Design & Access Statement
Improved Farm Access,
Abbey Green Farm, Leek

Description of existing site and it's setting

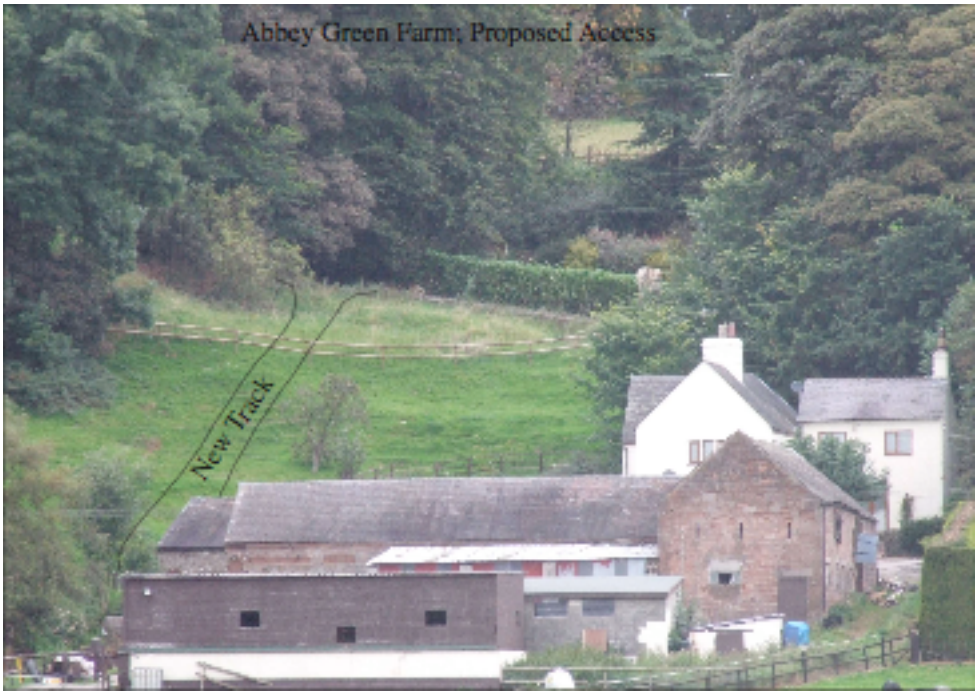
Abbey Green Farm is a 5.6Ha smallholding which lies to the west side of Abbey Green Road at OS grid ref, SJ977 579.

The farm buildings comprise a large farmhouse, several traditional stone outbuildings and a collection of post-war and modern portal frame agricultural buildings employed as stabling. Access to the farm is via Abbey Green Road, opposite the Abbey Inn. Access is via a hard surfaced track which runs through the yard, turning south past the stables to the paddocks beyond.

The existing access has inadequate visibility - evidenced by a recommendation by Staffordshire County Council to refuse planning permission on a residential barn conversion at Abbey Green Farm. Re SM/09/00728/FUL - withdrawn.

The estate is a mixture of flat grazing land to the south of the farm buildings with a wooded sandstone escarpment and the remains of an old quarry to the west. The land is not subject any land management agreement with Defra, eg ESA or stewardship agreement. Nor are there any land management agreements with Natural England relating to SSI's, SPA's, ancient woodlands etc. The woodland is not currently subject to any Forestry Commission scheme, eg the Woodland Grant Scheme.

Between the farm buildings and the escarpment and bordering Abbey Green Road lies a steep grassy bank. The proposed access will be sited here:



Please refer to the accompanying 1:500 Access Plan for further details.

Description of the proposed development

The proposed access will meet Abbey Green road at the north west corner of the site, adjoining the existing field access. It will enter the west side of the farm yard through an existing gateway.

The track will be relatively steep, with a gradient of ~ 1:12. At this gradient, hard surfacing will be required. Bituminous macadam is proposed since it can be laid at this gradient, and is salt tolerant in winter. The surface dressing can be coloured if required. The track width will be the minimum of 3.2m, with a short, unsurfaced branch leading providing access to the top of the escarpment. No turning or passing places are proposed. No fencing is required.

The track is sited on a relatively small area of open ground which is too steep for grazing. Willows have been planted at the top of this area. Further trees are to be planted lower down.

The exit point is on the outside of a bend in Abbey Green Road and given a 30 mph speed limit, affords adequate visibility in both directions. Following a site meeting with Mr Ron Parker from SCC Highways, the following visibility improvements are proposed:

i). Splay radius on east side of existing field access increased to 5.5m
ii). Drystone boundary wall on west side of access to be realigned. Set back by 2m for a distance of 45m.
iii). Vegetation and undergrowth on boundary with Abbey Green Road to be cut back to maintain adequate visibility.
iv). Verge lowered on west side of access so that tall grasses do not restrict visibility.
v). Dead stump on west side of access removed.
vi). Depth of (existing) splay = 2.4m
vii). The splay area at the head of the track will be level and slightly elevated to afford maximum visibility and to maintain the existing course of storm water.

The proposal requires the removal of a single tree. Refer to the 1:500 Access Plan, Provisional Tree Report and Appendix 1, Planning Appraisal, for further details.

Impact of the proposed development on the privacy and living conditions of neighbours and public amenity

The only property in close proximity is Coach House which is ~ 30m from the head of the proposed track. The track itself will be below the line of sight.

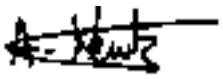
The applicant has consulted with neighbours at Coach House and no objections have been raised.

Improvements to visibility, particularly points, ii), iii) and iv) above will be of general benefit to local residents, pedestrians and road users.

The track will be will only really be evident at long range, but it is unlikely that

the development will have an adverse effect on the privacy and living conditions of neighbours and public amenity.

No public rights of way are affected and there are no public access concerns.



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17/11/09

Appendix 1

Planning Appraisal

The proposed development is within the special landscape area.

Relevant Saved Local Plan Policies:
N1,N8,N9,N20,B13

The need for proposed development

1). The existing access is inadequate, especially for longer slow moving farm vehicles. Access is required for tractor and trailer, tractor with harrow/roller/tedder, bailer and combine plus a variety of 4wd vehicles with horse-box. Re SM/09/00728/FUL - withdrawn.
2). The fields belonging to Abbey Green Farm are linked to neighbouring pasture bordering Abbey Green Road and affords flexibility with grazing and the production of haylage. The arrangement is of mutual benefit to both farms. Access via Abbey Green Farm is required.
3). Abbey Green farm has embarked upon a tree planting program. Several hundred trees are being propagated to provide fuel and fencing. At present, the cuttings are in a nursery within the domestic curtilidge and will be transplanted when established. Access will be required for felling, coppicing and chipping.
4). Access is required to maintain and manage the mature woodland at the top of the escarpment
5). The development will permit the separation of farm traffic from any traffic arising from the future development of the barn at Abbey Green Farm. The barn has been deemed 'worthy of retention', but development in any form, whether it is for holiday use, economic use or residential use will result in the intensification of traffic. Separate farm access will help to secure the future of the barn.

Alternatives

An alternative access point on the east side of the grassy bank has been considered, close to the junction with the curtilidge boundary of Abbey Green Farm. The track would be shorter with a reduced gradient but has reduced visibility to the east and the required splay would involve the loss of more trees. The lower access point would not provide access to the escarpment and would have a greater impact upon the amenity of the residents of Coach House.