

Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy



PLANNING STATEMENT

SPRINGS COTTAGE FARM, BAGNALL

NOVEMBER 2016



Site Address:

Springs Cottage Farm, Thorney Edge Road, Bagnall, ST9 9LE

Applicant:

Dr. L. Pearson

Proposal:

Proposed Equestrian Centre

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 28th November 2016

Job Reference: RDP/2016//142

Report Prepared By:

Rob Duncan BSc(Hons) MA MRTPI
Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd

Contact Details:

Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd.
70 Ferndale Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 7DL
Email: rob@robduncanplanning.co.uk
Tel. 07779 783521

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Dr. Lee Pearson to prepare a planning statement to support a full planning application for the creation of an equestrian centre on land at Springs Cottage Farm, Thorney Edge Road, Bagnall. Planning permission has previously been granted on the site for the erection of four stables and tack room, along with the change of use of the land to equestrian (SMD/2011/0923). This application represents a re-submission following the withdrawal of application SMD/2016/0196 and seeks to address the concerns raised during that previous submission.
- 1.2 The applicant has recently become an eleven times Paralympic Gold Medallist, and has amassed some 36 Gold medals at European, World and Olympic level throughout his career. His vision is to create a Midlands venue for the training of horse riders in both dressage and show jumping, and thereby contribute to providing a tangible legacy to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- 1.3 As with the previously submitted scheme, the proposed equestrian centre will encompass a manege (20m x 60m), enclosed on three sides by a horseshoe shaped stable block that will occupy a total footprint of 576m² and stand to a maximum height of 3.75 metres. The stable block will comprise of 17 stables that will be used for the keeping of horses trained and / or owned by the applicant, of which 7 will be used for full livery. A further 5 stables will be provided for use by visitors, along with a tack room, feed and equipment stall, grooming stall, office, farrier/vets box and two small storage areas. To the north of the building will be two turnout paddocks and a 16.5m diameter horse walker. To the south of the stable block and arena a new parking area will be created, served via a new vehicular access off Thorneyedge Road. This

will encompass parking space for up to 8 horse boxes, along with associated turning and manouvering space and a horse drop-off zone. Beyond the car park to the south will be two further turn out paddocks.

1.4 The previous application had raised concerns that very special circumstances had not been demonstrated to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, and that there was insufficient detail pertaining to parking provision on the site. Concern was also raised in respect of surface water drainage. This Planning Statement seeks to address these matters, and is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Arboricultural Report (Tree Heritage)
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment (Middlemarch Environmental)
- Strategic Drainage Plan (Keytech Development Design Ltd)

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of land extending to some 1.6 hectares, and forms part of a wider holding owned by the applicant that extends to some 4.9 hectares. The site is broadly flat in nature, before rising up in a westerly direction. The applicant's existing dwelling lies to the north of the site along within a cluster of existing agricultural buildings. The site as a whole lies to the south-east of the village of Bagnall, on the western side of Thorney Edge Road. The site is bordered to the south by open fields, beyond which lies a detached dwelling, whilst to the west there are open fields, raised up at an elevated level. The eastern boundary comprises Thorney Edge Road itself, beyond which lies further fields as well as a farm complex and the Jackson's Nursery site.

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. Following its recent adoption the Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:
- 3.2 Strategic Objective 7 of the Core Strategy seeks to support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District's residents and visitors.
- 3.3 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy 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. It goes on to state that the Local Authority will enhance tourist opportunities by supporting small-scale tourism developments in areas outside the Churnet Valley Master Plan area (in accordance with policies E3 and R1), and that development within the Green Belt will be assessed in the context of national planning policy.
- 3.4 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy states that all 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
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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. It goes on to state that wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement. Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

- 3.5 Policy C2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will promote the provision of high quality recreational open space by implementing and supporting schemes that will protect and improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and outdoor sports, leisure and children's play facilities throughout the district, in accordance with the adopted minimum standards set out in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD. New sport, recreation and open space facilities should be located in accessible locations and supported by the local transport infrastructure, protect the residential amenity of the area, be of an appropriate quality, scale and form compatible with the local area, especially if the site is located outside the settlement boundary in the open countryside; and not harm interests of acknowledged importance; and be designed so that they are fit for purpose. The policy goes on to state that applications to improve the use and availability of existing outdoor sports and recreation provision such as the introduction of ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, artificial surfaces or floodlighting will be permitted provided that they are directly related to the needs of the facility, can be satisfactorily and economically serviced, and meet the above criteria for new sport, recreation and open space facilities.

- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Policy DC3 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. The Council will also support development which respects and enhances local landscape character, and will support opportunities to use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape.
- 3.8 Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development by (amongst others):
- *Resisting any proposed development that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site alone or in combination with other plans or projects unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.*
 - *Ensuring development where appropriate produces a net gain in biodiversity, and ensuring that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for.*
 - *Ensuring development promotes the appropriate maintenance,*
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enhancement, restoration and/or re-creation of biodiversity through its proposed nature, scale, location and design.

- *Protecting and enhancing habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity as identified in legislation, and recognising and implementing appropriate measures, including landscape-scale conservation management, to take account of the fact that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change.*

3.9 Policy T1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and helps deliver the priorities of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plans, where this is consistent with other policies. This will be achieved by:

- *Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.*
- *Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.*
- *Referring to appropriate parking standards as laid out in national guidance, or any parking standards that may be produced locally.*
- *Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend*

identified walking or cycling routes.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development including promoting the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through well designed new building and supporting sustainable rural tourism. It also sets out the Government's approach to development within the Green Belt. The content of this document is explored in more detail, where relevant, in the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on the Green Belt

- 5.1 This application seeks to create an equestrian training centre on a parcel of land located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and within the rural area. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the Rural Area 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, and goes on to state that development within the Green Belt will be assessed in the context of national planning policy.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out within paragraph 89 a list of developments that will be considered appropriate within Green Belts. The list includes:

“provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”.

- 5.3 Whilst this proposal entails elements that would normally be regarded as appropriate development (e.g. the proposed manege) the development as a whole is acknowledged to constitute an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt. Paragraph 87 of the NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 88 of the NPPF goes on to advise that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, adding that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 5.4 In considering the previous application on the site the planning officer commented that in addition to harm to the green belt by virtue of the proposal constituting inappropriate development, there would also be harm to the openness of the Green Belt arising from the proposed built development and associated parking area. It was also concluded that there would be some harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt, but I would note in this regard that the site benefits from a reasonably good screen of mature trees that run along the eastern boundary with Thorney Edge Road. This screen is more substantial at the northernmost end of the site, and this feature has the effect of limiting views into the site from this direction. The rising nature of the landscape to the west furthermore means that the development will sit at a lower level and thus will not result in any longer-distance impacts to the landscape. The development will also be closely
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associated with the existing complex of buildings to the north of the site, and there is further built development on the opposite side of Thorney Edge Road associated with the nearby farm and Jackson's Nursery which benefits from a large number of existing structures. This leads me to conclude, overall, that the totality of harm to the Green Belt would not be significant.

Very Special Circumstances

- 5.5 In considering the previously withdrawn application, the Planning Officer's Committee Report raised concerns that a number of the applicant's supporting arguments were not quantified or justified by evidence, and thus afforded them limited weight in the balancing exercise. This revised submission seeks to address these matters in order that they can be attributed the significant weight which we as a project team consider them to be worthy.
- 5.6 The first material consideration is the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Following the success of those events, the Government introduced a commitment to provide a tangible legacy to the Olympic Games, backed up by a £1billion investment programme funded through Sport England. Equestrian is one of the sports eligible for funding through this programme, and the applicant's vision for this site is to provide top class training for his horses and others, using facilities that people would usually expect to see within the Green Belt/countryside.
- 5.7 The applicant is a highly skilled and successful athlete who over the years has amassed some 36 European, World and Paralympic gold medals. 11 of these medals were achieved during the Paralympic Games held in Sydney, Athens, Beijing, London and most recently in Rio. He was appointed as an MBE in 2001 for his services to disabled sports, and was subsequently promoted to OBE in 2005 in recognition of his services to equestrianism and disabled
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sport. Further recognition was then given in 2009 when he was made a CBE for the same reasons.

5.8 In considering the previous application the Planning Officer's report to committee noted that:

"The contribution that the applicant has made and continues to make to equestrian sport is undisputed".

