DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2019/0569 **Valid 16/09/2019**	**LAND OFF THORNCLIFFE ROAD LEEK**	**PROPOSED MANEGE ARENA FOR PRIVATE USE AND THE RETROSPECTIVE CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FROM AGRICULTURAL TO AGRICULTURAL WITH EQUESTRIAN USE.** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on landscape character;
- Amenity
- Highway safety.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is positioned on the northern side of Thorncliffe Road, Leek. The site comprises of a rectangular shaped agricultural field that is bound by post and rail fencing and native hedging. Trees also serve the north, east and west boundaries. Access into the field is provided within the south eastern corner off Thorncliffe Road. The access leads to an existing barn of modern construction. The site is located within the Countryside.

PROPOSAL

Approval is sought for the construction of a horse riding manege for personal and private use. Approval is also sought fort he change of use of the land from agricultural to a mixed used of agricultural and equestrian. The manage is to be located within the south western corner of the field, adjacent to Thorncliffe Road. The manege is to measure 30m by 40m and will be bound by a timber post and rail fence and additional planting.

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
SS6 Rural Areas
SS6C Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations

DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
R1 Rural Diversification
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14
Section(s) 12 and 15

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

National Policy Guidance

Paragraph 48 of the newly adopted NPPF states that:

"…decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Local Plan process

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was "sound". Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. An examination in public will now be held this Autumn is ongoing in order to determine whether the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. Hearing sessions were conducted in October 2018 and the Inspector issued his initial post-hearing advice in January 2019 which set out some actions for the Council and a range of modifications that would be necessary to make the plan sound. The full schedule of modifications is to be determined and will be subject to consultation in due course. The Inspector will then be in position to write his final report. Subject to the findings of the appointed Inspector, the Local Plan can then be adopted by the Council. This will be towards the end of 2019 at the earliest. At this point, Upon adoption, it the Local Plan will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and become part of the statutory development plan for the District.

In this context, the Council's position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is as follows:

- The stage of preparation – the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the Council has submitted it to the SoS for examination
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies – this varies depending on the policy in question. The Officer Comments section of this report identifies the level of outstanding objections to each policy and recommends the amount of weight to be given to them at this stage in the process
- The degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF – given that the Council has submitted a Local Plan that it considers to be sound, all policies are deemed to be consistent with the NPPF.

Emerging Policies

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

SS1 Development Principles
1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

There is no site history relevant to the determination of this application.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 07.11.2019
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No comments received.

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council recommend approval.

Severn Trent Water

No objection and do not require drainage condition.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. For decision takers this means (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are more important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless: i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development is reflected at Core Strategy (CS) policy SS1, where it outlines the Council's expectation for all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of the Staffordshire Moorlands. CS policy SS1a states that the Council will work proactively with applicants in order to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental circumstances of the area.

The application site is located with the Countryside and does not fall within a defined infill boundary of the towns and villages. Policy SS6c relates to development within the 'Other Rural Areas' and provides 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.

Policy R2 relates to rural diversification and 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.

This application proposes the construction of a manege that is to be positioned to the south western corner of an agricultural field. The manege is to measure 30m by 40m, which meets the dimensions of a 'typical' riding arena. The manege is to be enclosed by a timber post and rail fence and additional screen planting has been proposed. The development is not regarded as being unduly excessive in scale or unreasonable for the purposes in which it is to serve.

By their very nature horse riding arenas are predominantly located within rural locations. The manege has been sited within the flattest area of the field in order to reduce the level of engineering required to create a level surface. He application has been supported with site sections, which illustrate that the manege wwould sit below the highway level. It is considered that the proposed works would not present an uncharacteristic form of development that would detract from the rural landscape setting. As such this application is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Design

Core Strategy policy DC1 seeks to secure development that reinforces local distinctiveness and adds value to the local area. New development is expected to be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through scale, siting, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance. Policy DC3 relates to landscape and settlement setting and seeks to protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands; by doing so the Council will resist development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape.

The proposed development has been appropriately designed to respect its functional requirement and the character and appearance of the site. The applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with the LPA where alternative locations were considered. Consideration was given to siting the manege closer to the existing structure on the site. This was discounted due to the level of engineering required in order to create a level surface. Due to the topography of the field, a manege in that location would have resulted in a very engineered landscape that would have appeared prominent and uncharacteristic. In it's current position, although some engineering will be required, the manege will be cut into the landform below the hedgeline which will minimise its visual impact. The manege has been located in the least visible position within the field and it is considered that this application accords with the design objectives of policies DC1 and DC3, and of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Amenity

In accordance with policy DC1 development should achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development. The nearest residential property is 'Easingdale' which is located 40m to the south west of the proposed manege and separated by Thorncliffe Road. The manege is proposed for private and personal use and is not intended to be used for competitions or public events. Subject to a condition to ensure that the manege is used only for the purposes intended it is not considered that the impact imposed to this neighbouring property would be unduly significant or detrimental.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

This application is considered to accord with the policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Lisa Howard
Recommendation Date: 11.11.2019

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council