

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

**SIMFIELD FARM, GREEN LANE
WERRINGTON**

NOVEMBER 2021

Site Address:

Simfield Farm, Greens Lane, Werrington, ST2 9DR

Applicant:

Elizabeth Green

Proposal:

Formation of Equestrian Menage

Planning & Heritage Statement:

Date Issued: 8th November 2021

Job Reference: RDP/2021/063

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Miss Elizabeth Green to seek full planning permission for the formation of an equestrian manege on land at Simfield Farm, Greens Lane, Werrington.
- 1.2 The proposed manege will be located at the western end of the existing field that lies to the west of the existing complex of buildings that make up the Simfield Farm site. The manege will measure 59.4m x 30m and will be surfaced with silica sand and enclosed by 1.4m high post and rail fencing.
- 1.3 Vehicles using the site will park in the existing farmyard, with the horses then led across the field to the manege. No means of vehicular access to the manege is proposed, nor will there be any form of hard surfacing provided.
- 1.4 New planting is proposed in the form of a new indigenous hedgerow to be located along the southern site boundary, along with a cluster of indigenous shrubs to the immediate north of the manege, and three new trees in the far southwest corner of the site. An area of wildflower planting is also to be undertaken to the north of the manege where some minor re-grading works are proposed.

2 Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises an agricultural field used for the grazing of animals that lies to the west of the existing cluster of buildings that make up Simfield Farm.
- 2.2 The northern perimeter of the field slopes down towards a brook that is flanked by mature trees on either side. The landscape then rises back up towards the rear of the properties along Ash Bank Road. The western site boundary is enclosed by a mature indigenous hedgerow, whilst the southern site boundary is open to the agricultural fields beyond.
- 2.3 The eastern portion of the existing field where the manege is to be located constitutes a Schedule Ancient Monument (Simfields Moated Site). The proposed manege will lie approximately 50 metres distant from it at its closest point.
- 2.4 The complex of buildings at Simfield Farm is served by Greens Lane, which connects with Ash Bank Road to the north/northwest. The road winds down to the existing farmyard where there are a range of modern and traditional agricultural buildings.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the recently adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- *a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, including starter homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities*
- *quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;*
- *easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community;*
- *increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce;*

- *a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment;*
- *development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;*
- *development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations.*
- *support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.*

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these 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. It goes on to state that the Council will continue to exercise strict control over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:

1. *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*
2. *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;*
3. *create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design;*
4. *incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development;*
5. *protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, overbearing development, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution;*
6. *promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate;*
7. *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;*
8. *require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links;*

9. *ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;*
10. *ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community;*
11. *be served by high speed broadband (>30mbps) unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access Network providers that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable. In all circumstances during construction of the site sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.*

2.5 Policy DC2 of the Local Plan relates to 'The Historic Environment' and states that:

1. *The Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.*
2. *Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.*
3. *All applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.*

4. *Where development is likely to affect archaeology, both designated and undesignated, the Council requires the submission of a desk based assessment, and where appropriate, field surveys and trench evaluation by a qualified professional.*
5. *Where the loss of significance is unavoidable, recording should take place and this should be added to the Historic Environment Record as a minimum, held by Staffordshire County Council.*
6. *The Council will continue its proactive approach to heritage assets at risk and welcomes development proposals which would result in the sympathetic reuse of these assets in line with NPPF policy.*
7. *The Council will promote development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements, Archaeological Assessments, Characterisation Studies and Masterplanning.*

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt, securing high quality design and safeguarding heritage assets. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

- 5.1 The application seeks consent for the formation of an equestrian manege on land located within the Green Belt. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as defined by government policy.
- 5.2 Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework relates to development in the Green Belt and identifies a number of forms of development that can be considered acceptable within the Green Belt. These include:

*“the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”
(paragraph 149(b) refers)*

- 5.3 Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework goes on to confirm that engineering operations are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 5.4 The proposed manege constitutes an appropriate facility for outdoor sport and recreation, as well as an engineering operation, and by virtue of its flat and open nature, will not give rise to any material harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The minor regrading of the land at either end of the manege will furthermore not

give rise to any harm to the openness of the Green Belt, and no retaining structures will be required. The proposal therefore amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, and accords with the provisions of policy SS10 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 149 and 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design and Layout

- 5.5 The proposed manege is typical of this kind of development and will comprise of a flat surface, enclosed by 1.4m high post and rail fencing. The manege will be open in nature, and not appear alien or incongruous within its rural surroundings – such features being a common feature within the countryside. The fencing could be erected without the need for planning permission in any event, as it amounts to permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended).
- 5.6 The site benefits from good screening from the public domain, largely on account of the mature trees that flank the existing brook to the north of the site. Further planting is proposed to supplement that planting, in the form of a cluster of shrubs and a wildflower meadow to the north of the manege, and the planting of three trees in the far southwest corner of the site. As a consequence the proposed development will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the area, and is in accordance with policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Heritage Impacts

- 5.7 Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage

assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation".

5.8 The proposed manege to be constructed on this site is to be located approximately 50 metres west of a Schedule Ancient Monument known as the Simfields Moated Site. There are no other heritage assets within the local area that will be affected by the proposed development.