5.9 The success, experience and knowledge that the applicant holds is very unique, and the development of these equestrian facilities will not only serve to help further the applicant's success to the benefit of British Sport, but it will also afford an opportunity for him to train other riders and thus contribute positively to the social improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands and the wider region.

5.10 There are 21 Riding for the Disabled Groups within a one-hour drive of Bagnall, and these groups are the most likely to encourage riders to use the site. Disabled riders will be offered one-to-one or small group training sessions given by the applicant, and thus the proposal will make a valuable contribution towards achieving more inclusive participation in sport, whilst also offering opportunities for disabled riders to benefit from the applicant's skills and experience to help them achieve more success in equestrianism. In addition to the above, the site will be available to help train other riders, all the way up from local riders to international riders.

5.11 In determining the previous application, the Local Authority expressed concerns that there was no evidence of commitment from the Riding for the Disabled Association to use this facility. In this regard I would draw the Local

Authority's attention to the letter from the Chief Executive of the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) enclosed as Appendix A. This confirms that:

"As an organisation with over 500 centres across the UK we know that there is a critical lack of facilities for people to ride; research that we have undertaken this year shows that 75% of our centres are not able to meet the level of demand that they experienced" (my emphasis)

5.12 It goes on to state that:

"we know there are talented (and potentially talented) riders who are not getting the opportunity to develop their skills and attain higher competition level. These two issues are closely linked as the ability to move people through a pathway is key to freeing up space "at the bottom of the ladder" for new riders"

5.13 This leads the Chief Executive of the RDA to conclude that:

"We are clear that your centre would help us give opportunities to those talented riders and help them move on to higher levels"

5.14 The letter goes on to discuss how the creation of a system of training and support for riders was underpinned the success of the British Para-Equestrian team, going on to state that:

"It is vital that we continue to develop such a system and we are clear that a core part of that plan must be the provision of more support to riders coming into the higher levels of competitive riding. (my emphasis)

- 5.15 The Chief Executive of the RDA goes on to acknowledge that as a charity they do not have the funds to set up a specific centre such as that being proposed in this application. This letter of support serves to demonstrate a firm commitment from the Riding for the Disabled Association to utilise the training centre to improve the prospects of riders coming into the higher levels of competitive riding. It also demonstrates an essential need for the training centre (policy SS6c refers) in order to free up space at the bottom end of the ladder for new riders. As such the sporting benefits of this facility should be afforded significant weight in favour of the development.
- 5.16 Further support for the facility is provided by the British Equestrian Federation (see letter enclosed as Appendix B). This letter notes that the centre will not only allow the applicant to continue to train, compete and remain competitive at elite level, but it will also give him the opportunity to train and coach riders and horses from grassroots upwards and thus hopefully inspire not only local riders to improve, but the next generation of Olympians and Paralympians.
- 5.17 The proposed facilities have been derived following a comprehensive feasibility study commissioned by Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (SASSOT) in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, the British Equestrian Federation (BEF), and Riding for the Disabled (RDA) to establish a world leading training centre near Bagnall.
- 5.18 Both the BEF and RDA are keen to expand the range of facilities available for training (as discussed above), with the BEF's Better Facilities Strategy of 2013-2017 noting a lack of capacity in the West Midlands region in both competition and high performance training venues. That report comments that:

“With retention being a key performance indicator for the BEF, efforts to improve the quality of facilities for those development along the athlete pathway is of real importance”

