PLANNING STATEMENT

Erection of stable building and extension to access track

with new landscaping

at

Land east of Woodleigh, Ashbourne Road, Leek, ST13 7EZ



Application by: Glyn Doughty Design

For: Mr M. Delaney

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF STATEMENT

1.1.1 This document is the 'Planning Statement' in support of the full planning application by Glyn Doughty Design, on behalf of Mr Delaney, for the erection of a stable building and extension to access track with new landscaping at land to the east of Woodleigh, Ashbourne Road, Leek, ST13 7EZ.

1.1.2 This statement is structured to set out the key planning considerations, such as planning policies and history, followed by an assessment of the development proposal and conclusions.

1.2 THE PROPOSAL

1.2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a stable building with a floor area of 75.60m^2 (including canopy) comprising three loose boxes, a tack room and hay store, with an extension to the existing access track leading off Ashbourne Road and new landscaping. The stable building would be positioned against the north-eastern boundary of the site, and would measure 16.8m x 4.5m (max) with a ridge height of 3.04m. The external finish would be timber boarding on the elevations and an Onduline or similar corrugated sheet roof in either black, dark brown or green.

1.2.2 The stable building would front onto the paddock, with a small gated apron enclosed by 1.2m high post and rail fence. There would be new boundary planting on the north-east and south boundaries as set out in the planting schedule on drawing no. DM 1607-01 Revision A.

1.2.3 The extension to the access track would link with the existing track serving the two fields to the east. The materials would be rolled scalpings of permeable finish.

1.3 PLANNING POLICY OVERVIEW

1.3.1 Planning policies and guidance are contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF) and the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (A Local Plan for the future of Staffordshire Moorlands), adopted in March 2014. Policies of

relevance to this proposal contained in the Core Strategy are SO1 (Spatial Objectives), SS1 (Development Principles), SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development), SS6c (Other Rural Areas Area Strategy), DC1 (Design Considerations), DC3 (Landscape & Settlement Setting), R1 (Rural Diversification) and T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport).

1.3.2 Paragraph 8.8.1 of the Core Strategy outlines that there is ***'…a particular need in the District to support he rural economy, enable farm diversification and support total communities'.*** A fundamental aim of Policies R1 and R2 is to sustain the rural economy and enhance the quality of the countryside. Policy R1 supports rural diversification and states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of 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'.***

1.3.3 The policy also states that; ***'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'.***

1.4 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

1.4.1 The most relevant planning history to this proposal is the recent application (reference: SMD/2017/0055) for private stables consisting of 4 loose boxes, tack room and hay store (87m^2) and extension of the existing access track on the application site. Planning permission was refused on 30th March 2017 for the following reason;

'1. The building would, by virtue of its size, scale and positioning, appear as an isolated and incongruous structure which would be divorced from any built form of development and sit uncomfortably within this open and exposed landscape. The extension to the access track to facilitate the proposed development would only

serve to exacerbate the landscape harm. Furthermore, the proposed building is considered to be excessive in terms of its size and scale for the landholding which it serves and inadequate justification has been put forward to off-set the landscape harm which has been identified above. For these reasons it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary to planning policies SS6c, DC1, DC3 and R1 of the adopted Core Strategy Document as well as guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework'.

1.4.2 The Officer's report outlined that whilst there is not necessarily an objection to the principle of stables on the site, that there needs to be sufficient justification for them to be approved in the landscape. Furthermore, the size and scale of the proposal (with a floor area of circa 87m^2 and four loose boxes, tack room and hay store) appeared excessive given the small size of the site (1.45ha). The Council cited guidelines of The British Horse Society that average pasture could support two horses per hectare as a minimum. On this basis, it was not considered the landholding was capable of supporting the development proposed. In addition, the proposed siting of the development was considered isolated and divorced from any other buildings or built form of development, leading to the view that it would ***'sit uncomfortably within the landscape'.*** Due to the location of the stables, a '*substantial extension*' of the access track was required which it was considered would have harmed the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

1.4.3 The Officer's report makes reference to the approved development (two stables, equipment store and tack room) on the adjoining land under application reference SMD/2016/0149. This was considered materially different to the proposal by Mr Delaney thus reflecting the two different outcomes. The three key differences outlined were that (1) that application was accompanied by a detailed planning statement giving justification for the proposal, (2) the size and scale was smaller and its overall bulk and massing reduced by being spread across two separate buildings rather than one larger structure, and (3) that it did not require an extension to the existing access track.

