Rob Duncan
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Mr C. Johnston
Development Services
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stockwell Street
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Staffordshire
ST13 6HQ

22nd August 2023

Dear Chris

FORMATION OF NEW AGRICUTURAL ACCESS AND TRACK – LADYMOOR FARM, BROWN EDGE

On behalf of my client Mrs. H. Taylor I would be grateful if you would find enclosed a planning application proposing the formation of a new agricultural access and track at the above site.

By way of background, the existing farmhouse, associated agricultural buildings and surrounding land are currently served via a shared access off Ladymoor Lane to the north of the proposed new access. That access has poor visibility on egress, in particular to the north, as the road bends around making it difficult to observe oncoming traffic. The slow moving nature of farm vehicles using the existing access exacerbates the danger. The proposed access is intended to provide a safer means of access for the agricultural vehicles using the site, with only the farmhouse continuing to use the existing access.

The applicant's land holding extends to just over 8 hectares and is mowed for silage for cattle. The applicant's agricultural holding number can be provided on request. The proposed new access will be located to the south of the existing access, and will provide visibility splays of 2.4m x 124m to the north and 305m to the south. The track will extend for a total distance of approximately 130m across the field, providing access to both the existing farmyard and the fields beyond. Two passing places are to be provided along its length to allow agricultural vehicles to pass one another.

The application site is located within the rural area, and also lies within the North Staffordshire Green Bet. Policy SS10 of the 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. It goes on to state that this will be achieved via a number of actions, including:

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- Sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified

- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape;

- Maintain the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands. Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

The provisions of policy SS10 relating to visual impact are also reflected within policies DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan which place an emphasis of ensuring that development does not have an adverse impact on its surroundings or the character of the landscape. Policy NE1 of the Local Plan also requires proposals to demonstrate that no adverse harm to local ecology interests and protected species will occur, or can be satisfactorily mitigated.

The new access and associated track are to be used for agricultural purposes, which constitutes an appropriate and acceptable form of development within the rural area, in accordance with policy SS10. The new access will also derive a betterment to highway safety by relocated slow moving agricultural traffic away from the bend in the road to the north where there is limited visibility, and provide a much improved level of visibility on egress onto Ladymoor Lane.

In terms of visual impact, the track has been designed to have an agricultural appearance, and will comprise of parallel twin trod tracks with a central grass strip. That design approach is based on the one advocated by the Peak District National Park for new agricultural tracks. This site is of course not located within the Peak Park, but their guidance provides a useful reference point for this type of development.

Existing hedgerows are to be cut back and new hedgerows / supplemental planting undertaken to maintain a mature screen of vegetation to the roadside boundary with Ladymoor Lane. The cumulative length of hedgerow being planted will be more than double the section of hedgerow removed to allow the new access to be formed. New tree planting is also proposed along the track in order to soften its impact and to provide screening of the track to further soften its impact on the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development is consequently held to be acceptable from a visual impact perspective.

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In terms of impact on the Green Belt, the National Planning Policy Framework confirms in paragraph 150 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. The proposed access track has been designed to have the appearance of an agricultural track, and by virtue of its open and flat nature, will not derive any harm to the openness of the Green Belt, nor will it conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. Any vehicles using the track will only have a transient impact, rather than any form of permanent harm, and we consequently submit that the proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The application is also accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Apex Ecology which has assessed the impact of the proposed development on existing habitats across the site. The report acknowledges the proposed removal of part of the existing frontage hedgerow to accommodate the new access point and recommends the planting of a replacement hedgerow on a like-for-like basis with at least an equivalent length of hedgerow replacing that being lost, and preferably at least double the length. The submitted proposal demonstrates that replacement hedgerow will comprise of native species which will be double the length of that being in accordance with the ecologist's recommendation. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal also recommends that a badger survey be carried out immediately prior to works commencing on site in the interest of avoiding any impact to this protected species. Such a survey can be secured via planning condition. The other precautionary recommendations set out pertaining to birds can also be secured by way of planning condition.

Having regard to the above considerations we respectfully submit that the proposed new agricultural access and formation of track constitutes an acceptable and appropriate form of development within the rural area and Green Belt, and meets the requirements of policies SS10, DC1, DC3 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

I trust this proposal will be of interest, and should you have any queries or concerns with the submitted proposal then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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