

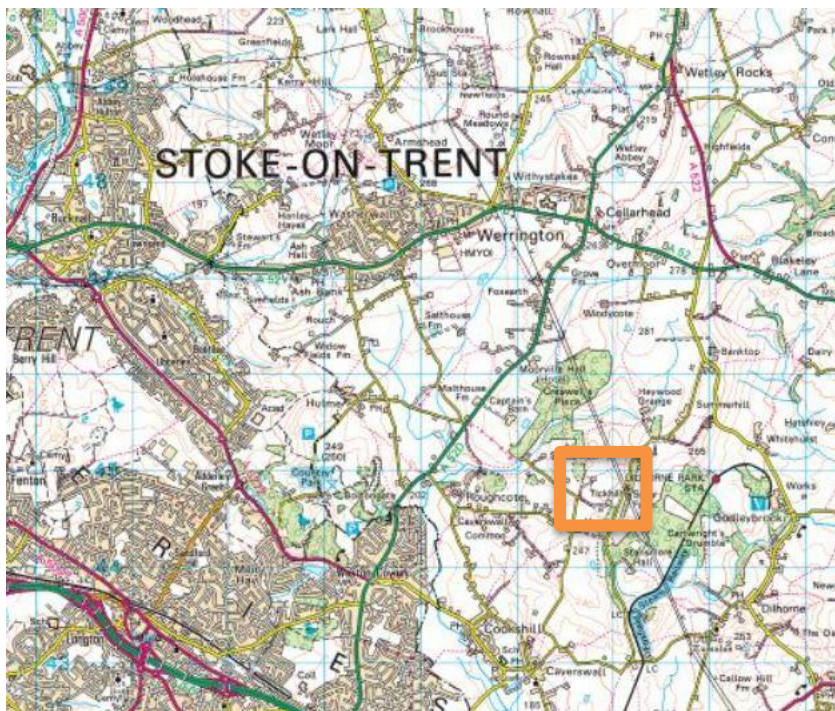
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council,
Development Management,
Moorlands House,
Stockwell Street,
Leek,
Staffordshire,
ST13 6HQ

25 July 2022

Dear Sir / Madam

OAK BARN CONDITION VARIATION

This letter is submitted on behalf of Mr Tony Millar and accompanies an application for the variation of condition 4 of planning application SMD/2020/0298. The site is Oak Tree Farm, Tickhill Lane, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 2PL, located to the south of Stoke on Trent as indicated below.



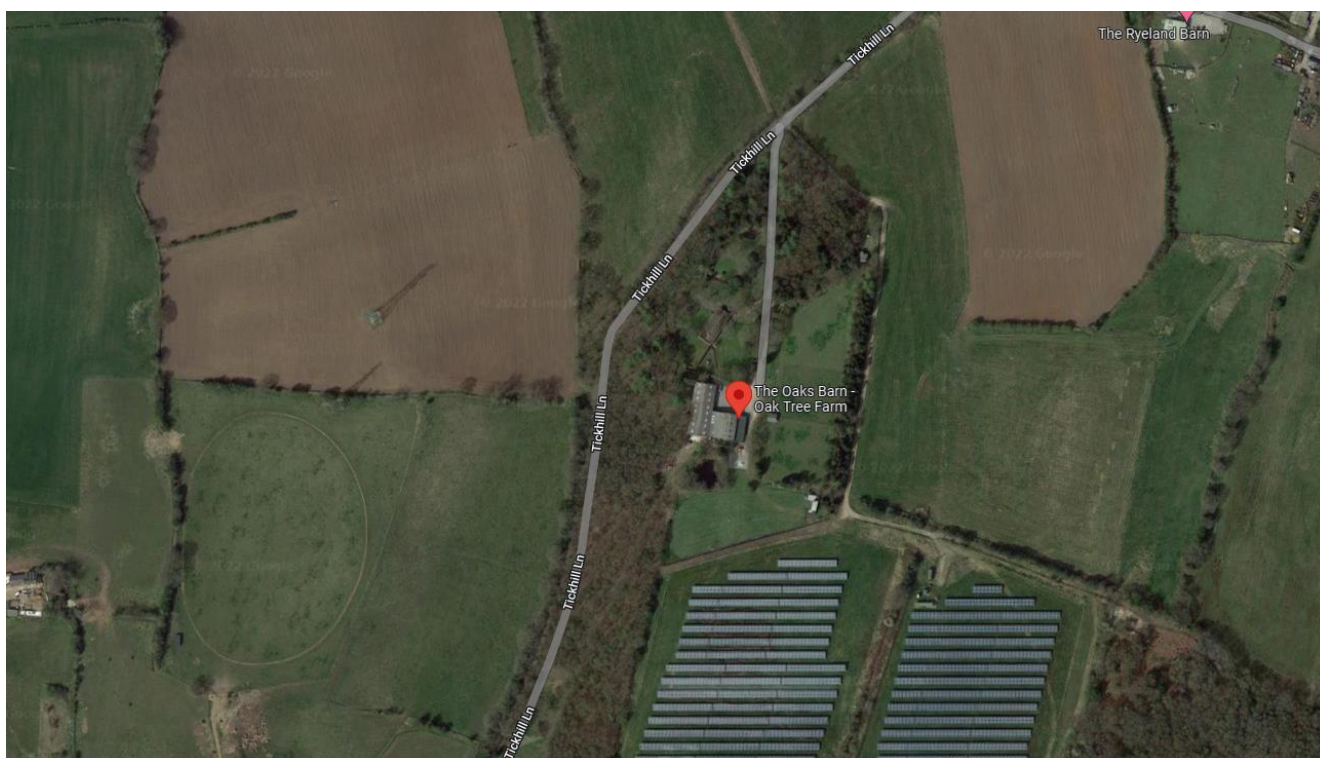
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It is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt, in an open countryside setting. The nearest residential property unconnected with the application site is New Hill Farm (approximately 390 metres northeast). Other properties are located in the surrounding area; however, these are further away. The image below shows the immediate site context.