1.4.4 The above planning permission granted under application reference SMD/2016/0149, and referenced within the officer's report for application SMD/2017/0055, has been reviewed. The application was made retrospectively and approved the building comprising two stables and a second building consisting of an equipment store (tack room), and hay and fodder store alongside the use of the land for equestrian purposes (the use of the land alone for horses did not require consent). The two buildings are connected by a gate with the yard presenting to the south-western side.

1.4.5 Despite the fact that two earlier applications for a field shelter for breeding ewes (SMD/2012/0961) and agricultural store (SMD/2015/0573) were refused, the stable building was erected without first seeking consent from the local planning authority. The report referenced the British Horse Society Guidance as recommending 1 to 1.5 acres per horse and on this basis concluded the land to be a suitable size for two ponies. The stables were considered to be ***'small in scale and of earthy colours and therefore reasonably harmonious'.*** The buildings were considered to ***'appear somewhat unrelated to their setting'*** but to address this a condition requiring a landscaping scheme to involved native hedgerow to mitigate visual intrusion was applied to the permission (Condition 2). Conditions were also included on the consent to preclude the storage of vehicles, feedstuffs and paraphernalia (Conditions 6 and 7) and restrict further external lighting (Condition 8).

1.5 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

1.5.1 Prior to the submission of this revised application, a pre-application enquiry (PAD/2017/0036) relating to the proposal was lodged with the local planning authority seeking their non-binding views. In summary, the response was as follows;

- Option 2 (the proposal herewith) was preferred to an alternative that would lead to an increase in the length of the access road/track;
- The building size should reflect the approved building to the east;
- The dimensions should not exceed 4.5 metres (including canopy and depth of hay store) x 16.0 metres (retaining the length shown on the drawings) and a height of 3.04 metres;

- Acceptance of the scheme is on the basis of robust native hedge planting along the north-east and south boundaries – full details to be included in the application;
- Details of surfacing of the access road extension and hardstanding areas (to be kept to a minimum), and boundary treatments to be included in an application.

1.5.2 As set out in the third bullet of 1.5.1 above, the advised dimensions of the building are 4.5m x 16.0m. However, the submitted drawings show all other cited measurements but a building length of 16.8 metres. Given that the pre-application response specifically states that the full application is to *'retain the length shown on the drawings'* it is presumed that this written measurement was a typographical error and that the 16.8 metres is considered acceptable along with the 4.5m maximum depth and 3.04 metres ridge height.

2.0 SITE ASSESSMENT

2.1 SITE SPECIFIC CONSTRAINTS

2.1.1 The site is located within the open countryside, outside of any recognised development boundary. The Environment Agency flood maps show that the site is in an area at low risk of flooding[1].

2.2 THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.2.1 The application site is a 1.45ha field located to the south-west of Ashbourne Road within the wider open countryside and approximately 3 miles south-east of Leek. The site adjoins a paddock to the east with an existing access/track from the highway (A523). There are presently no buildings on the site, though it is noted that there are on the adjoining field to the east, as well as the access track.

2.2.2 The surrounding area is of rural character. The open countryside prevails with sporadic development in the form of dwellings and commercial sites including holiday accommodation, kennels and farmland.

[1] https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/summary/402684/353184

3.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

3.1 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

3.1.1 The application site lies within the open countryside where restrictive policies seek to control the amount and type of development to, amongst other things, ensure local distinctiveness is reinforced and special character and heritage complemented. Development that is harmful to the character of the local and wider landscape, will be resisted.

