

AE Planning Consultants

Little Longsdon Farm, City Lane, Longsdon, Leek, ST9 9QU.

Applicant: Mrs Sue Sutton.

Planning, Design, and Access Statement – Revision A.

Construction of building to create an indoor riding arena over an existing
manege.

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1 INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1 This statement is submitted to support an application seeking outline planning permission for the construction of a building that would be used to cover an existing manège in order to provide an indoor riding arena at Little Longson Farm, City Lane, Longsdon. The statement assesses the application proposals against the relevant policy tests set out in the Development Plan and National Policy guidance.

2. SITE LOCATION.

- 2.1 The application site is situated to the west side of City Lane and comprises a dwelling and its curtilage, together with a substantial range of both traditional and modern outbuildings that are used for residential and equestrian purposes on a land holding of approximately 25 acres. The site is within the Open Countryside and the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.2 A search of the Council's web site shows that the site has no relevant planning history.

4 THE APPLICATION

- 4.1 The application seeks outline planning application for the construction of a building above an existing manège to create an indoor riding arena. At this stage approval is sought for the access, layout, scale and appearance of the building with landscaping, reserved for future consideration. The plans submitted with the application show the position of the building along with its design and appearance. The drawings and documents which accompany the application include: -

- ✓ Drawing LLF_SR_01A – Location and site plan.
- ✓ Drawing LLF_SR_02A – Proposed site plan and section.
- ✓ Drawing LLF_SR_03 – Proposed arena, plans and elevations.
- ✓ Ecological Appraisal and BNG Assessment prepared by Rachel Hacking Ecology – August 2024 – Reference RHE 2457.
- ✓ AE01 – Photographs of an arena with a similar appearance to proposal.
- ✓ Arboricultural Impact Assessment - AIA/LLF/12/24.
- ✓ Topographical Survey - RBS-24-4090-001

Use

- 4.2 The application seeks outline planning permission to construct a building that would be used to cover an existing manège in order to create an indoor riding arena for the existing equestrian use.
- 4.3 Mr and Mrs Sutton purchased Little Longson Farm some 25 years ago and at that time it was used as a livery yard for approximately 50 horses. Caverswall district riding club often used

the land to hold shows throughout the summer months. Since buying the property Mr and Mrs Sutton have simply stabled their own horses at the site and continued the established equestrian use.

- 4.4 There are some 25 acres of grazing land at the site with 10 acres being divided into small individual paddocks and the other 10 acres used for mowing twice a year to provide haylage for the horses throughout the winter months. A small number of sheep graze the paddocks on a rotating basis to maintain the grass.
- 4.5 Presently, the existing buildings contain some 17 stables that are used for both horses and storage purposes. There are currently 7 horses at the site that are all owned by Mr and Mrs Sutton. Additionally, they also currently keep five horses in Preston, where they rent facilities with an indoor arena. This arrangement is not only expensive but also involves considerable travel time and costs. The construction of the proposed building would enable Mrs Sutton to re-locate the horses from Preston and stable them within the existing buildings. The covered arena would then provide the necessary facility for Mrs Sutton to carry out the safe and effective training of her horses on an all-year-round basis and provide effective protection from adverse weather conditions. As things currently stand it is proving very difficult to provide the regular training to develop the skills of the horses present at Little Longsdon. Unfortunately, the harsh and wet winter weather conditions make it impossible to maintain a suitable outdoor training environment. The existing arena surface can also often freeze, posing significant risks to both horse and rider. An indoor arena would allow for uninterrupted, all- year-round training, ensuring the safety and progress of the young horse in a professional environment.
- 4.6 Mrs Sutton has been riding for over 30 years and specialises in the sport of dressage. Dressage is a hobby that allows her to keep physically fit whilst connecting with the fantastic horses she owns. Over the years she competed at various different levels, from smaller local competitions right the way up to national championships. She has built strong friendships along the way throughout across the country and have even had the opportunity to train with a Olympian dressage rider.
- 4.7 Over the last 5 years Mrs Sutton mentored a young horse trainer based in the North West. She is a strong advocate for helping young people to succeed in their career with horses and seeks to provide the support system for riders that was something missing in her younger years. Mrs Sutton takes great pride in coaching her horse trainer from both a personal and professional standpoint. The proposed arena plans will allow her to continue to mentor her trainer and provide the opportunity and support for an all-year-round training environment. This means all of the horses will be at home as they will have the facilities to develop in all weather. Without a roof over the arena, in adverse weather conditions, it is unsafe to exercise the horses and they become bothered when they are not regularly exercised. Currently, when the arena is covered in frost, they have to hand walk the horses on hard ground but this poses a risk to both horses and grooms due to the slippery surface. If the horse has an injury, this could put them out of work for months or could even cause long-life issues.

