Planning Committee: 15 September 2015 **Item Number:** 10

Application No: W 15 / 0996

Registration Date: 24/06/15
Town/Parish Council: Rowington **Expiry Date:** 19/08/15
Case Officer: Anne Denby
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Sandall House Farm, Narrow Lane, Lowsonford, Solihull, B95 5HN
Construction of extended drive (50m) FOR Ms Saber

This application is being presented to Committee due to an objection from the Parish/Town Council having been received.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to GRANT planning permission, subject to conditions.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the construction of a hardcore driveway within the site. The driveway will be 3m in width and extend for 50m in length in an 'L' shape form orientated southwest to northeast connecting existing tracks within the north of the site with the intended purpose of providing a hard surface for the regular passage of horses, equestrian and farm vehicles associated with Sandall House Farm.

The application is supported by a covering statement which states:

- The existing circular horse exercise track is surfaced with wood fibre and is too soft and valuable to be suitable for the regular passage of horses, equestrian and farm vehicles associated with Sandall House Farm.
- The loop is centrally located and experiences a significant amount of traffic and without a hardstanding is prone to water logging and heavy mud during wet periods.
- The extension to the existing track is required to provide a hard surface for the regular passage of horses, equestrian and farm vehicles associated with Sandall House Farm.
- Paragraph 28 of the NPPF seeks to support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas. The proposed extended track does not facilitate an expansion of the existing business but it helps the welfare of horses and prolong the life of its plant and vehicles.
- Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that engineering operations in the Green Belt are not inappropriate provided they preserve openness. The proposed extended drive will have a porous surface, will not raise ground levels, will not result in a change of land use and not impact on openness or the five purposes of Green Belt.
- The proposal is 'water-compatible development' as it is for 'outdoor sport and recreation' and will have no adverse impact on the watercourse, floodplain or flood defences.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The application site is located on the northern side of Narrow Lane, between Santan Farm and Sanbrook Farm, within the Green Belt and Arden Ancient Landscape Area. It is a substantial equestrian establishment with a range of buildings of various ages and designs.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is an extensive planning history to this site, none of which is specifically relevant to this application.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework

The Current Local Plan

- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP13 - Directing New Outdoor Leisure and Recreation Development (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP11 - Drainage (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)

The Emerging Local Plan

- BE1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- BE3 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- FW1 - Development in Areas at Risk of Flooding (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- CT4 - Extensions to Tourism, Cultural or Leisure Facilities in Rural Areas (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 Publication Draft April 2014)

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Rowington Parish Council: Objection. The details can be summarised as follows:

- The proposals are contrary to National and Local Planning Policy and no special circumstances or supporting evidence has been provided to support deviation from current policy.
- The horse exercise track was designed and built by a specialist contractor specifically for the use of fast racehorse exercise and training and is not *'too soft and valuable for the regular passage of horses'*
- When in regular use a large tractor and chain harrows followed exercising horses to ensure that the surface of the track did not compact and cause safety issues for use by horses the following day. Daily harrowing of such exercise tracks following use is normal practise.
- A previous application at the site was retrospective following the unauthorised construction of the original section of hardstanding.

- Fields do become wet and muddy during winter months but this should not encourage the construction of driveways throughout the fields within the Green Belt.
- The continued development of driveways, hardstanding and storage areas at this site is now considered to be over intensification and over development, notwithstanding the potential impact all this hardstanding and development will have on the flood plain in this Flood Zone 3.

Environment Agency: Comments awaited.

Assessment

The main issues in the consideration of this application are:

- The principle of development
- The impact on the character of the surrounding area
- Drainage

Principle of development

The National Policy Planning Framework April 2012 advises in Section 9: Protecting Green Belt land (paragraph 89) that provision of facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation can be considered as appropriate development within the Green Belt, as long as schemes preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

In this case the application site relates to an existing and established equestrian site used for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation. While hardstanding can have an urbanising impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, this development relates directly to the movement of horses and equipment across key routes within the site, which are prone to becoming waterlogged and muddy. The proposed scheme is therefore considered to represent appropriate development within the Green Belt and is acceptable accordingly.