3.1.2 As set out in the previous application, this site ***'forms part of a wider agricultural landscape that has a semi-upland character. The local characteristics are of somewhat sparsely hedged and treed fields and either well spaced individual farms and farmsteads or former farm houses or small groupings of the same. There is a strong sense of rural character and an exposed open feel to the location'.***

3.1.3 It is noted also, from the delegated report for application SMD/2017/0055, that The Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA 2008) records the site as being within the Gritstone Highland Fringe landscape character type which is defined by ***'moderate to high quality landscape, ranked at four on a five point scale where five is highest'.*** The site is also deemed to be in an area of ***highest landscape sensitivity.***

3.1.4 As a result of the above site analysis, it is apparent from the previous application and the subsequent pre-application enquiry, that the development must be designed in a manner that ensures it is not prominent in the landscape, either by its location or its form. The Council advised in the previous application that they raise no objection to the principle of development for the keeping of horses but that this needs to be justified.

3.1.5 The proposed stables (this including the hay store and tack room) are required by the landowner to accommodate his own personal horses. Mr Delaney has owned horses for approximately 50 years. His horses are privately owned for his and his own family's use only and those intended to be moved to the application site are currently in rented

stables. The intention is to move the horses to the field off the A523 to bring them closer to the family in order that they can be more closely looked after.

3.1.6 The two new stable buildings approved to the east on the adjoining field are closer to the A523 and visible in their location (even with the proposed landscaping scheme). There is also Beaver Hall Equestrian Centre at just 0.2 miles to the south-east which is considerably larger in size and scale (with extensive sand schools, buildings and hardsurfaced yards). Whilst boundary hedging provides a degree of screening, the scale of this centre is apparent, with the formal signed entrance off the A523 and prominent, non-permeable driveway.

3.1.7 Whilst the former Local Plan contained a policy specific to stables and ancillary buildings (Policy B22), there is no such policy in the current Core Strategy and instead, such proposals are considered against Policy DC3 and others. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy supports development that meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It is widely accepted that equestrian uses are a form of rural diversification and evidently demonstrated by the numerous other equestrian land and buildings in the immediate surroundings.

3.1.8 The British Horse Society provides guidelines for the keeping of horses: stable sizes, pasture acreages and fencing. They advise that their guidelines are recommendations only and that all horses/ponies require ***'adequate, appropriate living conditions, feed and exercise'.*** In terms of pasture, the guidelines state that the ***'average pasture will maintain approximately two horses per hectare as permanent grazing (1-1.5 acres per individual), provided that good pasture management is employed'.*** This is *generally* considered a minimum acreage requirement for the average horse but the BHS state ***'there are numerous variables that must also be taken into consideration.*** The BHS guidelines recommend a minimum stable size of 12ft x 12ft, or 12ft x 14ft for larger horses, with a height between 9ft and 11ft and minimum 3ft clearance of the roof.

3.1.9 In this instance, the site has an area of 1.45ha (3.6 acres) and therefore under the BHS guidelines could accommodate 2-3 horses. In this instance, the grassland would not provide total grazing keep as the horses would be stabled for part of the time which reduces the effects of long term grazing enabling the grass and ground a chance to recover. This would be managed by the owners who in this new location can visit the site frequently to tend to their animals and the land.

3.1.10 The BHS recognise that equestrian activities are very much dependent on the experience and capabilities of the keeper, and the fact that Mr Delaney has owned horses for some 50 years is reflective of his detailed equine knowledge which supports his ability to accommodate 3 horses on the site (as opposed to 2) with good and proper land/animal management.

3.1.11 In terms of the stable building, the pre-application response supported the proposed dimensions at 4.5m (max.) x 16.8 metres and with a height of 3.04 metres as shown on the drawings submitted. The building would have a front canopy and its design clearly reflects its intended equine use. As per the officer's advice, the hardstanding around the building would be limited, with an area similar to that approved at the stables to the east. The extension to the access track would be what is necessary for vehicles to enter the field and have sufficient turning space.

