



ORCHARD

STRUCTURAL DESIGN

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Planning and Design and Access Statement in Support of a Change of Use Application at Higherland Farm, Caverswall Common, Caverswall, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9EU, for Mr and Mrs L. Termine, and to be known as "Higherland Stone" – A Small-Scale Stone Products Supply Merchants Business on part of the existing Land area and utilising Existing Buildings.

1.0 Introduction

This application seeks planning permission for the change of use of 2 no. existing agricultural barn buildings, which it is understood, were changed into Craft Workshop use in a planning consent in 2000, and change of use of the adjoining land, shown edged red in the accompanying Location Plan and Block Plan, within this area of Caverswall to support a new rural business: Higherland Stone — a locally focused, small-scale stone products supply merchants operation.

The proposal represents a viable, low-impact re-use of existing under-utilised rural land and the existing buildings, without any major alterations, with the prospect of direct economic, community, and sustainability benefits. The business model has been carefully developed by the Applicant, to be both appropriate to the site's setting and to be financially realistic, with clear employment generation and minimal disruption to the surrounding area.

1.1 The Site

The site is located in the Green Belt, on the south side of the Caverswall Common carriageway between Sandy Lane and Laburnam Cottage behind a large screening hedgerow boundary.

1.2 Previous Planning History

SMD / 2000 / 0135 – Change of use of rural buildings into craft workshops – Approved 29/ 11 / 2000

SMD / 2004 / 0096 – Use of agricultural building for archive / document building – Approved 25 / 5 / 2004

SMD / 2014 / 0070 – Formation of open air menage (and change of use of land) – Approved 18 / 06 / 2014

1.3 Planning Policy

The Planning Policy is set by the Adopted Local Plan 2014 – 2033 as adopted in September 2020.

From the National Planning Policy Framework, Local Plans must be consistent with Government policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out Government policy regarding planning matters. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF is a critical element of national planning policy in relation to Local Plans. It states that: "At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision taking."

This "presumption in favour of sustainable development" makes it clear that the District Council should seek to meet identified needs for development in Staffordshire Moorlands in the Local Plan unless there are very clear and robust reasons not to do so.

Smaller Villages Area Strategy – Policy SS9 - The smaller villages have a more limited role as service centres, but they are vital to the rural areas particularly in terms of providing for local housing and rural employment

needs. A major issue for smaller villages is the loss of local population through lack of housing opportunities. The proposed strategy for the smaller villages therefore seeks to allow an appropriate level of sensitive development which enhances community vitality.

2.0. Nature and Scale of the Business

Higherland Stone will supply pre-packed Indian stone, porcelain paving, and associated landscaping materials to both retail and trade customers. The business will operate on weekdays only (Monday to Friday, 08:00–16:00), and the business model is designed for modest but sustainable throughput.

While the operation is intended to remain relatively small in nature, within the confines of the application site, edged red on the enclosed application drawings, it is also commercially viable and based on realistic customer and delivery expectations. It is intended that the business will employ three staff members from the local area in addition to the company directors who already reside at Higherland Farm.

2.1 Operational estimates (daily average):

- **Private retail customers visiting the site to view products:** ~1- 2 per day
- **Trade customers collecting in vans or small flatbed trucks (up to 3.5 tonnes):** ~10 - 15 per day
- **Larger trade collections (7.5-tonne vehicles):** ~1–2 per day
- **Deliveries to customers:** Up to 5 per week using a **3.5-tonne flatbed delivery truck** (based at the site)
- **Inbound supplier deliveries:** Typically, 1 x **18-tonne rigid truck with Hyab type crane every 2-4 weeks**.

This customer and vehicle movement profile reflects a realistic, sustainable throughput assessed on local landscaping and domestic building demand, based upon the Applicants experience in the Landscape Contracting business, while remaining entirely appropriate to the scale and location of the site.

2.2 Use of Existing Buildings and Facilities

The proposal involves no new buildings or structural changes. All operational activities, including product storage, loading, and staff facilities, will take place within 2 no. existing barn buildings. These buildings are structurally sound, weatherproof and well-suited to this purpose.

Three staff members will use an existing internal room for staff welfare purposes. An accessible type **WC facility** is to be installed within one of the barn buildings for staff and customer use, comprising of an accessible cubicle (minimum 2.2m x 1.5m with an outward-opening 1m wide door). The facilities will be connected to the existing foul drainage system for the property.

3.0 Access, Highway Safety and Vehicle Management

Access into the site will be created from the Caverswall Common carriageway via a proposed new vehicle access and gateway. The entrance gates will be **recessed by 10 metres** from the carriageway, with a **minimum 6m kerb radius**, and surfaced in concrete paving or similar hard paved durable material extending to a further **10 metres** into the site.

- **Proposed entrance width:** 7.3 metres wide access road, allowing for two-way traffic and safe access by delivery vehicles.
- **Vehicle types expected:**
 - 3.5-tonne flatbed trucks
 - 7.5-tonne rigid bed lorries
 - Up to 18-tonne rigid delivery vehicles with drop-sides and cranes for offloading stone filled pallets

The main external product display and storage area will be created within the existing former menage compound and be finished with a new levelled and compacted **hardcore base**.

Customer parking will be provided in a dedicated area with permeable block paving, with sufficient space for 4–5 vehicles including a marked accessible bay.

No reversing or waiting will take place on the public highway. Vehicle circulation within the site will be managed to avoid conflict with other vehicles and to ensure pedestrian safety and efficiency.

