site as identified on PME Planning Services Site Location Plan Drg No. 1 Rev 1 (but excluding Jackfield Plantation). Such a strategy shall specifically make provision for suitable new planting whether to mitigate for tree removal arising from implementation of the development hereby approved or for general landscape and biodiversity enhancement objectives, and shall also address other related issues including control of non-native invasive species and maintenance of open areas and glades within the site, and shall include indicative timescales and programmes for management work. Following approval of such a management strategy, it shall thereafter be implemented generally in accordance with the details and timescales so approved.

The proposed harvesting/felling of the coniferous Jackfield Plantation at the southern end of the overall site is not set out or described in detail at present, but is presumably mentioned in the application by way of support/justification for the forestry track resurfacing, in association with the holiday cabin proposal. However, it is noted that although improving the track itself requires planning permission the forestry operations themselves are not subject to planning permission. Nevertheless, given the reported planting age of the conifers and the ultimate timber harvesting objective, it should be anticipated that such operations are likely to be implemented in the near future, and are considered broadly appropriate in principle, and certainly improvements to the track would be a necessary provision in order to allow appropriate access for felling and extraction.

Whilst forestry felling operations are not subject to planning control, a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission would almost certainly be required and I would therefore request that the following informative also be added to the decision notice if planning permission is granted:

"It should be noted that whilst the forestry felling and timber harvesting operations referred to in the planning application details are not themselves subject to planning permission, the planning permission for the development hereby approved (including improvement/re-surfacing of the forestry track) does not override the likely need to obtain a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission prior to any felling operations being carried out. There is no exemption from Felling Licence requirements arising from the grant of planning permission in this instance as the forestry felling is not directly required to accommodate the proposed development. The applicant is referred to the relevant pages of the Forestry commission's website for further information on applying for a Felling Licence ( [www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6DFK86](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-6DFK86) )."



Steve Massey  
**Trees and Woodlands Officer**