The impact on the character of the surrounding area

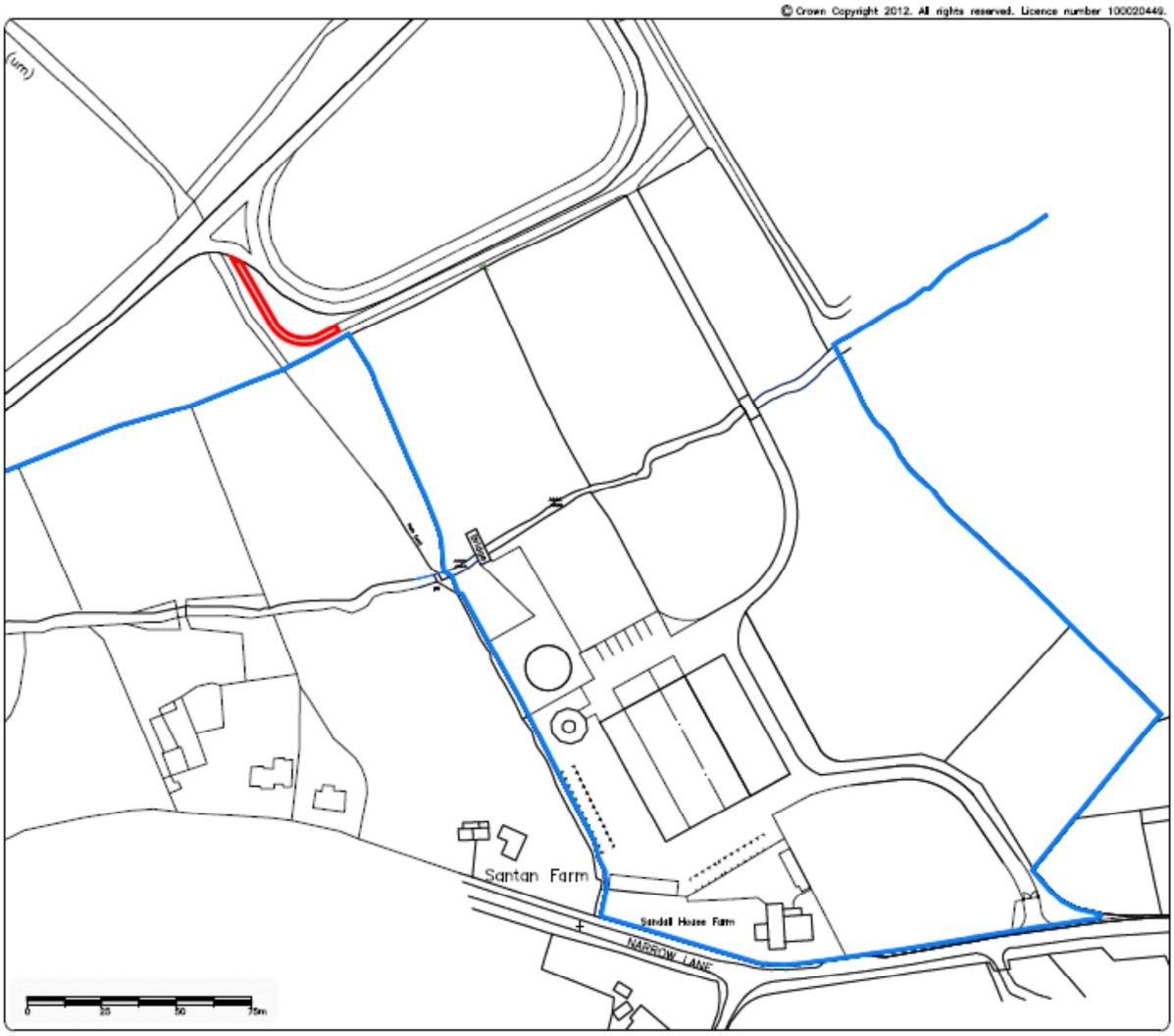
The scheme does not involve built form and the development will not raise ground levels. The area is already used for access and trodden. Although a public footpath runs through the main site the proposed hardcore drive will not appear conspicuous from public vantage points and the proposed drive will sit adjacent to a hedgerow that provides screening from lower land levels on Narrow Lane.

Drainage

The drive is located within Flood Zone 3. The applicant states that the drive will be constructed with a porous surface, namely a loose rubble base and hardcore surface. The NPPF Technical Guidance identifies outdoor sports and recreation and essential facilities such as changing rooms as water compatible development.