- 5.19 The strengths of the West Midlands region are noted as including good latent demand, and equestrianism being well established on all levels of the athlete pathway. There is also a specific objective in the BEF strategy for the development of a hub centre for the region with a focus on disability riding development. The RDA’s leading training centres for para-competition riders are the South Bucks RDA near Gerrards Cross, the Middlesbrough Centre in Cleveland, and The Diamond Centre in London. There is no elite base within the West Midlands. This proposal affords the opportunity to meet the demand for such a facility, and provide world-class training afforded owing to the applicant’s unique knowledge and experience.
- 5.20 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF confirms that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in people’s quality of life including improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure. The provisions are reflected within Strategic Objective 7 of the Core Strategy which seeks to support and enhance the tourism, cultural, recreation and leisure opportunities for the District’s residents and visitors.
- 5.21 The provision of this equestrian training centre, coupled with the applicant’s extensive experience and knowledge to provide training and education for these riders, will result in very significant beneficial enhancements to achievement and participation in sport by both disabled and able bodied people, and will improve the conditions in which they take leisure. As a consequence I submit that these considerations weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development.
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- 5.22 The facility will also help to encourage further participation in sport by offering opportunities for people to train in eventing and dressage on the site. Policy C2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will support schemes that will protect and improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and outdoor sports, leisure and children's play facilities throughout the district. The proposal is consistent with these objectives and will improve both the quantity and quality of outdoor sports and recreation facilities within the District. Sporting activity plays an important role in helping to tackle various health problems by engaging in physical activity. Such benefits are well documented, and I therefore submit that the potential to encourage further participation in sport also weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.23 The facility also has the potential to boost tourism in the local area. The high level of training that this facility will offer means it will encourage visitors from both the local region, and those further afield. This is emphasised by the comments made by the Chief Executive of the RDA (see Appendix A) where it is noted that there is a deficiency in provision for higher level athletes and that there are disabled people across the UK who want to progress and this facility will offering them the support to do so. As a consequence of this proposal attracting visitors to the area, there will be knock on economic benefits.
- 5.24 It is difficult to quantify such benefits as each person visiting the site will have their own intentions, needs etc. but it is reasonable to conclude that visiting riders may want to have lunch out at a local pub or café, or may be having multiple lessons over a course of a few days, and thus require overnight accommodation in the local area, thus benefitting local B&B/Holiday Let providers, and may also wish to visit other local attractions. I submit that

such benefits to the local economy lend further weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.25 The proposal will also contribute positively to the rural economy by virtue of the new jobs it will create. It is anticipated that the proposal will generate a requirement for 3 full time jobs, as well as a number of casual positions. The full time posts would entail care of the horses, supporting the running of the facility, and undertaking the administration and operation of the business including the training sessions. The proposed development will therefore facilitate economic activity in terms of generating knock-on benefits to local service providers as well as generating new local employment opportunities, and as such will support the sustainability of the rural area. I submit that such benefits carry significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.26 The benefits of this proposal to the economy are reinforced by the provisions of paragraph 28 of the NPPF which states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development, adding that planning should:

“support land based rural businesses, and sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside”

5.27 This proposal constitutes a land based rural business that will benefit the local economy, and derive enhancements to local tourism and leisure opportunities for the local communities. As such it accords with the aims of paragraph 28 of the NPPF and accordingly this lends further weight in favour of the development.

5.28 In addition to the above I submit that the provisions of paragraph 81 of the NPPF also weigh in favour of the development. The guidance in this paragraph states that:

“Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land”. (my emphasis)

5.29 This proposal will serve to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt by offering opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, in particular to disabled riders. Such benefits are therefore considered to lend further weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.30 During consideration of the previous application, the Local Authority had questioned the viability of the project and whether Government funding was available. In this regard I can advise that the applicant proposes to offer full livery in 7 of the proposed stables. Each horse accommodated under full livery is expected to derive an income in excess of £8,000 a year based on a weekly livery rate of £160 per horse. This reflects the rates that the applicant expects to be able to command for livery services on the site given the high quality, competition nature of the horses being trained. At full occupancy there is therefore potential to generate an income of up to £58,240 per annum. The applicant will also be offering training to riders and this will also provide a further revenue stream. The applicant accordingly considers the proposal to offer a viable return on his investment.

- 5.31 Further financial support for the facility is also likely to be available through grant funding from the RDA, although planning permission needs to be in place before this can be confirmed. The overwhelming support afforded to the proposal by the RDA (as discussed above) nevertheless gives some encouragement that funding would be forthcoming. The applicant also has a number of personal sponsors and other potential sponsors who may wish to support the venture, as well as his own personal savings.
- 5.32 This site has been chosen for the development as the land is already owned by the applicant and already benefits from planning permission for the erection of four stables and a tack room. The applicant will be the principal user of the facility, undertaking the training activities on the site as well as his own personal training in order to continue his equestrian successes. He resides in the farmhouse to the immediate north of the site and as such this site will be easily accessible to him and allow for natural surveillance of the development. If an alternative, non-Green Belt site were to be pursued then it would necessitate the applicant having to travel in the order of 5-10 miles to the nearest non-green belt site, thus representing a less sustainable arrangement compared to that being proposed. The scheme, by its very nature, is unsuited to locations within existing built-up areas.
- 5.33 The Local Authority had also previously expressed reservations that detail had not been provided about the operation of the site. As discussed above, 7 of the proposed stables will offer full livery, with the remaining stables accommodating the applicant's own horses and other horses he is training. 5 additional stables will also be available for visitors to the site who may be having multiple training sessions over a number of days or a number of sessions in one day. It is expected that the applicant would have circa 2-10 clients visiting per week for lessons, with the site otherwise used by the applicant for the training of horses. All teaching is to be undertaken via an
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earpiece thus avoiding any noise disturbance. No equestrian competitions are to be held on the site and a suitably worded planning condition can be imposed to control this.

