

PLANNING STATEMENT

SHUKERS ANIMAL FEEDS, WESTON COYNEY

OCTOBER 2014

Site Address:

Shukers Animal Feeds, Thornfields Farm, Weston Coyney,
Staffordshire, ST3 5BE

Applicant:

Mr. M. Shuker

Proposal:

Creation of new vehicular access

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 24th October 2014

Job Reference: RDP/2014/119

Report Prepared By:

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Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. M. Shuker to prepare a full planning application for the creation of a new vehicular access and revised car park at Shukers Animal Feeds, Thornfields Farm, Weston Coyney.
- 1.2 The planning history of the site shows that planning consent was granted in January 2013 for the retention of an existing agricultural building on the site (LPA Reference: SMD/2012/0876), with permission subsequently being granted in November 2013 for its change of use to a farm shop (LPA Reference: SMD/2013/0977). The farm shop that already existed within an adjacent building was granted consent to convert to a butchery as part of the same application. In addition, the Local Authority has very recently granted consent for the new farm shop building to be extended to provide additional retail and storage space (LPA Reference: SMD/2014/0427).
- 1.3 This application seeks to provide a new vehicular access for the site and consolidate the parking provision associated with the retail components of the site. The proposed access is to be located to the south-west of the existing farm shop building on the site, and has been subject to pre-application discussions with the Local Highway Authority. The need for the new vehicular access has arisen as a consequence of the growth of the applicant's business and his desire to minimise pedestrian / vehicular conflict on the site.

2 Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt on the western side of the Leek Road some 1.5km from Weston Coyney and 2km from Cellarhead. The site as a whole extends to some 0.50 hectares and comprises a range of existing agricultural buildings of varying scales and means of construction. The proposed vehicular access and car park is to be located to the south-west of the recently approved farm shop building and will provide an enhanced circulatory arrangement for vehicles visiting the site thereby helping to minimise pedestrian/vehicular conflict. An aerial photograph of the site is shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site



Source: Google Maps

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy 2014 of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It states that the Council will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*
- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.3 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the Other Rural Areas Strategy and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It goes on to state that it will sustain the rural economy by:

- *enabling the limited expansion or re-development of an existing authorised business for employment uses;*
- *supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises in accordance with policy R1 of the Core Strategy.*

3.4 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. It goes on to state that appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to Design Considerations and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. It goes on to state that in order to promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- *support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;*
- *promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*

4.2 The content of this document is explored in more detail, where relevant, in the Statement of Case below.

5 Statement of Case

5.1 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that areas within the countryside and green belt will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It goes on to state that it will sustain the rural economy by:

- *enabling the limited expansion or re-development of an existing authorised business for employment uses;*
- *supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises in accordance with policy R1 of the Core Strategy.*

5.2 Similar provisions are also set out within paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Policy R1 of the Core Strategy further states that development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. It goes on to state that appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area by virtue of (amongst others) the type and amount of traffic generated. Policy R1 and policy SS6c of the Core Strategy also identify that strict control over inappropriate development will continue to be exercised in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

5.3 Paragraphs 89 and 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework set out the Government's policy on development in the Green Belt, with paragraph 90 confirming that engineering operations are an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.

5.4 It is submitted that the new vehicular access constitutes an engineering operation that will not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green

Belt or conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt as it involves land that is already used as a hardstanding area/external storage for the farm. Even if the Local Authority were to conclude that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development, it is submitted that the benefits associated with the proposal in reducing pedestrian/vehicular conflict will serve to clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt.

- 5.5 Owing to the close proximity of the approved Butchers and the farm shop to the existing vehicular access, the site often suffers from incidents of pedestrian/vehicular conflict. The business has also had instances of vehicles queuing up on the main highway owing to there not being sufficient space on the site to pull off the carriageway. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that existing agricultural vehicles from the farm also make use of the access, with one of the large agricultural storage buildings being located directly opposite the farm shop. All of these movements take place in the area where customers are located owing to the position of the front doors of the butchers and farm shop, and where there is an existing pinch point between the two buildings.
- 5.6 The proposed vehicular access and parking area will facilitate a much improved through-flow of vehicles within the site, and by enabling vehicles to enter in via the existing access and exit via the new access the potential for pedestrian/vehicular conflict will be substantially reduced as drivers will no longer have to try and navigate amongst parked cars, existing customers and agricultural vehicles. The overall efficiency of the site will therefore be vastly improved to the benefit of the applicant's business.
- 5.7 It is also noted that the Local Authority has already supported the provision of parking areas within the site, both in front of the farm shop, to the rear of
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the farm shop and to the rear of the Butchers (LPA References: SMD/2013/0977 and SMD/2014/0427). This proposal does not seek to increase the overall level of parking provision on the site, it merely seeks to consolidate and organise it to achieve a more efficient site layout. Coupled with the proposed landscaping scheme it will assimilate well with the existing cluster of buildings and outdoor storage area.

- 5.8 Pre-application discussions have been held in respect of this proposal with the Local Highway Authority who acknowledge the problems of pedestrian / vehicular conflict and agree that the provision of the new access and consolidated parking area would help to alleviate them. Accordingly the Local Highway Authority has confirmed that it would have no objection to the proposed access and parking area subject to it being designated to the correct standard, e.g. 2.4 x 215m visibility splays, 6m radius kerbs, an access width of between 4-5 metres and standard parking bay dimensions (2.4m x 4.8m). These standards have all been incorporated into the proposed plans and are therefore considered to be acceptable from a highway safety perspective.
- 5.9 Overall, the scheme constitutes part of the existing diversification of the agricultural activities on this site that will support its operations by improving the overall efficiency of the site layout and in turn help to reduce pedestrian / vehicular conflict. It will not result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt and as a consequence is considered to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in accordance with paragraphs 28 and 89 of the NPPF. The proposal is further considered to be consistent with the requirements of policies SS1a, SS6c, R1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is respectfully submitted that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal constitutes an engineering operation that will not detract from the openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. It is therefore an appropriate form of development;
- The proposal will give rise to substantive improvements to existing issues of pedestrian/ vehicular conflict;
- The proposal constitutes part of the sustainable expansion and enhancement of the approved farm shop and butchers uses on the site and will help to improve the overall efficiency and layout of the site to the benefit of the applicant's business and agricultural operations;

6.2 The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy SS1a, SS6c, R1 and DC1 of the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy SS1a of the Core Strategy.