Summary/Conclusion

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development is acceptable in principle and would not cause unacceptable harm to the character or openness of the Green Belt or the visual amenities of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the policies listed.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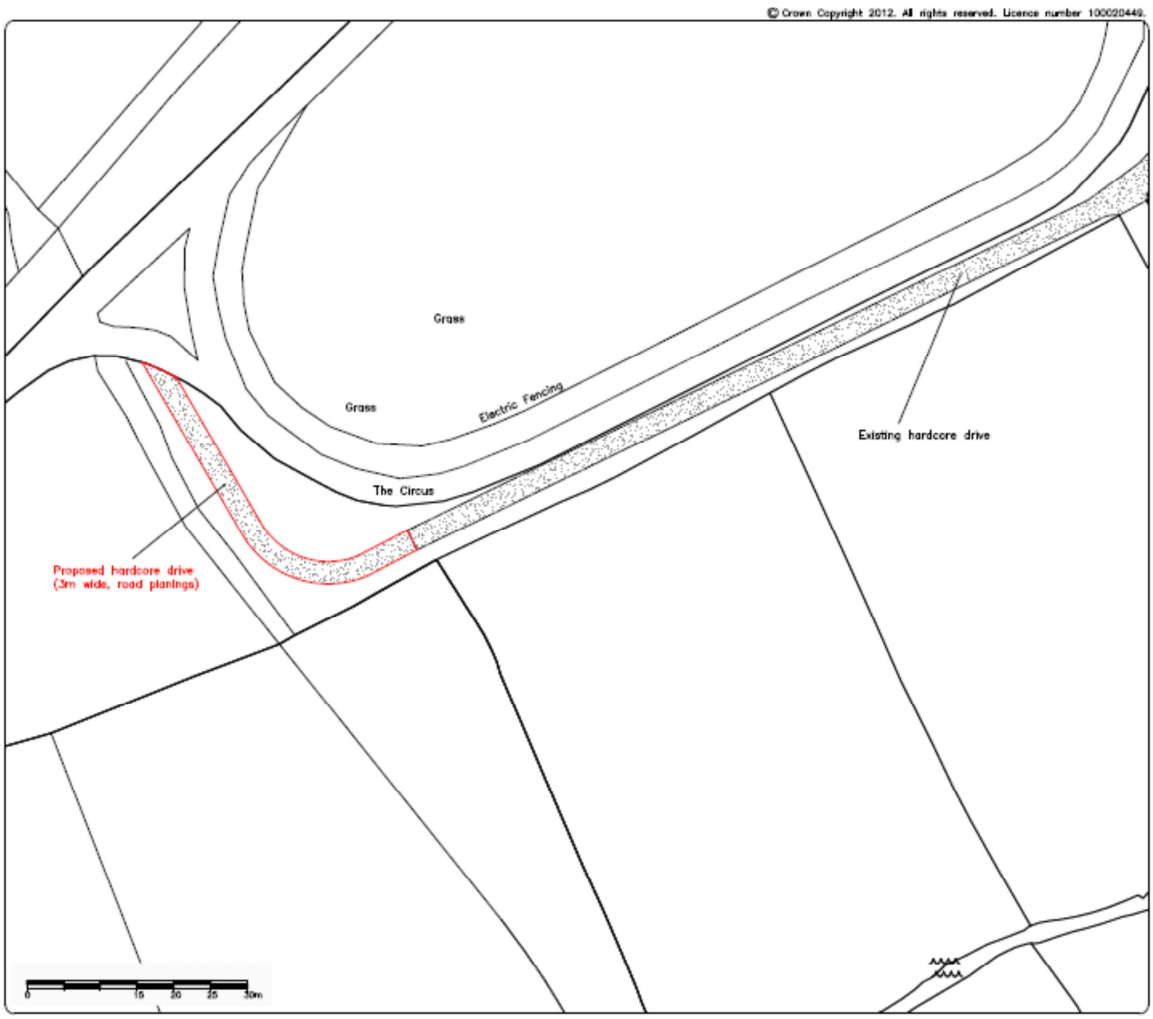
Santan Farm
Sindall House Farm
NARROW LANE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Grass
Grass
Electric Fencing
The Circus
Existing hardcore drive
Proposed hardcore drive
(3m wide, road planings)
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