3.1.12 With the presence of the equine development on the adjoining field to the east, and other establishments in the local area, the proposed development would be comparable to other buildings and land use. Furthermore, the revised location of the building adjacent to the north-eastern boundary would reduce its prominence and enable it to better integrate with the stables to the east.

3.1.13 It is as such considered that this amended proposal would result in a form of development that is appropriate to the rural location and would not cause harm to the local or wider landscape. The building would be positioned adjacent to the north-eastern boundary, reducing the spread of isolated buildings. Furthermore, by the new position of the building, there would be only a modest extension of the access track required. These works would be supplemented by new native planting on the south

and north-east boundaries which would bring improvements to the local landscape. It is trusted that this proposal will be considered acceptable in principle.

3.2 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

3.2.1 As set out in the preceding section, the potential impact of new development on character and appearance is a key planning consideration. In terms of the previous proposal, the isolated location of the development and the extent of the extension to the access track were cumulatively considered harmful to the landscape. This revised proposal has re-positioned the stable building to the south-eastern corner of the field which would mean that it has a better visual relationship with the approved stables to the east and requires a much-reduced extension to the shared track off the A523.

3.2.2 In addition to this, full landscaping details are provided with the application on drawing no.DM 1607-01 Rev.A. In terms of hard landscaping, the extension to the access track would be finished with rolled scalpings creating a permeable surface on a 200mm hardcore base of geotextile membrane. Similarly, the hardstanding around the stable building would be a Marshalls permeable concrete block paving in Tegula Priora Brindle.

3.2.3 New fencing and gates would be 1.2 metre high post and rail wooden structure, which would respect the rural character of the area. This would be enhanced by the new native planting on the north-east and south boundaries that would run their entire lengths. The building would have an *earthy* appearance, with timber boarding on the walls and sheet roofing in black, dark brown or green.

3.2.4 As with the approved stables to the east, the open character of the landscape is respected and, for this reason, a condition would be accepted to prevent outdoor storage on the site. The proposed stable building has been designed so that storage will be within the building to ensure that the site maintains a tidy appearance.

3.3 OTHER MATTERS

3.3.1 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF advises that both plans and decisions should take account of whether ***'safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people'*** (second bullet).

3.3.2 The proposed development would use the existing access track and entry point to the A523 Ashbourne Road. It is noted that on the consent granted retrospectively for the stables on the adjoining field, SCC Highways found the access acceptable subject to conditions. The highways conditions attached to permission SMD/2016/0149 related to access ground surfacing (Condition 3) and visibility splays (Condition 4).

3.3.3 The adjoining access track and visibility splays would not be altered as part of the development. However, given that the track and access are within the red edged area of the site, a condition requiring their maintenance in a manner set out for application SMD/2016/0149 would be accepted.

3.3.4 As was set out to the Council previously, the proposed stables are for the private use of the applicant and his family and would not operate as a livery or for any other commercial purpose. This will ensure that the level of activity associated with the site is appropriate to the area, where land uses generally are low intensity.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The proposed stables would constitute an appropriate form of rural diversification, where horses are homed in accordance with other parcels of land in the local area. The stable building is required by the applicant, who has more than 50 years' experience in looking after horses. The horses that would be moved to the new stables are currently in rented stables that are a distance from the applicant and his family making it difficult to provide care alongside other responsibilities.

4.2 The proposed development has been amended since the previous application, with the benefit of the pre-application feedback of the local planning authority. The stable building has been redesigned and would be positioned adjacent to the north-eastern boundary, limiting the spread of buildings in the countryside. The associated hardstandings and access track extension would be modest, to reflect only what is needed to serve the development and no greater.

4.3 With the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, the appearance of the site in the local and wider landscape would be maintained. The extensive new native landscaping on the north-eastern and southern boundaries, would enhance the appearance and local distinctiveness of the site.

4.4 Given the modest scale of the development and its private use, there would be no adverse impact on the highway. The development would utilise the existing access track and entry point to the A523, where visibility splays are secured under the consent granted on the adjoining field.

4.5 It is trusted that the Council will support the proposed development in principle and the detailed design and so grant planning permission, with the imposition of planning conditions as appropriate.