

Rob Duncan  
Planning  
Consultancy



# **PLANNING STATEMENT**

**MAY 2016**

**Site Address:**

Land at Bradley Lane, Bradley-in-the-Moors, Alton,  
Staffordshire, ST10 4DQ

**Applicant:**

Miss. C. Graham

**Proposal:**

Creation of Manege (part-retrospective)

**Planning Statement:**

**Date Issued:** 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016

**Job Reference:** RDP/2016/059

**Report Prepared By:**

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Miss. C. Graham to seek planning permission for the creation of an equestrian manege on land at Bradley Lane, Bradley-in-the-Moors, near Alton. The application is part retrospective as works to excavate the land to accommodate the manege have already been partly undertaken.
- 1.2 The application proposes the creation of a manege with dimensions of 40 metres by 20 metres, located in the easternmost corner of the site. The manege will be enclosed by 1.5m high post and rail fencing with low-level kickboards. Access to the site is taken via an existing vehicular access to the northwest which was approved under application SMD/2003/0835. Adjacent to this access an existing agricultural building that was approved under application SMD/2013/0329.

## **2 Site & Surroundings**

- 2.1 The application site forms part of an agricultural holding that extends to some 3.6 hectares. The manege is to be located in the easternmost corner of the site and will be enclosed on its northern and easternmost sides by existing mature landscaping. The land lies at a lower level to the adjacent highway, and gently slopes down in southerly and westerly direction away from the site down towards the existing agricultural building. The site as a whole lies within the open countryside, and an aerial photograph showing the site in its surrounding context is shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site



Source: Google Earth

### **3 Planning Policy**

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Stafford Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (2014) of which the following policies are of relevance:
- 3.2 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to Development Principles and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which

maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.3 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

or

- *specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.4 Policy SS6c of the adopted Core Strategy relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and

sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance. Proposals should also protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. Development should also provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

3.6 Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

- . *Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*
- . *Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*
- . *Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;*

- 3.7 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to ‘Rural Diversification’ and states that development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

#### **4 Other Material Considerations**

##### ***National Planning Policy Framework***

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development and sets out guidance in respect of securing sustainable development and improving the conditions in which people live, work and take leisure. The content of the National Planning Policy Framework is explored in more detail, where relevant, in the Planning Assessment below.

#### **5 Planning Assessment**

##### **Principle of Development**

- 5.1 The application proposes the creation of an equestrian manege on land within the open countryside. Equestrian uses are generally regarded as being acceptable within the rural areas as they meet a local rural need and help to support the sustainability of the rural areas. Accordingly the principle of development is considered to be acceptable having regard to the provisions

of policies SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy which allow for development which meets an essential local need / rural community need, and which supports the sustainability of the rural areas. The main issue to be considered in the determination of this application is the visual impact of the proposed development.

#### Character and Appearance

- 5.2 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands by, amongst others, maintaining the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy elaborates on this further, stating that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape, and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character. These provisions are also reflected in policies DC1 and R1 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.3 The application site lies within the Dissected Sandstone Cloughs and Valleys Character Area, as defined by the Planning for Landscape Change SPG produced by Staffordshire County Council. It is an area characterised by deeply incised wooded valleys running through a smoothly undulating upland pastoral landscape of regular and irregular fields. Hedgerow condition varies from well trimmed and intact to very gappy, with grown up individual trees. Landscape features identified as being incongruous within the landscape are past and present sand and gravel quarrying, industrial sites, stock proof fencing and busy main roads. The document goes on to advise that the critical factors which currently limit landscape quality are a decline in the condition of some of the characteristic landscape features and, to a lesser



extent, the introduction of some incongruous features and the loss of some of the semi-natural vegetation characteristic of this landscape type.

- 5.4 Some of the works to construct the proposed manege have already been undertaken on the site, so this application is part retrospective. The steep banks that have been created are not considered to be suitable to retain the existing bankside, and accordingly the application proposals seek to revise the grading of the bank to achieve a more appropriate gradient of slope. This will necessitate marginal additional encroachment into the existing field and additional grading of the land. The section drawings accompanying the application nevertheless demonstrate that the proposed grading of the land will assimilate well with the existing landscape and I submit that these proposed works, coupled with the open character of the development, will ensure that there is no detrimental harm to the character of the landscape.
- 5.5 The proposed development will not result in a decline of the key landscape features of this area as defined by the Planning for Landscape Change SPD, and will serve to reinforce some of the landscape features by supplementing the existing boundary hedgerows and trees with more planting. This will also derive benefits to local biodiversity in accordance with the aims of paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst the application entails the provision of post and rail fencing, such works could be undertaken without the need for planning permission and accordingly any impact this aspect of the proposal may have on the character of the area has to be considered against this material fall back position.
- 5.6 The application site is well secluded from public viewpoints owing to the presence of mature vegetation along the northeastern boundary of the site where it borders Bradley Lane. The presence of this mature vegetation ensures that the site of the proposed manege is well screened on approach

from both the north and the east along Bradley Lane. This vegetation is to be retained, and supplemented by further planting as indicated on the submitted section drawings. The siting of the manege at a lower level to the highway furthermore serves to lessen its impact. As a consequence I submit that the proposed development would not have a demonstrable impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and accords with the provisions of policies DC1, DC3, R1 and SS1 of the Core Strategy.

- 5.7 In addition to the above, paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including moving from a net-loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature, and improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure. This proposal will deliver net gains to local biodiversity by virtue of the additional planting proposed in the application, and will furthermore enhance the conditions in which the applicant takes leisure, by providing a safe environment for the exercising of her horses, thus avoiding the need to exercise on the local highway network which is very narrow and undulating in this locality, and subject to a 60mph speed limit. The provisions of paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework are therefore considered to weigh in favour of the proposed development.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development within the rural area, and is sited such that it will not appear strident or incongruous in views from the public domain. The proposed grading of the land coupled with the supplementary tree and hedgerow planting will serve to assimilate the development into its rural surroundings,

and will avoid any adverse impact on key landscape features. As a consequence I submit that the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6c, R1, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission accordingly for the proposed development in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy.