

Miss. J. Howard
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 6HQ

25th August 2021

Dear Julie

RETENTION OF HARDSTANDING – LAND AT LEA HOUSE FARM, BOND HOUSE LANE, HORTON

On behalf of my client Mr. P. Addy I would be grateful if you would find enclosed a planning application seeking consent to retain an existing area of hardstanding that has recently been constructed at the above site associated with the applicant's existing agricultural activities.

The hardstanding constructed on the site extends to a total area of 106 square metres and is surfaced with porous material. It is located immediately rear of the existing field gate that connects the field with Bond House Lane to the south. The existing field gate has existed on site for over 18 years and does not form part of this planning application. The hardstanding has been enclosed by 1.2m high post and rail fencing, with a new gate located in its northeast corner providing access into the adjacent field. The fencing erected likewise does not form part of this application, as those works amount to Permitted Development under Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended). The application proposes only the retention of the area of hardstanding.

The application site is located within the Green Belt and also forms part of the rural area. Policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan states that the rural areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism, or enhances the countryside. The policy goes on to state that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the carrying out of engineering operations is not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that the development

preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The formation of the hardstanding on this site amounts to an engineering operation, but owing to its open and flat nature, does not derive any material impact to the openness of the Green Belt, nor any conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. As a consequence, the proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The applicant's land holding extends to some 8 acres, and he currently keeps 17 sheep. That number will be increasing in the coming months. The hardstanding has been provided in order to reduce poaching of the land by animals and to reduce its disturbance by vehicles passing over it when accessing the field. The hardstanding also provides the applicant with a safe and secure area within which shearing of the sheep can be undertaken. As a consequence, the proposal is considered to support the sustainability of the rural area and therefore accords with the provisions of policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

From a landscape and visual impact perspective, the hardstanding does not have a material harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area. The existing hedgerows that enclose the northern side of the highway serve to preclude views of the development until more or less alongside the field access itself, particularly on approach from the east. They provide a strong degree of visual screening such that no adverse impacts arise. In views on approach from the west, existing dry-stone walls, hedgerows, and mature trees also afford some screening of the development. The hardstanding is, in any event, a feature that is relatively commonplace throughout the rural area, particularly at vehicle access points. The proposal therefore derives no conflict with the provisions of policies DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

Having regard to the considerations set out above I submit that there is a compelling case for planning permission to be granted to retain this area of hardstanding. I trust this proposal will be of interest and should you have any queries or concerns with the application then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Rob Duncan
Planning Consultant