4.8 Mrs Sutton now also has a secondary local trainer who is doing fantastically well in her horse career. She has been doing close training work with one of the young horses and is already winning many competitions. She is now attending and competing at various championships across the country and is recognised as up-and-coming talent in the equestrian sphere and has had a recent spotlight in Horse and Hound Magazine. Again, Mrs Sutton wants to provide the young trainer with an all-weather environment where she can continue to work and develop the horses at Little Longsdon. Presently much of this training has to be done elsewhere using other facilities, many of which are outdoor causing problems during the winter months. Having a roof over the existing riding arena will open up so many more opportunities, not just for Mrs Sutton but also for the people who work for her. It will not only benefit the horse's welfare but ensure a safer working environment for the whole team at Little Longsdon.

4.9 There are currently 3 full-time members of staff and 2 part-time members of staff who ride and look after the horses at Little Longsdon. There are also 3 part-time maintenance staff who look after the land and make the haylage in the summer months. Bringing all Mrs Sutton's horses home will enable her to create a more cohesive training environment. Indoor arenas provide a controlled setting that is essential for conditioning horses to competitive environments. This is particularly important for the young horses. The ability to provide consistent, quality training is key to maintaining and enhancing their value and performance potential. The increase in the number of horses at the site will also then require more grooms to look after the animals and additional support from local services including vets, dentists, farriers, instructors, physiotherapists, farms etc. The covered arena would enable Mrs Sutton's trainer to be brought to the site on a full-time basis. It is very likely that more part time staff would be required to look after the increase in the number of horses.

Amount & Scale

4.7 The building has dimensions of some 60m in length with a width of 20m. The eaves and ridge height would be 5.25m and 7.55m respectively.

Layout

4.8 The building is rectangular in shape and would simply cover the existing manège at the rear of the existing outbuildings and stables. .

Access

4.9 Little Longsdon Farm benefits from 2 existing access points onto City Lane. The arena would be served by the existing stable and manège access shown edged red on Darwing 01. The residential access would remain as existing.

Landscaping

- 4.10 There are no proposals to provide any formal landscaping of the site but to simply retain the hedges that are situated to the west (side) and north (end) of the manège. Any future landscaping will be dealt with by the reserved matters application. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms the trees and hedges to be retained and removed. Please refer to Appendix A of the report.

Appearance and Context of the Development

- 4.11 Materials of construction would comprise of timber cladding and clear Perspex to some of the walls with a metal clad roof finished in a Juniper green colour. The proposed building is located immediately to the rear of the main equestrian complex which consists of both traditional and modern farm buildings.

5. PLANNING POLICY.

- 5.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section focuses on the relevant national planning policy guidance, which is a material consideration in the determination of this application, as well as reviewing the development plan for Staffordshire Moorlands and the National Planning Policy Framework.

National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) sets out the Government's planning policies for England. It views delivery of sustainable development as a key consideration for the planning system. Indeed, within the Framework there is 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development.' Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Framework reinforces the key principle of sustainable development, i.e. meeting the needs of the present whilst not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The following three overarching objectives are set out, and each are seen to be interdependent and pursued in mutually supported ways to secure net gain across each of the objectives:

- (a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- (b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment,

with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- (c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 5.3 The Framework seeks to achieve sustainable development and explains that this involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural, and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life. This includes promoting good design and the continued protection of the Green Belt.
- 5.4 Section 12 of the Framework seeks to achieve well-designed places and ensure that development's "are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change..." Development should "create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users..."
- 5.5 With reference to Green Belt Policy the Framework says that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to retain and enhance landscapes and visual amenity. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 5.6 The Framework says that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Paragraph 155 states that engineering operations and material changes of use of land within the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate development provided that they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 154 confirms that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport and recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The Development Plan.

5.4 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted on 9th September 2020 and sets out the council's vision and strategy for the District until 2033. It also refers to the proposed locations for development and policies which will be used in determining planning applications. The Local Plan covers the Staffordshire Moorlands area except for the part that lies within the Peak District National Park Authority. Relevant policies include: -

- ✓ SS1 – Development Principles.
- ✓ SS2 – Settlement Hierarchy.
- ✓ SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy.
- ✓ DC1 – Design Considerations.
- ✓ DC3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting
- ✓ NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- ✓ NE2 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- ✓ T1 - Development and Sustainable Transport

Policy SS1 seeks to ensure that the development and use of land makes a positive contribution to the social, economic, and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. Particular reference is made to a well-designed and well-maintained environment with development being undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas.

Policy SS2 sets out the settlement hierarchy for the district and requires that all development will need to be of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and role of each area within its hierarchy. The hierarchy refers to Towns; Rural Area Larger Villages; Rural Area Smaller Villages and the Other Rural Areas.

Policy SS10 - Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these 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. The policy confirms that the Council will sustain the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified. The policy seeks 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. It also states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

Policy DC1 seeks to achieve good design and ensure that all development uses materials that are appropriate to the character of the area. Particular attention should be made to matters of scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character, and appearance.