Oak Tree Farm is the home of The Great Grounds Education Centre, a facility set within 25 acres of woodlands, wetlands and meadows. The centre provides a range of educational facilities and services to schools to develop a better understanding of the link between curriculum, outdoor vocational skills and the natural environment. It is thought to be the first of its kind in the country. The Oaks Barn building allows space for educational seminars, conferences, exhibitions and interactive workshops to take place.

Planning application SMD/2020/0298 was granted on 10 March 2021 for the “Proposed extension of the permitted use of the building as an office and education centre to include business conferencing and social functions.” This change was sought to allow the wider use of the facility outside of the typical, primary educational business hours.

This approval included 8 conditions, and condition 4 stated *“A maximum of **15 nighttime social events** after 7pm in the evening shall take place each calendar year. Music shall cease at Midnight, with events finishing at 1am.”*

This S73 application seeks to vary the wording of condition 4 so that it now reads *“A maximum of **100 nighttime social events** after 7pm in the evening shall take place each calendar year. Music shall cease at Midnight, with events finishing at 1am”.*

The only change to the condition would be an increase in the number of nighttime social events from 15 to 100.

This application is submitted with a Noise Impact Assessment Report by NoiseAir (dated 21st July 2022). The report has been submitted in support of the application, and is an addendum to the earlier assessment submitted with application SMD/2020/0298. It concludes that overall noise levels are likely to remain below the predicted noise levels and also below the background sound levels presented within the initial report.

The report recommends mitigation and management measures, including a noise limiting device as well as a noise management plan. As part of the noise management plan, the use of subwoofers should be prohibited, windows and doors should remain closed other than for entry and exit, and a 24-hour complaints procedure should be established.

The findings of the noise report confirm that neighbour amenity will not be detrimentally impacted upon as a result of the increase in nighttime social events, and it can operate within the acceptable nighttime noise limits for internal rooms. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan which states under point 5, *“New development should **protect the amenity of the area**, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as **noise, odour and light pollution.**”*

The proposal seeks to maximise the use of an existing commercial building. It would safeguard an existing business which has been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby protecting full-time jobs in addition to potentially creating part-time positions. This is in accordance with Paragraph 84a of the NPPF which states *“**Planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.**”*

The business has been successfully hosting nighttime social events as per the parameters of the original permission. It is considered that the increase in the number of events would not impact upon neighbour amenity in an unacceptable fashion with the necessary mitigation measures in place. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with the above local and National policies.

It is therefore respectfully requested that the application is approved without delay.

Yours faithfully

Adam Mustafa BSc (Hons) Assoc RTPI
PLANNING CONSULTANT