

DRAFT Consultation Response from Regeneration Team, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Application SMD/2022/0088

The application is for a food processing facility/edible bone processing factory.

The site for the proposed facility amounts to 2.9 hectares. The applicant is applying for a new 5779 sq. m building to incorporate an office block with green roof and a total floorspace over 2 floors of about 830 sq. m, a main processing building with floorspace (B2)– of ground floor 3479sqm, first floor 1249sqm, second floor 221sqm totalling 4949sqm plus a narrow chimney rising a further 6.5 metres of the south eastern corner of the building.

The site is within the greenbelt. National policy on green belt states that “Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

The proposal is stated “to meet a specific need for an innovative process that is not currently available in the UK and has specific site needs that can be met by the application site. The aim of this innovative project is to add value to bones from approved boning plants across the UK which are currently categorised and processed as inedible animal by-products.”

Regeneration Comments:-

1. From a regeneration perspective we are not opposed to innovation in the agri-food industry as this forms part of the aims of the Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy¹, however the information provided as to the innovative nature of the new plant is insufficient to be able to confirm the claim that this is “cutting edge technology”. This may be for reasons of commercial confidentiality however we would need a better understanding of the potential end product and processes and the potential market for the end product to be able to confirm this claim. The process described in the planning statement (4.2 -4.6) sounds very similar to the existing process and includes fat rendering. Whilst retention of the site is still significant, more information is needed on the innovative nature of the proposal.
2. We would ask, are the additional transport jobs largely on and off-site movements rather than on-site movements only as the application states that “having regard to the proposals for an additional 30 staff and additional HGV movements across 3 shifts, the increase (in traffic) is considered as negligible.”
3. A staff travel plan indicates that currently 64% of employees travel independently by car with an aim to reduce this to 60%. The Plan which was comprised following a staff survey does not indicate how far staff currently travel to work hence it is not known how many or what percentage are local.
4. New commercial developments are estimated to create 1 job per 35m² for manufacturing (B2) and 1 job per 50m² for distribution. The application proposes the creation of an additional 4949 sq. m of manufacturing space and on the above basis therefore it could accommodate an additional 141 full time positions. The 30 additional jobs proposed would indicate that the new area would not be highly labour intensive though this is not uncommon with automated processes.
5. Office block with green roof and a total floorspace over 2 floors of about 830sqm – if conventional standards were applied (pre covid) 14 sq. metres of office space are estimated

¹ Staffordshire rural economic strategy

to create one additional job hence the office elements could accommodate 59 additional jobs – however the applicant is not proposing to create any additional office jobs and the build is to improve existing office space.

6. Propensity to spend studies have identified that between 4.5 and 9% of employees overall household spend is spent within 2-3 miles of their place of employment. In Staffordshire Moorlands this would equate to £34 per employee per week (£1768 per annum based on mid-rate of 6.49%). Based on an additional 30 FTE this scheme could generate an additional £53,040 uplift per annum for local shops and traders and safeguard a further £332,384 which could be lost if the business relocated.
7. In addition, based on existing rateable values for the site, the 5779 m² proposed extension could generate an additional business rates income of £86,500 per annum a proportion of which will be retained by Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to support services for the community.
8. Site allocations for employment in the Local Plan include the below however mostly these are envisaged as mixed use developments.
 - Land at Newton House, Leek
 - Cornhill East, Leek
 - Land east of Brooklands Way, Leek
 - Land off Tunstall Road, Biddulph
 - Wharf Road, Biddulph
 - Land off New Haden Road, Cheadle
 - Land at Waterhouses Enterprise Centre, Leek Road
9. Regeneration do not dispute that the existing business supports a local supply chain as described by the applicant. The economic statement states that indirect jobs in the locality will result from new contract drivers, maintenance, electricians and other supply chain elements, amounting to about 15 jobs. Analysis by the What Works Centre suggests that the multiplier for indirect tradeable jobs is 0.4 jobs for each additional direct job created or 12 jobs. For high skilled jobs this can rise to a multiplier of 2.5 or 75 new indirect jobs. Regeneration would not dispute the figures provided.
10. Regeneration agree that the proposal would generate significant construction jobs during construction.
11. Regeneration would support the statement that the proposal will consolidate and safeguard the existing roles at the site in the absence of any alternative local sites.
12. The statement that the loss of potential employment sites would lead to a loss of job opportunities for younger people forcing them to out commute from the Moorlands cannot be substantiated with the evidence presented. We have no further information on the recruitment policies of Advanced Proteins, or their use of apprenticeships for example