

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0460
Valid 31/01/2025

LITTLE LONGSDON FARM
CITY LANE
LEEK

**OUTLINE PLANNING
PERMISSION WITH SOME
MATTERS RESERVED
(LANDSCAPING)-
CONSTRUCTION OF A
BUILDING THAT WOULD BE
USED TO COVER AN
EXISTING MANÈGE IN ORDER
TO PROVIDE AN INDOOR
RIDING ARENA.**

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

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.

PROPOSAL

The 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 Longsdon Farm, City Lane, Longsdon for the existing and established private equestrian use at Little Longsdon Farm.

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

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.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

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

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 28th March 2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: 28th March 2025

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council: No objection in principle, but concerns over potential impact on Ladderedge sky line and Country park.

Longsdon PC: No objection

Environmental Health

No Objection in principle subject to conditions being applied to any permission.

Manure: There is no information provided in regard to the disposal of horse manure. It may be advisable to apply the condition set out below in order to protect the local environment, soil and water.

Noise: The primary cause of noise from equestrian training centres/units/menages can be the use of amplified sound and voice, it may be advisable to apply a condition ensuring that use of amplification is prohibited or controlled such that the amenity of the area and nearby residents is not compromised.

Light: The proposed building is an area with low levels of artificial lighting. We would advise any external lighting is selected and installed so as not increase pre-existing luminance levels.

Tree Officer

Awaited/no response within consultation period

Staffs Wildlife Trust

Awaited/no response within consultation period

Severn Trent Water

Awaited/no response within consultation period

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Substantial weight should be attributed to any harm to the Green Belt. Planning permission should not be granted unless there are other considerations, amounting to 'very special circumstances', that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harms that would result from the development.

One of the included exceptions in the NPPF is at paragraph 154(b) "the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport and outdoor 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 applicant seeks to rely on that exception. It is submitted that "the proposal is required in connection with the existing equestrian use at the site".

We are told that currently the applicant owns 7 horses at the site connected in, particular, to the sport of dressage. It is the applicant's evidence that the covered arena would provide "necessary" facility for the safe and effective training of the horses on an all-year-round basis and provide effective protection from adverse weather conditions. The applicant spends considerable time and money using an indoor facility in Preston on which she is currently reliant.

On the applicant's evidence it is clear that they are not involved in a sport can truly be described as 'outdoor', rather, on their evidence, it is a sport that is critically dependent on being carried on using indoor facility. Indeed, all of the exercise and training at the site, the essence of dressage, would, if the development were carried out, be carried on indoors. The proposed development therefore would not be facility for outdoor sport or recreation. Moreover, as a facility provided only in relation to the applicant's own private hobby and pursuit, the building's size and scale would be disproportionately large and cannot be considered 'appropriate facility' in those regards. The development is not therefore provided for by the specified exception and it would be inappropriate development and harmful to the Green Belt.

Moreover, the considerable size of the building to the western edge of the existing site would be harmful to the spatial aspects of the Green Belt's openness and would cause encroachment into the countryside. The development would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

There would be conflict with the terms of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Landscape and the Area

The development would not appear particularly intrusive or prominent in the landscape. The site is on the other, western, side of a range of sheds and stables that conceal and screen the existing arena from the approach road City Lane. Hedgerow enclosure and tree line also assist in these regards. Despite the considerable height and length of the proposed building it would be seen in that context and have a presence in a grouping of, and against, buildings of a similar size and appearance.



View From City Lane

By reason of land profiles, the distances involved, and the arrangement of hedgerow and tree line, none of the site or the existing buildings are visible from Ladderedge or School Lane to the south or Devils Lane to the west. In these regards, the building would assimilate into the landscape and would not appear overly intrusive or prominent from any vantage. Moreover, the building would be agrarian in character and appearance and would be similar to the adjacent buildings at the site and farm buildings within the locality.

Aerial photographs indicate that an outdoor arena had been provided in this location by the end of the last century. By 2006, an enclosing hedgerow and a grouping of trees to the arena's north eastern corner had been planted. They had become established in the proceeding 20 years. Landscaping proposals are reserved, but where the proposed building would require the removal of four of the planted trees and impact on the quality of hedgerow. A new replacement planting scheme could be required to include Biodiversity net gain. Within a similar time frame new trees and hedgerow could replace and enhance such landscape features.

There would be no conflict with policies DC1 or DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020 in these regards.

Other considerations

The applicant in their submissions makes a case for need and says more about their activities.

The applicant has ridden for over 30 years, her dressage hobby allows her to keep physically fit whilst connecting with her horses. She competes at various different levels. She mentors a young horse trainer based in the North West and helps young people to succeed in their career with horses.

It is said that 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. It is said that the development will allow the applicant to increase the number of horses at the site and that this 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. It is very likely that more part time staff would be required to look after the increase in the number of horses.

Essentially, it seems, the applicant's hobby and private pursuits are of a scale that attracts some employment for staff that look after the horses. It is put, that if the sports and activities became primarily 'indoor', with the provision of the development, then she would be able to employ more people at the site.

Overall, these considerations attract very little weight, they do no amount to 'very special circumstances' that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that would be caused by the provision of a very large indoor riding facility.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development would be inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt because it is not provided for by any of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Specifically, it is not considered that the development would provide an appropriate facility for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation. The development would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. There are no considerations that would amount to 'very special circumstances' and clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. There would be conflict with the terms of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 28th March 2025

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council