
From: Emma Termine 28 November 2025 21:08
Sent: Planning Comments (SMDC)
To: Re: Comment submitted for Planning application
Subject:

Hi,

Could you please use this version for the public portal? The formatting in the web form is misaligned, and given the amount of information included, it's important that it's presented correctly.

Many Thanks

Mrs Termine

Application Reference: SMD/2025/0385

Site: Higherland Farm, Caverswall Common, Caverswall, ST11 9EU

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Termine

Proposal: Proposed change of use of existing barns, manege, and land (edged red on submitted plans), including new vehicle access, gateway, hardstanding, turning and parking areas, and tree planting, to form a Landscape Stone Products Retail and Trade Supply Business.

We note that a significant proportion of the objections submitted share remarkably similar wording, structure, and themes. This pattern suggests that some responses may have been influenced by commentary circulated within the village, rather than reflecting an independent assessment of the planning proposal. Indeed, the correspondence appears largely concentrated in the areas to which letters were specifically sent, further indicating that a coordinated campaign may have shaped the content of multiple objections. While we fully respect the right of residents to express their views on planning matters, it is important to recognise that these submissions may not represent a fully independent or balanced evaluation of the proposal. Below, we have provided our response to the material planning concerns raised. As a matter of courtesy, we have also addressed some non-material concerns, even where they fall outside the core planning considerations. In addition, we are aware of claims that work has already begun for the Stone Merchants. We want to be absolutely clear that this is categorically not the case.

Clarifying the Nature of the Business - This Is Not an Industrial Operation

It is important to address a fundamental misunderstanding: a landscape stone retail and trade supply business does not operate as industrial use. This proposal is for a retail and trade counter operation, not a quarry, not a concrete batching plant, and not a recycling facility. Our activities centre on displaying stone products for customers to view, providing advice on suitability and specification, and arranging deliveries. The majority of customer visits will be by car or

small van.

In practical terms, the business functions much like a garden centre or a builders merchant both well-established uses that operate successfully in rural settings without generating the significant impacts some objectors have suggested.

Highway Authority - Insufficient information.

This application should be refused for the following reason: Insufficient information. Visibility: New access requires visibility splay showing 2.4m x 215m. Drainage; There is a roadside drainage ditch approx. 1 metre deep running along Caverswall Common Lane. Details of drainage works necessary at the proposed new access are required. Swept path; Swept path of the largest vehicle accessing/egressing the site onto and from Caverswall Common Lane.

Response - All amended plans have been resubmitted to SMDC with all requested additional information on 11/11/2025.

Development on Green Belt Land

Objection: The development will harm the openness and rural character of the Green Belt.

Response: The proposal has been carefully designed to minimise any impact on the openness and visual character of the Green Belt, while delivering sustainable benefits for the local economy and community. Key points include:

Limited Land Take and Re-use of Existing Structures

The development affects less than one acre and primarily involves the re-use of existing buildings (a barn and manege) and a small area of grass. No new permanent buildings are proposed, and the scale of operational development is minimal. By reactivating the site, the proposal prevents the existing structures from becoming derelict and ensures continued productive use of the land.

Policy Compliance

The proposal is fully consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Green Belt principles, which explicitly allow for the re-use of buildings and minor operational development, provided openness and character are preserved.

Landscape Mitigation and Reversibility

Additional native hedgerow planting and sensitive landscaping will soften any visual impact.

Hardstanding areas are designed to be fully reversible, ensuring the site could be restored to its current condition in the future if required.

Proportional, Non-Precedential, and Economically Beneficial Development

The proposal is limited in scale, functional in purpose, and does not create a precedent for wider development in the Green Belt. The development supports sustainable rural economic growth and diversification by providing local employment opportunities and delivering wider economic benefits to the surrounding community. Examples of potential benefits include: Supporting local contractors and suppliers during construction and ongoing maintenance. Increasing demand for local goods and services through business operations. Strengthening the viability of nearby agricultural or rural enterprises through complementary activity. It integrates into the existing site without encroaching on surrounding open land, preserving the rural character of the area.

Traffic, Road Safety, and Access

Objections: Narrow lanes, unsuitable roads for HGVs, potential use of village roads, risk to horse riders, walkers, cyclists, and local traffic congestion.

