DELEGATED REPORT

FILE REFERENCE: SMD/2016/0170

MAIN ISSUES: Open Countryside; Landscape Impact; Nature Conservation and Trees

PUBLICITY/REPRESENTATIONS:

Site Notice: No representations received as a result of the publicity undertaken.
Leek Town Council: Recommends approval.
Trees Officer: No objections subject to enhancement hedgerow planting.

CASE OFFICER ASSESSMENT:

Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a manege (27m x 20m) at Highfield Stud Farm, Abbey View Road, Leek, which is located within the open countryside which falls within the dissected sandstone uplands landscape character type. The applicant confirms that the proposed surfacing is rubber upon drained hardcore, the use of the manege is intended to be private to the owners of the farm and no floodlighting is proposed. The manege would be situated within a small paddock immediately to the south of the farm complex and to the north of the mast. The field boundary is dispersed hedgerow with some mature trees to the south corner which fall under a TPO (tree preservation order).

The proposal relates to a farm, which appears to have previously diversified, however, retains some livestock on site with the landholding to either side of the access track. The farmhouse and various outbuildings are grouped around an extensive hard standing. Previous permissions have established a transport base for lorries with repair facilities. Some lorry parking was evident, but this was not excessive. A repair workshop occupied a building to the northwest of the hard standing area and there was some vehicle storage within the open fronted outbuilding to the northeast of the yard area. The farm building to the southeast of the hard standing accommodated storage and a 'monarch' style of stabling. The farmhouse / range of outbuildings is accessed off a straight track leading from Abbey Green Road – the fields to either side of the track are indicated as falling within the applicant's ownership.

The Local Planning Authority is required to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material circumstances which indicate otherwise and in determining these applications, it shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, in so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations. The Council's Development Plan is formed of the Core Strategy (CS) Development Plan Document (adopted March 2014). The Saved Local Plan Proposals Map / Settlement Boundaries (adopted 1998) remains in force until the Council's Development Plan Document is adopted.

Herein, CS Policy SS6c 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' is relevant. It requires the Council to enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape. Further, CS Policy DC3 'Landscape and Settlement Setting', amongst other matters, sets out that the Council will resist development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. The landscape character is identified as 'dissected sandstone uplands'. The related county document identifies the landscape character sub type as farmland with a policy objective of active landscape conservation.

The Council's Trees and Woodland Officer has considered the submitted scheme in relation to both visual and tree impact. He confirms that the proposed manege would have no impact on significant trees in relation to the group of mature trees protected as G1 under TPO No. SM.138 situated immediately to the south of the existing communications mast as these are well away from the application site. The proposed manege would be sited behind an existing, relatively gappy, hedgeline and some 180m from Abbey Green Road where there is also a roadside field boundary hedge. In these circumstances, the Trees Officer considers that the development would not have any significant visual impact. Nevertheless, the Officer, in the interests of minimising any visual impact and achieving an element of biodiversity benefit/enhancement, suggests a condition securing a landscaping scheme comprising of the 'gapping up' the existing hedgeline along the northern side of the application site with suitable native hedge species and ideally the odd native hedgerow tree as well.

It is therefore concluded that the likely landscape and visual impact arising from the proposed development is considered acceptable in the context of its location, scale, character, which is against a backdrop of built development. The suggested mitigation landscaping strategy has been secured via a revised scheme and its implementation will be secured via a suitably worded planning condition.

On other matters, given the more distant location of the manege from the nearest dwelling, the proposal is unlikely to cause any adverse neighbour impacts. The use of the agricultural building as stables does not appear to have received planning consent, however, given the apparent historic diversification away from the agricultural use of the site, it is unlikely that the Council would resist such a use, particularly as it is contained within an existing building. The proposal herein accords with the above CS policies and the general policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Accordingly, the proposal is recommended for approval, subject to conditions as detailed within the decision notice specifying materials, private use and implementation of landscaping scheme.

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVE**

Date 27/05/2016 **Signed** _____
Rachael Simpkin

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MANAGER COMMENTS:

Date **Signed** _____