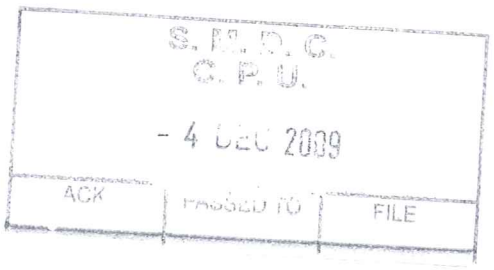
Pegasus Planning Group

MS/01ms1296/EMS.2012 e-mail: mike.smith@ppg-llp.co.uk

3rd December 2009

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council,
Moorlands House,
Stockwell Street,
Leek,
Staffordshire. ST13 6HQ



Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Thorncross Farm, Thorncliffe Road, Leek.

I have pleasure in submitting the following details in connection with an application for change of use at the above premises.

- Completed Planning Application Forms and Certificate of Ownership.
- Petition and Letters of Support
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
- 1:500 block plan of the site with the application area outlined in red.
- Cheque in the sum of £335.00 made payable to Staffordshire Moorlands Council.

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Background.
Planning permission was granted by the Council on the 20th September 1999 for the Change of use of Agricultural Buildings for Storage of Caravans ref 99/00930/FUL. Since that time the permission has been implemented and a business now operates from the site involving the storage of caravans and ancillary activities.

More recent events have however raised concern about the areas within the site but outside of the buildings in which caravans are stored. This application therefore seeks formal planning permission for the change of use of part of the former farmyard to an open area for the storage of caravans.

It is believed that such a use on a site that currently benefits from planning permission is supported by Planning Policy at both national and local levels. PPS 3 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas; recognises that farm diversification into non-agricultural activities is vital to the continuing viability of many farm enterprises and that local planning authorities should adopt a supportive approach to farm diversification provided it does not result in excessive expansion and encroachment of built development into the countryside.

In terms of Tourism Development the PPS recognises that the provision of essential facilities for tourist visitors is vital for the development of the tourism industry in rural areas and local planning authorities should therefore ; plan for and support the provision of general tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities; and wherever

4 The Courtyard
Church Street
Lockington
Derbyshire
DE74 2SL

T 01509 670806

F 01509 672247

Also at:
Birmingham
Bracknell
Bristol
Cambridge
Cirencester
Leeds

Pegasus Planning Group LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales partnership number OC305545

Registered Office:
6-20 Spitalgate Lane,
Cirencester, Gloucestershire.
GL7 2DE

Partners
Anthony Bateman Andrew Cook John Holden David Stentiford
Stephen Bawtree Mervyn Dobson Gary Lees Jim Tarzey
Mike Carr Nigel Harris Martyn Smith

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possible , tourist and visitor facilities should be housed in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements.

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 1998. Policy N8: Special Landscape Area, recognises the special character and qualities of the landscape of north-east Staffordshire and identifies that within the area;
'Permission will not be given for development which would materially detract from the high quality of the landscape because of its siting, scale, design and materials, and associated traffic generation'.

Policy N11 Peak National Park, further advises that;
'In considering proposals for development on land conspicuous from the Peak National Park, the council will have regard to the need to ensure that the visual amenities of that land are not adversely affected to the detriment of the national park'.

Policy E3 Agricultural Diversification; highlights that applications for alternative uses for agricultural land and buildings may be approved provided that they will diversify the rural economy by providing wide and varied opportunities for rural people and provided that they have regard to the need to protect landscape , wildlife habitats and historic features.

Policy E6: Employment in the Countryside, advises that outside the green belt, development comprising either the expansion by forms of their existing premises , the redevelopment of existing sites or the conversion of rural buildings , will be permitted provided that the development will not be intrusive in the landscape or to nearby residents by virtue of its use or appearance.

Policy NC2 Landscape, Protection and Restoration, of the Staffordshire and Stoke and Structure Plan; advises that development should be informed and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality. Proposals with landscape and visual implications will be assessed having regard to the extent to which they would:

(a) cause unacceptable visual harm;
(b) introduce (or conversely remove) incongruous landscape elements;
(c) cause the disturbance or the loss of (or conversely help to maintain);
(i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness:
(ii) historic elements which contribute significantly to landscape character and quality, such as field, settlement or road patterns.

Since the business was established at the end of the 1990's it has provided an important facility for the owners of caravans and motorhomes in the surrounding area. Caravanning is an important and popular tourist/leisure activity in this country supported by many thousands of people. The provision of appropriate, secure facilities for the storage of caravans and motorhomes when not being used by their owners is a key consideration in peoples decision to purchase such vehicles the cost of many can run into thousands of pounds.

Thorncross Farm provides such a facility and as testament to this and the professional way in which the site is maintained and run are enclosed with this application letters and a petition from Mr Morgan's clients supporting the

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application. Nevertheless Mr Morgan recognises that Planning Officers will have legitimate concerns that the use of the site and that it should not have an adverse impact on the landscape or the character and amenity of the attractive countryside location. The area to which this application relates is therefore located to the rear of the main former agricultural building and is therefore almost entirely screened from views from outside the site. In addition to the screening effect of the existing buildings, the adjacent site boundary is heavily treed with a native hedgerow supplemented with a row of conifers and the topography of the site is such that from other points outside the site the area is screened by natural features. Further planting has been undertaken alongside the road frontage of the site to supplement the native hedgerow which as it develops will further screen the site from outside views.

It is considered that the use of the part of the site which for which consent is being sought in association with the current authorised use of the site would not have any adverse impact of the character or appearance of the countryside and is entirely acceptable in respect of all material considerations and in particular, the provisions of the relevant development plan policies.

Yours sincerely



MIKE SMITH
Principal Planner