Policy DC3 relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and seeks to protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by, amongst other things resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.

Policy NE1 relates to "Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development having regard to relevant ecological evidence. Where possible proposals should seek to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development.

Policy NE2 – confirms that the Council will protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration.

Policy T1 seeks to promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys and reduces the need to travel generally. The need to provide parking will be considered on a case-by-case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.

- 5.5 As well as the above the Council has produced further guidance in respect of design and space standards that are contained within the following: -

- ✓ Design Principles for Development (Supplementary Planning Guidance)
- ✓ Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Document).

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS.

The Principle of the Development in the Green Belt

- 6.1 In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment.
- 6.2 The application proposes the construction of a building that would provide an indoor riding arena for the existing and established private equestrian use at Little Longsdon Farm. LP Policy SS10 confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by government policy.
- 6.3 Paragraph 154 of the Framework confirms local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport and recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposal is

required in connection with the existing equestrian use at the site and is not inappropriate development in terms of Paragraph 150 of the Framework. The site is in the countryside, and so falls under LP Policy SS10, which states that these areas shall only provide for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside and supports rural diversification and sustainability of rural areas. In this case, the proposal can demonstrate an essential need to be located in the countryside as it is part of the existing and long established intensive equestrian use at the site. The arena has been positioned so that it sits above an existing outdoor manège that forms part of and is closely related to the existing outbuildings and access roads within the site. The proposal would not encroach out onto the adjoining fields and there would be no significant impact on openness. There can, therefore, be no objection to the principle of the development.

Design, character, and appearance.

- 6.4 Both the Framework and the Local Plan expect new development proposals to achieve high standards of design and not to have any adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. Paragraph 131 of the Framework states that: *“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”* Paragraph 139 states that development that is not well designed should be refused
- 6.5 LP Policy DC1 requires development to be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, character and appearance. The Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands SPD outlines the Council’s expectations in respect of design and states that for agricultural buildings, the expectation would be the use of contrasting materials such as Yorkshire boarding above a stone wall, corrugated roofing, as well as an overhang in the roof.
- 6.6 Whilst the proposal is clearly not an agricultural building, the overall appearance of the building is very similar and contains many of these features, particularly, with the use of timber cladding and a metal corrugated sheet roof. The west (side) elevation would have full height timber cladding with the opposite, east side elevation being primarily open. The north end of the building would have clear Perspex above the timber cladding with the southern end having open bays above the low-level cladding. The photographs at AE01, whilst not the subject building, are submitted to give a visual representation of the timber cladding with the clear Perspex above. Generally, the proposed design is acceptable and satisfies the requirements of the design guidance. LP Policy DC3 aims to protect the landscape and settlement setting, and outlines how the Council should protect the local landscape. In this regard, the site is not greatly visible in the wider landscape, and where it is visible from City Lane, it would be seen in context and conjunction with the wider equestrian and residential environment at Little Longson Farm. The Leylandii and ornamental hedgerow running

parallel with the west side of the existing manège would be retained to provide very effective landscaping of the arena building. The proposal would, therefore, not appear unduly prominent within the landscape and satisfy the requirements of LP Policy DC3.

Highways

- 6.7 Paragraph 115 of the Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. LP Policy T1 seeks to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development does not lead to an increase in on street parking. The proposal would simply use the existing access arrangements at the site and it is not anticipated that the use of the arena would generate any additional level of traffic that would cause any adverse impact on the local highway network

Impact on Protected Species and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.8 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd was commissioned in 2024 to carry out an ecological appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment at the site. The report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and to ensure that the development achieves a biodiversity net gain. No further survey work is necessary and Section 5 of the report sets out a detailed set of measures to both protect and enhance the bio-diversity value at the site. These detailed matters relate to planting a minimum of 7 medium trees, enhancing an existing tree line and the creation of at least 0.03km of non-native ornamental hedgerow. This can be achieved by an appropriately worded planning condition and in doing so the development will meet the requirements of LP Policy NE1 and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. This would be achieved by providing enhanced Wildflower Grassland and the planting of a minimum of 8 medium sized trees.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework indicates that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; environmental, social, and economic. The proposal satisfies the relevant core planning principles within the Framework and the requirements of the Local Plan for the following reasons: -

- ✓ The proposal is not inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
- ✓ The proposal is of acceptable design and will not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- ✓ The proposal will safeguard protected species on the site and provide appropriate mitigation and enhancement.

- ✓ The proposal would contribute to improved animal welfare and provide further opportunities for rural employment.

7.2 The proposed development would satisfy the requirements of LP Policies SS1, SS2, SS10, DC1, DC3, NE1, NET and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, and guidance contained within the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD. The proposal would contribute to economic, social, and environmentally sustainable development and there would be no adverse impacts arising from the proposal that would outweigh the presumption in favour of granting planning permission. Accordingly, and in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, it is requested that this planning application be approved.

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