Response:

Traffic Volumes, Vehicle Types, and Safety Measures

We recognise that the proposed development will lead to a very small increase in traffic. However, this increase is modest, proportionate, and significantly lower than the traffic generated historically by the two plant nurseries previously operating along this road. Those businesses received frequent large deliveries and served retail customers seven days a week, with opening hours far longer than those now proposed. The traffic figures submitted are evidence-based and prepared in line with recognised methodologies. Due to the high volume of objections related to traffic and road safety, we are carrying out further assessments to ensure these concerns are fully addressed.

Some objectors appear to envision constant streams of 44-tonne articulated lorries. This is not the case. We have clearly specified maximum vehicle sizes and delivery frequencies within the planning proposal, and we have worked directly with our proposed suppliers to ensure that all deliveries can be restricted within these defined parameters. The vehicles proposed are already regular and established users of the Caverswall road network. However, to further support road safety and ensure minimal disruption to vulnerable users, we are proposing a series of proactive measures, including:

Road Safety for Vulnerable Users -Installation of equestrian warning signage (DfT Diagram 550) with supplementary Please Slow for Horses plates. Introduction of an advisory 20 mph speed limit within 200 metres of the site entrance. Use of white noise reversing alarms for onsite vehicles to minimise disturbance while maintaining safety. Ongoing communication with local riders and stables to ensure continual feedback and improvement.

Vehicle movements -Vehicle movements will be managed through a combination of designated delivery routes and timed scheduling, allowing deliveries to be coordinated in a way that avoids sensitive periods and minimises any effect on surrounding roads and residential properties.

Retail / Trade Traffic- The planning proposal seeks consent for both trade and retail customers. To demonstrate our commitment to listening and responding to the local community, we are willing to accept a planning condition restricting the site to trade-only operations. This approach would eliminate customer traffic, further reducing any potential impact on the local road network and residential amenity, while ensuring the site continues to operate efficiently and safely for trade purposes.

Noise, Dust, and Air Quality

Objections: Concerns have been raised regarding potential noise, dust, and air pollution arising from site operations and associated vehicle movements.

Response:Modern stone supply operations are low-intensity and are governed by strict environmental management practices. The proposed development incorporates a comprehensive set of measures to ensure that any impacts remain minimal and well within acceptable planning thresholds:

Noise Management -Strict restricted operating hours to avoid evenings, early mornings, and weekends. Use of electric-powered plant and equipment wherever practical. White noise reversing alarms fitted to onsite machinery. Mixed dense hedgerows to protect nearby receptors. Staff trained in quiet-operation procedures to reduce incidental noise.

Dust Control - Compacted, well-maintained surfaces to limit dust generation. Water suppression systems deployed in dry conditions. Dust-netting around stockpiles to prevent wind-blown particles. Fine materials stored under cover to further minimise air dispersal.

Air Quality Protection -The business is a very low-intensity operation, with limited processing and slow vehicle speeds on-site. All vehicles entering the site will comply with UK Euro 6 emission standards. A strict no-idling policy will be enforced for all staff and visiting vehicles. Proposed tree and hedge planting will provide natural air filtration and long-term environmental enhancement.

Overall, the anticipated noise, dust, and air-quality impacts are expected to be no greater than those associated with a typical working farm, and significantly lower than many rural commercial operations. The measures proposed ensure a robust and responsible approach that addresses and in many cases exceeds the concerns raised by objectors.

Biodiversity and Environmental Considerations

Objections: Concerns have been raised regarding potential impacts on wildlife, habitat quality, and the wider ecological value of the site.

Response: The proposal has been carefully designed to protect, enhance, and work with the existing natural environment. An ecological survey has been undertaken, and the findings show that the risk to wildlife is very low. A series of proactive biodiversity measures have been incorporated to ensure there is no adverse ecological impact, and in many areas, conditions for wildlife will be improved. Furthermore, we are fully committed to achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and will work closely with the Council to deliver this, whether through on-site enhancements or off-site measures where appropriate.

Protection of Nesting Birds -All works affecting vegetation or boundary features will be scheduled outside the bird nesting season, ensuring full compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act and avoiding disturbance to breeding birds.