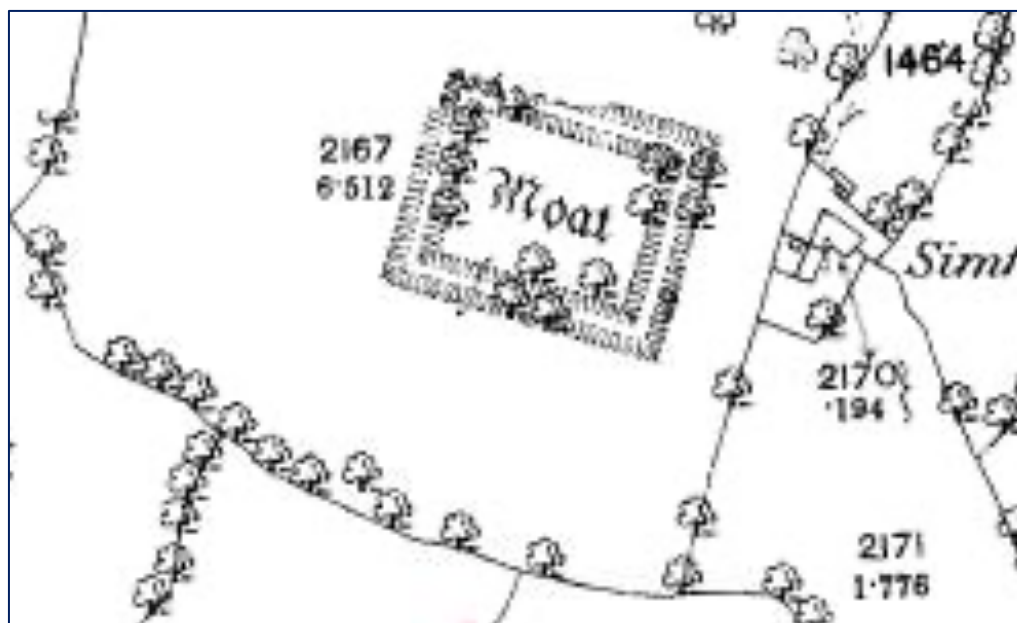
5.9 The monument is described on the Historic England website as follows:

"The monument is a moated site that includes an island surrounded by a predominantly dry moat. The grass covered raised island measures c.48m x 30m and is surrounded by a moat partly infilled on the N side but elsewhere measuring c.12m wide x 1.5m max. depth. The moat is generally dry but remains boggy in its W arm where it is fed by spring water through an inlet channel at the SW corner. A second inlet channel, now dry, enters the moat at the SE corner. The moat is flanked on all sides by outer banks varying in width between 7-10m and varying in height between 0.1 - 0.5m. A hollow ditch leads downhill from the moat's NE corner. On the N side of the moat, at the edge of a 10m wide

flat area beyond the outer bank, is a low enclosure bank 0.2m high running along the edge of a steep declivity. The moated site at Simfields was the seat of the Verdons before Alton Castle. All wooden poles carrying an electricity cable are excluded from the scheduling. The ground beneath them, however, is included.

- 5.10 There are known to be around 6,000 moated sites within England, and the majority were intended as a status symbol to prestigious residences, rather than acting as a form of military defence (Source: Historic England). The moated site at Simfield Farm survives in good condition and is noted by Historic England to be unencumbered by modern development. An extract of the Ordnance Survey Map from 1883 showing the site is set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Ordnance Survey Map Extract 1883 (Source: old-maps)



- 5.11 As a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the site is deemed to be of national significance as a heritage asset. The irregular field pattern surrounding the site is furthermore noted within the Staffordshire Moorlands Historic Environment Character Assessment to likely have arisen as a consequence of

an assortment of woodland when the new holding was created and consequently is considered important to the setting of the Monument.

- 5.12 In preparing this application careful consideration has been given to the siting of the manege in the interests of avoiding any adverse impact to the Scheduled Ancient Monument, either directly to the Monument itself, or indirectly as a result of harm to its setting.
- 5.13 The landscape surrounding Simfields Farm undulates considerably and there are very few areas that are flat enough to accommodate a manege without necessitating substantial changes to levels. The western edge of the existing field is the flattest part of the holding and can readily accommodate the manege with only modest alterations to levels at its southern and northernmost ends.
- 5.14 The proposed manege is, by its nature, and unobtrusive, flat, and open form of development that will not materially detract from the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. It will furthermore not impinge on the irregular field pattern that surrounds the site and will serve to reinstate an historic hedgerow that can be observed on the 1883 OS Map shown in Figure 1 above, but which has been removed over time.
- 5.15 The manege will be located more than 50 metres distant from the western perimeter of the Scheduled Ancient Monument and does not propose any works in the vicinity of the Monument. The proposal is therefore unlikely to give rise to any adverse impact to the Monument itself or any below ground archaeology. An archaeological watching brief can nevertheless be secured by way of planning condition so that if any matters of interest identified during the construction phase they can be appropriately recorded. In doing so the development will accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

- 5.16 The nearest neighbouring occupier to this site lies circa 80 metres to the north of the site, and consequently the use of the site for equestrian purposes will not give rise to any material loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers. The proposal is therefore consistent with the relevant provisions of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

- 5.17 The application site is served by Greens Lane which connects with Ash Bank Road to the north/northwest. The Lane only serves the farm and benefits from good visibility on egress onto Ash Bank Road. The access is already used by the applicant for equestrian purposes as they ride their horse on the land, and therefore is ample space on the site to turn vehicles around. No access across the field is proposed. Consequently, the development will not give rise to any material greater impact to highway safety than that which already occurs. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed manege is considered to constitute a sustainable and appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, and is of a layout and design that will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposed manege has furthermore been sited so as to avoid any adverse impact on the setting of the nearby Scheduled Ancient Monument. No adverse impact to neighbouring residential amenity or highway safety will occur. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with policies SS1, SS10, DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.