

WIGNALLS

Chartered Surveyors, Planning
Consultants & Land Agents

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR AN AGRICULTURAL ACCESS AND TRACK

at

Smithy Lane Farm, Smithy Lane, Aughton

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TABLES OF CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Planning History of the Site
- 3.0 The Proposal
- 4.0 Relevant Planning Policy
- 5.0 Planning Policy Assessment
- 6.0 Siting and Appearance
- 7.0 Impact upon Residential Amenity
- 8.0 Highway Considerations
- 9.0 Landscaping
- 10.0 Conclusion

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Wignalls Chartered Surveyors in support of a full planning application for a new agricultural access and track to Smithy Lane Farm, Smithy Lane, Aughton. The planning application is submitted on behalf of T. Dobson and Son Ltd.

2.0 PLANNING HISTORY OF THE SITE

Previous planning applications that are relevant to this site are:

- 2.1 1996/0801 - Consideration of Details for Prior Approval - Agricultural storage building. Details approved.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is for the creation of a new access and agricultural track to Smithy Lane Farm, Smithy Lane, Aughton. The existing access will be closed and hedged over.
- 3.2 Smithy Lane Farm has recently been bought by the Applicant. During the sale of the land and buildings it became clear that the existing access to the site is not wholly within the Applicant's ownership but partially within the ownership of the neighbouring property no.82 Smithy Lane. Due to the boundary position on the western side of the site with the neighbouring property at no. 82, it is considered that the existing access to the site is not wide enough to allow for some of the larger farming machinery to access the site safely and that there are also visibility issues.
- 3.3 The Applicant has considered widening the access, however due to the large mature trees on the front boundary of the site, which are to the west within the ownership of no.82 and to the east which are within the Applicant's boundaries (however seeks to retain), it is considered the visibility at this access is poor. The Applicant is also mindful that the western boundary due to new ownership will be shortly fenced thus again will impact upon visibility.

3.4 To improve highway safety, the Applicant seeks planning permission for a new access and track from Smithy Lane. The existing access to the site will be closed over with hedging. The proposals, which will be located to the south east of the site, will allow for an improved access to the site to accommodate larger farming vehicles and machinery. The proposal will also allow for a better use of the existing yard area permitting vehicles to enter the site to manoeuvre safely within the boundaries of the yard and being able to exit in a forward gear. The proposals will also allow for improved visibility when exiting the site - to the betterment of highway safety. It is also considered that keeping the access and track away from the neighbouring property, no. 82 Smithy Lane, will also reduce the impact of any potential noise and disturbance issues to the occupants of this property who have clear glazed windows to the eastern side of their property abutting the application site.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the West Lancashire Local Plan (WLLP) provide the policy framework against which the development proposals will be assessed.

4.2 The site is located within the boundaries of West Lancashire Borough Council and allocated as Green Belt. The site is designated under the following policies under the current adopted Local Plan 2012-2027:

GN1 - Settlement Boundaries

GN3 - Criteria for Sustainable Development

EC2 - The Rural Economy

4.3 In addition to the above, the following policies have been considered:

- National Planning Policy Framework
 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

4.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance - Development in the Green Belt

Supplementary Planning Document - Design Guide (January 2008)

5.0 PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the West Lancashire Local Plan (WLLP) provide the policy framework against which the development proposals will be assessed. The Council also have published Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on 'Development in the Green Belt'.
- 5.2 Paragraph 146 sets out that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. One such form of development is "engineering operations".
- 5.3 The development proposes engineering operations in connection with the agricultural use of the site. Careful thought by the Applicant has been given to the location of the development and it is considered that the new track has been sited in the best possible position. The proposed development improves not just the visibility of the site access, allows for a satisfactory turning area within the yard area, maintains mature trees to the front of the site and also seeks to help reduce any noise and disturbance to the neighbouring occupants at no. 82 Smithy Lane from the farming operations of the site. On this basis it is considered, in our view, that the development would not result to any adverse harm to the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with any of the purposes of including land within in.
- 5.4 Therefore, the development would be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt and would in our view, comply with the requirements of the NPPF and Policy GN1 of the West Lancashire Local Plan (WLLP).

6.0 SITING AND APPEARANCE

- 6.1 Policy GN3 of the WLLP which is supported by the Council's SPD Design Guide requires that new development should be of a scale, mass and built form, which responds to the characteristics of the site and its surroundings.

- 6.2 The proposed access and track will be used for agricultural purposes and is of a sufficient width and length to accommodate larger farm vehicles and machinery. The track will comprise of porous asphalt which is considered an appropriate material. The size and extent of the track is in keeping with the character of the area.

7.0 IMPACT UPON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 7.1 Policy GN3 of the WLLP allows development provided it retains or creates reasonable levels of privacy, amenity and sufficient garden/outdoor space for occupiers of the neighbouring and proposed properties.
- 7.2 It is our view that the development proposals would on balance, benefit the occupants of the neighbouring property, no. 82 Smithy Lane. The application site is within agricultural use, with no restrictions to time of use. By closing up the existing access from Smithy Lane which is adjacent to no. 82 and moving the access to the south east of the application site it is our view that the development will benefit the occupants of no. 82 by allowing vehicular movements to and from the site occur further away from this property.
- 7.3 Therefore it is considered that there would be no adverse impact on neighbouring properties as a result of this development and it is considered the proposal would comply with Policy GN3 of the WLLP.

8.0 HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 As outlined above, the Applicant has recently purchased Smithy Lane Farm and during the sale it was brought to the Applicants attention that the existing access as on site is not wholly within the Applicants ownership boundaries, but also within the boundaries of the neighbouring property, no. 82 Smithy Lane.
- 8.2 It is considered that the existing access is unsuitable for use by farming vehicles and machinery due to its width and visibility. The Applicant has considered widening the existing access - however due to the visibility at the access, mainly due to the location of tall mature trees on the front boundary (some of which are outside of the Applicants ownership / control) that it would be poor. The new access and track is sited in such a position that it would provide a betterment to highway safety by widening splays to improve

visibility when exiting the site. It will also allow for vehicles entering the site to safely manoeuvre within the boundaries of the site so to exit also in a forward gear.

9.0 LANDSCAPING

9.1 It is considered that no further landscaping is required on the site given that there is already significant screening to the site from the main public viewing points of the site from the highway.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 The Applicant seeks planning permission for an agricultural access and track to Smithy Lane Farm, Smithy Lane, Aughton.

10.2 Due to the boundaries of the site, it is deemed necessary by the Applicant that the existing access from Smithy Lane is closed and a new access and track is positioned to the south east of the site. The new access and track to the Farm will in our view improve highway safety, will allow for the mature trees to remain to the front boundary of the site and will also benefit the occupants of the neighbouring property by reducing the impact of farming vehicles passing so close to their property.

10.3 Overall, the development proposal is considered to be appropriate for this Green Belt location and would not have a significant impact on the character or appearance of the area or the amenity of neighbouring properties. The development would not result to any additional adverse impact on highway safety and could be viewed to having significant highway safety benefits. In our view, the proposed development is considered to be in compliant with national and local planning policies and would respectively ask that planning permission is approved.