- 5.34 Overall I consider that the aforementioned considerations carry a significant degree of weight in favour of the proposal, and collectively amount to a demonstration of very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the green Belt that will ensue as a consequence of this development. The principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable in the context of policies SS6c and R1 of the adopted Core Strategy and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Highway Impacts

- 5.35 In considering the previous application, the planning officer considered that an absence of traffic movements meant it was not possible to determine likely impact on the local highway network, and whether parking for 7 horse boxes was sufficient. The following paragraphs provide further detail to address these concerns.
- 5.36 A total of 15 stables will be used for permanent accommodation for horses, with 7 of those available for full livery where the owner leaves the horse on the site and it is cared for and exercised by the applicant and his employees. Full livery differs from DIY livery in that owners do not visit the site anywhere near as frequently as they would for DIY Livery, where they would usually attend twice a day. Full Livery Service users expect a parking service for their horse transport but the use of horse transport by such owners is usually restricted to when they are taking their horses to competitions or visiting the vets.

5.37 The remaining stables will be occupied by the applicant's own horses as well those he is training, with 5 further stables set aside from people visiting the site for lessons. The applicant anticipates holding up to 10 lessons a week, but not all of these customers would bring their own horses. The provision of parking for up to 7 horse boxes is considered to be sufficient to accommodate the expected visitors to the site, which in essence will be visitors to the 5 stables, plus occasional visits by those whose horses are benefiting from full livery. Deliveries will be relatively minimal owing to the availability of hay / feed storage within the scheme, and staff will all be employed from the local area and will be encouraged to utilise sustainable modes of transport to access the site. A local bus service operates in Bagnall nearby. Any staff members arriving by car will park off site on the applicant's driveway.

5.38 Having regard to these considerations and the fact that the Local Highway Authority had raised no objections to the previous application, I conclude that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policy T1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

Drainage

5.39 During consideration of the previous application the Lead Flood Authority raised an objection owing to the absence of a drainage strategy for the site and the resultant potential for the proposal to derive surface water flood risks. In response to this concern the applicant has commissioned the preparation of a Strategic Drainage Plan and this has been submitted to accompany the application. This shows the creation of a surface water retention pond of sufficient size to store water in a 1 in 100 year event (plus 30% for climate change). A flow control chamber will be utilised to restrict outfall to a maximum of 5 litres per second. This arrangement is considered

to constitute an appropriate means of surface water drainage for the site and as such the previous concerns raised in this regard have now been addressed.

Other Issues

- 5.40 The Committee Report into the previous application found that the proposed development would not appear incongruous so as to lead to unacceptable landscape or visual impact on what is already a fairly developed part of the rural area. The design of the development was also found to be acceptable, as was its impact on existing trees, ecological interests and residential amenity. Similar conclusions can be reached on this re-submitted proposal. The application is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies DC1, DC3 and NE1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 6.2 Having regard to the provisions of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework it is acknowledged that the stable block and horse walker components of this proposal will render the scheme as a whole as inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It is nevertheless considered that the additional information provided provides a clear case of very special circumstances to justify a departure from policy as discussed within the Planning Assessment above. The proposal is of an appropriate design, will have a limited impact on the landscape owing to the slope to the

west of the site and the mature vegetation to the east, and will furthermore not result in adverse impacts to ecological interests, highway safety, or drainage.

- 6.3 The proposed development therefore accords with the provisions of Strategic Objective 7 and policies SS6c, E3, R1, C2, DC1, DC3, NR1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.4 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to support the proposal and grant planning permission accordingly.