Enhancement of Local Habitat -The development includes a range of biodiversity enhancement measures, such as additional native hedgerow planting, new habitat features, and reinforcement of existing ecological corridors. These features will strengthen nesting, foraging, and shelter opportunities for local wildlife, increasing habitat diversity across the site.

Low-Impact Hardstanding Design -The use of permeable concrete pavers that allow grass to grow through provides a visually soft, nature-compatible surface. This reduces surface sealing, supports natural drainage, and allows local flora to re-establish within the paver structure, helping to maintain a semi-natural ground environment rather than a traditional hard, impermeable yard.

Commitment to Biodiversity Net Gain -The project will incorporate additional measures to meet BNG requirements, such as habitat creation, enhancement, and long-term ecological management. We will liaise with the Council to identify opportunities to achieve BNG both on-site and, if necessary, through appropriate off-site compensation, ensuring measurable ecological benefits are delivered.

Visual Impact and Privacy

Objections: Some residents have expressed concerns that the development will be visually intrusive, too close to neighbouring properties, or detrimental to privacy.

Response: The design of the proposed development has been carefully considered to ensure it remains visually discreet, low-impact, and fully compatible with its rural surroundings.

Limited Visibility and Natural Screening -The proposed hardstanding, storage areas, and operational zones will not be visible from public roads or neighbouring properties due to a combination of existing mature hedgerows and the natural topography of the site. These natural

screening features already prevent direct lines of sight, and their retention ensures that the development will sit comfortably within the landscape.

Low-Impact Hardstanding Design -Instead of traditional concrete or tarmac surfacing, the proposal uses permeable concrete pavers that allow grass to grow through. This creates a green, natural appearance, significantly reducing any sense of industrialisation and allowing the hardstanding to blend into the rural environment. This also helps reduce surface water runoff and contributes positively to biodiversity and visual softness.

Sensitive Lighting Strategy -Lighting will be low-level, downward-facing, and motion-activated, ensuring illumination is used only when needed and without casting light beyond the site boundary. This approach prevents glare, maintains dark skies, and ensures that lighting levels remain consistent with those of a typical small farmyard.

Minimal Hedgerow Removal with Enhanced Screening -Only minimal hedgerow removal is required, and any areas affected will be replaced with native species planting to reinforce long-term screening and maintain the rural character of the site. As a result, boundary treatments will remain dense and effective all year round.

Waste Management

The original submission did not include details on waste management. The following measures will be implemented to ensure responsible, compliant, and sustainable handling of all waste streams on site:

Pallets & Wooden Crates -Where possible, pallets and crates will be reused for part-crate and part-pallet orders. Untreated timber will be donated to community groups, small charities, hobbyists, and local schools for DT projects. Crates that cannot be reused will be dismantled for kindling, and any remaining clean wood may be chipped on site and sent to biomass facilities via a licensed wood-recycling partner.

Plastic Wrapping / Stretch Film -All plastic film and wrapping will be collected in a designated internal bay, kept clean and uncontaminated, and sent for specialist recycling through an authorised provider.

Stone Offcuts -Stone offcuts will be segregated and stored in a dedicated internal bay. These will be collected as required by a licensed waste-disposal contractor for appropriate recycling or recovery.

General Residual & Mixed Trade Waste -Any non-recyclable or mixed commercial waste will be securely stored on site and collected periodically by an authorised commercial waste provider, in full compliance with trade-waste regulations.

Other Matters

Sustainable Water Management

Objections: Residents are claiming there are Shallow sewers & water pipes under proposed site. Residents have raised concerns regarding the presence of shallow sewers and water supply pipes beneath parts of the site. We fully acknowledge these comments and are awaiting the formal assessment and guidance from Severn Trent Water (STW), who are currently reviewing the below-ground infrastructure as part of their statutory consultation.

Until STW provide their detailed report, it would be premature to determine what if any protective

measures or adjustments may be required. The applicant is committed to working directly with STW to ensure that all existing pipework is properly understood, mapped, and safeguarded before any works take place.

Once STW findings are issued, any necessary design modifications will be implemented to ensure full compliance with their engineering standards, the protection of existing assets, and the safe management of stormwater and mains drainage on site.

