

Mr. A. Swithenbank
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 6HQ

13th August 2024

Dear Arne

ENLARGEMENT OF SEATING AREA – CAVERSWALL CREAMERY, ROUGHCOTE LANE, CAVERSWALL

On behalf of my client, Mr. D. Moseley, I would be grateful if you would find enclosed a planning application proposing an enlargement of the external seating area associated with the established farm shop at the above site.

By way of background, planning permission has previously been granted under application SMD/2023/0158 for the change of use of a former agricultural building on the site to create a farm shop, along with an associated area of parking and the creation of an external seating / picnic area. The existing picnic area is located to the northeast of the farm shop, and northwest of the parking area.

This application proposes to enlarge that external seating area to the northeast (81.3m²) bringing it level with the front elevation of the adjacent farm building. The objective is to provide additional space for customers to sit and enjoy the produce purchased from the farm shop. No changes are proposed to the hours of use (08:00 – 20:00hrs daily), nor in terms of the number of visits by mobile food vendors (one per week between hours of 16:00 – 20:00hrs) which will remain as per the terms of the existing permission.

The application site is located within the Green Belt and the rural area. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that the Local Authority will sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion of employment uses where a rural location can be justified and will support the diversification of existing farm enterprises. Policy SS10 goes on to state that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd.

T. 07779 783521

E. rob78duncan@gmail.com

W. www.robdduncanplanning.co.uk

A. 28 Ferndale Road, Lichfield
Staffordshire, WS13 7DJ

Those exceptions are set out within the National Planning Policy Framework, with paragraph 155 confirming that the change of use of land can be considered an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, provided that it preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

In determining the previous application on the site, the Local Authority concluded that the external seating / picnic area constituted a change of use of the land but took the view that the use of picnic benches in this area and the use of timber post and rail fencing to a height of c.1.2m to 1.4m around the perimeter would not harm openness and amounted to an appropriate form of development.

It is respectfully submitted that the proposed enlargement of the external seating area commands similar conclusions. It will continue to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and be enclosed by post and rail fencing akin to that which encloses the current seating area. The enlarged area will abut up to the existing farmyard and not have any materially greater impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area than that which already exists.

The seating area, as with the existing approved area, will be indistinguishable from the general setting of the farmyard / farm shop and will not have a dominant impact in views from the public domain owing to the strong degree of natural screening afforded by the roadside hedgerow. The enlarged seating area will furthermore be located further away from neighbouring properties than the existing seating area, and thus not give rise to any greater impact to residential amenity than that which already occurs.

The proposed development is consequently held to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, and one which will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The proposal consequently meets the requirements of policies SS1, SS10 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Should you have any queries in respect of the application then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Rob Duncan
Planning Consultant

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