Beyond the hard surfaced vehicle access route, the remaining on-site vehicle turning, delivery and unloading areas will be provided in a stone, rolled and compacted hardcore finish, where the required turning area for the manoeuvrability of the largest expected trucks is shown on the enclosed application Block Plan drawing.

It is expected that the main access route to the site will take place via Roughcote Lane from the A520 Leek Road, which links Weston Coyney and Meir beyond with Cellarhead and Leek beyond. The Leek Road to Roughcote Lane road junction was improved by Staffordshire County Council some 30+ years ago.

Roughcote Lane also accesses to Cookshill and the Caverswall Village centre.

Caverswall Common in the eastwards direction adjoins to Handley Banks, which heads towards Dilhorne in the southerly direction.

4.0 Environmental and Amenity Considerations

The proposal has been designed to maintain a quiet, clean, and well-managed rural environment:

Noise: Work will be carried out during standard daytime hours only, with no evening operation. Machinery and equipment used will be limited in scale, and all activities will be managed to minimise disturbance. (1 electric / gas forklift truck to be used)

- **Lighting:** Low-level, directional fixtures (winter use only), designed to avoid light spread
- **Waste:** Minimal — offcuts and packaging to be recycled or removed by licensed contractors
- **Drainage:** Surface water will be managed via soakaway / sustainable drainage systems;
- **NO** hazardous materials will be stored, nor required
- **Visual impact:** Any materials stored outside will be kept tidy and positioned discreetly to minimise visibility from neighbouring properties and the road. If needed, screening or existing natural boundaries will be used to soften the view. It is anticipated that the external yard storage will include and contain pallet loaded products – stored 2 pallets high (approx 2.5m high). There is substantial existing hedgerow screening to the northern Caverswall Common carriageway boundary, which is not expected to require any additional supplementation. The eastern boundary adjoining to Laburnum Cottage has a 20 metre long approx. 2 metre high timber fence along the boundary which is aligned to the side of the dwelling house and it is proposed that this length of boundary be more effectively screened by the planting of a 3 metre high conifer trees hedgerow set 2 metres inside of the boundary line, which will then be lapped with the remaining hedgerow boundary between the properties. The southern boundary is formed by a traditional timber post and rail fence which adjoins the neighbouring field plot.
- As no new structures are proposed, the visual impact will be minimal, and the overall character of the area will remain unchanged.

There are no Flood Risk issues associated with the property.

5.0 Policy and Green Belt Context

National Green Belt policy allows for the reuse of permanent, substantial buildings where the openness is preserved and no conflict arises with the purposes of Green Belt designation.

This application satisfies those criteria:

- No new built form, hardstanding or boundary treatment beyond existing arrangements

- No intensification of land use beyond the existing land footprint
- Business activity remains consistent with a rural setting and scale

The proposal supports **rural diversification**, **local employment**, and **productive re-use** of buildings, aligning with Paragraphs 84 and 87 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the local Core Strategy objectives for economic sustainability in rural areas.

6.0 Local Context and Precedent

The Caverswall Common locality has a history of accommodating rural commercial uses. This application proposal reflects the pattern of dispersed small-scale enterprise and compliments the existing land use context.

A handful of nearby rural businesses include:

- **Acres Green**, Caverswall Common – Turf, Topsoil and woodchip product supplies
- **Hardiwick Kennels**, Caverswall Common – Pet boarding services
- **Hardiwick Farm**, Handley Banks
- **Ward Mill Farm**, Handley Banks
- **AG Services** , Caverswall Common - Car body repairs shop
- **Caverswall Creamery**, Caverswall - Farm, milkshakes, Ice-cream
- **Former Tick Hill / Hardiwick Quarry**– Caverswall Common – 4 X 4 off roading
- **Bobbys Ice Cream Parlour & Tea Room** - Hulme Lane – Farm, Café, ice-cream, cakes
- **Stone Valley - operated by Pankhurst International Ltd**, a landscape products and supplies business operates in Roughcote at the old quarry, but their main access is served by their own dedicated road access onto the A520 Leek Road as no trade access is allowed from the end of Roughcote Lane (No Through Road). The business was previously operated by Martin Pankhurst who passed away suddenly on 13th July 2024 and the business is now operated by surviving family members.
- **There are also 2 no plant nurseries in eye view of the proposed location of Higerhland Stone that have now ceased trading** – Martindale Nurseries & Gravel Bank Nurseries due to family retirement.
- **Foxfield Railway** - runs from NE to SE of Caverswall
- **Roughcote Hall Farm** - Care Home

These operations share similar characteristics and larger in terms of scale, access requirements, and business model, demonstrating clear local precedent for this type of use within a rural setting.

7.0 Economic and Community Benefit

The proposal will deliver immediate and long-term economic value:

- **Secure employment** for three staff
- **Use of local suppliers and hauliers**, retaining value within the local economy
- **Revitalisation of underused rural land and buildings**
- **Supply chain support** for local landscaping and construction activity, indirectly aiding delivery of regeneration and housing initiatives

The business is designed for **long-term sustainability**, with realistic operational figures that provide confidence in its commercial viability.

Conclusion

The proposal represents a **balanced and appropriate reuse** of rural land and buildings. It is of a relatively small scale in operation and nature that complements the local setting, offers a realistic and viable business model, and contributes positively to the local economy without compromising the openness or character of the Green Belt.

We respectfully request that planning permission be granted for this change of use, enabling the site to support sustainable rural enterprise in a way that is both respectful and beneficial to the local area.

END.

Martin Levie

Orchard Structural Design Ltd

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