DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

DET/2017/0013	**LAND OFF DELPHOUSE ROAD**	**PROPOSED TRACK**
Valid 24/04/2017		
	CHEADLE	**(AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY DETERMINATION)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Green Belt
- Landscape
- Agricultural purpose and need

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is a large 6ha / 16acre field which dips away southwards from the main road along its northern top edge. The field is initially gently sloped then dips away more strongly before levelling towards the southern-most third. The land rises again beyond the field to the south and is generally wooded with few overlooking properties or public vantage points. The field is well hedged to the main road boundary and generally strongly hedged around its perimeter.

There is obvious periodic tipping of mixed inert materials – earth and builders rubble – in an area to the west of the entrance off the main road. At the foot of the field there is again further similar tipping both longstanding and some recent to the date of the site visit.

PROPOSAL

To construct a direct straight track from a point 25m from the road to the foot of the field. This was originally submitted as a track 280m long x 4m in width. In response to Planning discussions this has been amended to a track of c.200m but of the same width. The track is described as comprising a hardcore base with limestone topping.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS6c Other Rural Areas
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
R1 Rural Diversification

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 to 17

Section(s) 7 – Requiring Good Design; 9 – Protecting Green Belt Land

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS
SMD/2012/0094 – portal framed building for agriculture (prior notification) – siting and design approved – not implemented and time lapsed
DET/2014/0004 – proposed field track – prior notification – refused due to coming to within 25m of metalled road
DET/ 2014/0017 – proposed field track – prior notification – application returned on grounds of no agricultural need

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity
Site Notice expiry date: 20th May 2017
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments
None

Town / Parish Comments
Cheadle Parish Council – no objection

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development
Subject to there being a bone fide agricultural need as set out in the regulations the proposed development would have support in principle. It must be in connection with agricultural land so used (ie. for agriculture) for the purposes of a trade or business forming part of a unit of 5ha or more and occupied as a unit for the purposes of agriculture.

The prior notification procedure is to enable the LPA to control the development in terms of siting and means of construction.

Within the Green Belt an engineering operation is accepted as not inappropriate provided that the openness is preserved and it does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Siting and means of construction
At 4m in width with a limestone topping the track would have visible prominence. Following inquires the agent has stated that the track would be formed flush with the field by excavating existing ground. It is not stated to what depth. The nature of the material to be imported is simply stated as “hardcore”. A limestone topping is not appropriate and the final surface layer should be required to be formed using sandstone – this would not preclude the use of limestone beneath. The lack of detail

as to the depth and specific type of hardcore proposed could be considered a significant concern.

The siting of the track positioned centrally in a straight line through the middle of the field is likely to appear incongruous. Its continuation to the very farthest boundary of the field was not found logical given the stated purpose is to facilitate access for muckspreading and fodder harvesting. The optimal length would be to the field centre. The reduced length now proposed of 200m is c. 80m short of the farthest boundary but takes in the more steeply sloping part of the field. The siting would arguably be preferable if it followed one of the field edges but this would clearly be less optimal in terms of maximising reach to all parts of the field.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In conclusion the case made to justify the track is noted and it is difficult for the LPA to question this following receipt of additional information as to the extent of the farming operation etc. The applicant's agreement to reduce the length in the amended plan is welcome. However, in terms of siting, the track is still considered incongruous for a rural field. For this specific location however it is also recognised that the track and its location are not likely to be widely seen, not from public places. As a track the development would not significantly affect the openness of the Green Belt . It should though be considered an urbanising feature and as such may be regarded as encroachment. The applicant states however that they would expect the track to gradually grass over once formed. This is perhaps likely, to a degree at least, and would therefore reduce the urbanising effects. A final dressing of sandstone would further help moderate the appearance.

On balance noting the limited landscape prominence of this particular field, the applicant's willingness to reduce the length of track, the proposal to finish the track flush with existing field levels and express willingness to accept a condition to allow the track to grass over it is considered approval be granted in respect of siting and means of construction subject to conditions as to final surface treatment.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 19th June 2017

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council