Use and Competition Concerns

Objections: Duplication of existing services, potential impact on local business competition.

Response: Industry statistics confirm a clear local and regional need for additional suppliers of landscaping and construction materials, demonstrating that the development addresses genuine market demand rather than creating unnecessary duplication.

Competition Considerations: The proposal responds to market need and is not intended to undermine existing businesses. Evidence shows that additional suppliers are required in the local area to meet demand, ensuring that the development complements rather than harms existing services.

The development does not involve changing Green Belt to brown belt for construction; it is a re-use of existing buildings and minor operational development, in line with NPPF guidance.

Access to Field via New Gateway

Gateway location carefully chosen to balance functionality, safety, and minimal visual/environmental impact. Only the minimum necessary section of hedgerow will be removed; the removed section is currently unhealthy/dead. Works will be scheduled outside the bird nesting season. Compensatory native planting will reinstate or enhance biodiversity. Gateway design and materials will be sympathetic to the rural setting to minimise visual intrusion.

Changes to Opening Hours if Business Expands

We seek consent for operating hours of 08:00 - 16:00 weekdays only. Any future changes to hours would require a separate application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, with full consultation with neighbours and statutory bodies.

Road Cleanliness Outside the Yard

A wheel-wash and brush system will be installed at the site exit. The access road and immediate highway will be regularly swept, particularly during wet conditions. Any hard surfaces within the site will be maintained. A nominated site manager will perform regular inspections and ensure prompt cleaning if required.

Neighbour Health Concerns

Concern: Some neighbours have expressed that the proposal could seriously impact their mental and physical health.

Response: We fully recognise the importance of local residents' wellbeing and has carefully designed the proposal to minimise disturbance. Operating hours are restricted to 08:00 - 16:00 weekdays, with no weekend activity, and all delivery and operational activity is managed to avoid unnecessary noise, dust, or congestion. Noise, dust, and traffic mitigation measures ensure that the development will not create conditions likely to affect residents' mental or physical health. The proposal is low-intensity, small-scale, and contained, comparable to standard agricultural or small industrial activity in rural areas. Evidence from our delivery trial shows minimal impact. We are committed to ongoing communication with residents to address any concerns promptly.

Weight Limit Misconception

Concern: Some comments state that there is a 7.5-tonne weight limit on the road to the site.

Response: There is no evidence of a legal or traffic-based 7.5-tonne weight restriction on the access road.

Winter Access and Road Safety

Concern: Residents have expressed concern about access and safety during winter conditions.

Response: All deliveries and site operations will be pre-booked and scheduled, with drivers instructed not to travel if road conditions are unsafe. In the event of snow, ice, or flooding, deliveries will be rescheduled rather than vehicles waiting on the public highway. We will ensure that site access is maintained safely, including the use of sand or grit on hardstanding and immediate access areas if required. Communication with drivers and staff will ensure adherence to safe travel routes during adverse conditions.

Business Financial Sustainability

Concern: Some residents have expressed concern that the business may not be financially sustainable, speculating on business plan figures.

Response: The financial viability of the business is not a material consideration for the planning process. Planning decisions are made on land use, environmental impact, traffic, amenity, and compliance with policy, not projected profits. The planning application focuses solely on land use, traffic, environmental impact, and mitigation measures, all of which demonstrate that the proposal is suitable and responsible.

Waiting Traffic / Early Deliveries

Concern: Trade customers or delivery vehicles may need to wait outside the site if arriving before the gates are open.

Response: All deliveries and trade visits will be pre-booked and scheduled to ensure vehicles arrive within operating hours (08:00-16:00 weekdays). The site design provides ample internal turning and waiting space, so vehicles can remain safely within the site if they arrive slightly early. Drivers will be given clear guidance not to arrive outside opening hours, and site staff will coordinate any early arrivals to avoid blocking the road. Should occasional waiting be unavoidable, the internal hardstanding area ensures vehicles can wait safely on-site, adhering to the noise reduction operating measures to prevent any impact on neighbouring properties or the public highway.

We trust that the response provided offers clear reassurance, and we will continue to engage openly with residents as the application progresses.

Kind Regards

Mr & Mrs Termine
