DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0411	**THORN TREE FARM LEEK**	**PROPOSED MANEGE**
Valid 03/10/2023	**OLD ROAD**	
	LONGSDON	**(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Green Belt
- Design and visual impact
- Neighbouring amenity
- Highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site relates to a large farmstead in the open countryside sandwiched between Leek old road, to the south and main road, A53 to the north of the site, east of Longsdon.

The site itself is predominantly greenfield particularly to the northern part of the property. There is an embankment that runs along part of Leek Road A53 which is on a higher gradient to the applicant's land. The domestic curtilage of the farmhouse together with its cluster of outbuildings and stable are all concentrated to the southern part of the site fronting Leek Old Road. At the time of visit, there was a horse on the pastured land.

For the purpose of planning, the site is located within the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a horse manege/exercise arena with dimensions of 20 x 40 metres. It will involve the top-soil and grass to be removed to grade in the surrounding area of the manege. This would be for the private use of the owner who has a horse on site. It would be enclosed by a low timber post-and-rail fence to height of 1.5m. The surface material would be shredded rubber. This would be above a sand layer and other layers of differing materials to allow drainage.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

DC1 Design Considerations
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

National Planning Policy Framework
Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
Section 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places
Section 13: Protecting Green belt land

SITE HISTORY

SMD/2006/0676	Erection of timber stables and feedstore	Approved
SMD/2007/0249	Two storey rear extensions	Approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 07/12/23
Neighbour consultation period ends: 25/10/23
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments	No neighbour representations
Staffordshire County Council Highways	No comments received
Public Right of Way	No objection subject to PROW being kept open at all times. Public Footpath No. 25 Longsdon Parish runs adjacent to the application site, east of the proposed manege.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of development
Policy SS10 for the rural areas supports only development which meets an essential local need and supports rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas (or supports sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside).

SS10(3) is to Enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by 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.

However, in the Green Belt policy SS10(6) is that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government Policy.

Section 13 of the NPPF states certain specific forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Relevant to this application, this

include (e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds) and engineering operations.

Facilities for outdoor leisure and recreational uses such as equestrian uses are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt under paragraph 89 of the NPPF. I recognise that the manage is large and within the open countryside. However, it is a typical feature in this setting that I do not consider the proposed horse manege to affect the openness of the Green Belt. The principle of development is considered acceptable.

Design
With regards to the visual impact on the countryside, the manege would not be visible from the A53 as this section of the road is elevated and bounded by a 1.3m stone wall. However, it would be visible from the public footpath which runs through the property. The manege would also be well-screened from Leek Old Road as it would be at its furthest distant point from the road and the roadside hedgerow has a substantial row of established trees.

The 1.5m high perimeter fence is in common with existing boundary fences at the property. The site is relatively flat so significant extraction would be avoided. As the nature of development is also flat it would not be harmfully prominent in the surrounding landscape. The surface material would contrast with the grass of surrounding open fields that would be visible from walkers that runs through the site. However, it can be accepted that as a level open area, this proposal would not disrupt openness and the degree of conflict is somewhat nominal.

The plans show that some degree of cut and fill will be required. However, only 1 section is provided. This shows that the cut and fill will be limited to around 1m. The rising embankment alongside means that this will not be significant. However, it is considered that a condition is required to provide and approve details of levels across the manege.

Amenity
With regard to residential amenity, there is a dwelling to the west of the site. However, this neighbour is well screened by a sufficient degree of tree and hedgerow cover to not be affected by the proposal. There are a number of buildings to the north. These however will sit on higher elevated land to the manege to cause any visual or noise disturbance. It is also worth noting that due to the nature of the proposal, no significant additional noise is likely to be created in relation to noise expected to be generated from nearby farms.

However, standard conditions relating to lighting and commercial use are recommended.

Highways
The arena is for private use. It is considered there would not be significant traffic generation or other harms which could affect the surrounding environment or the character of the area.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

To conclude, the proposal does not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and with the safeguard of conditions would not harm the character and appearance of the area or residential amenity.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Lisa Li
Recommendation Date: 10/11/23

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council