

Application No: 16/5740C

Location: LAND EAST OF SOMERFORD PARK FARM, HOLMES CHAPEL ROAD,
SOMERFORD, CW12 4SW

Proposal: Change of use of land from agriculture to showground including the
creation of a new access, internal access tracks, hardstanding and
arenas.

Applicant: Mr Simon King

Expiry Date: 30-Jun-2018

SUMMARY:

The principle of the proposed equestrian showground is acceptable in this location, where the impact upon the character of the existing countryside and landscape can be minimised through an enhanced landscaping and woodland planting scheme.

The proposal would bring significant benefits to the rural economy by supporting Somerford Park Farm, which is an existing rural enterprise currently employing at least 60 full time equivalent employees.

Subject to the construction of the Congleton Link Road (CLR), the access proposals would be acceptable and the likely traffic generated by the proposal could be accommodated on the new CLR and local highway network. Adequate parking would be provided on site during equestrian shows, which are proposed to take place on 43 days / 20 weekends in any calendar year.

The impact on neighbouring residential amenity can be adequately safeguarded by conditions ensuring that any public address (tannoy / loudspeaker) systems are appropriately designed and positioned so as to not cause noise disturbance. The traffic generated would also be carried by the proposed link road.

Whilst the proposal would result in the partial loss of agricultural land, this loss would not be of any permanence and in any event, such loss is considered to be outweighed by the benefits to the rural economy.

The impact of the proposal on trees and hedges would not be significant and environmental considerations relating to flooding, drainage and ecology including the nearby SSSI and SBI (subject to conditions and further information) would be acceptable. The impact on nearby heritage assets would also be acceptable owing to the temporary nature of the proposals and the separation. The proposal would not impair the efficiency of the Jodrell Bank Radio telescopes.

On this basis, the proposal is for development which is sustainable in terms of environmental, economic and social considerations. The proposal is considered to comply with the relevant saved policies of the Congleton Borough Local Plan, the policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, the 'made' Somerford Neighbourhood Plan and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:**APPROVE with Conditions**

PROPOSAL:

This application seeks full planning permission for a change of use of land to the east of Somerford Park Farm from agricultural to an equestrian showground including the creation of a new access, internal access tracks, hardstanding and arenas.

The applicant has confirmed that the number of events to be held on the proposed showground would be 43 days / 20 weekends in a calendar year and this would also include 3 international events. The applicant states that shows and events will be held during the summer months i.e. from mid March to mid September and that the times / duration of events will be from 8am to 8pm.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

This application relates to land east of Somerford Park Farm, a large equestrian facility situated on the north eastern side of Holmes Chapel Road, Somerford. This is an extensive equestrian facility that attracts many visitors to the area. The land subject of this application is agricultural land which extends to some 29.07 hectares and comprises of mainly open arable land.

To the north of the site is The Dane Valley Area of Special County Value and SSSI. To the east of the site is the part of the proposed Congleton Link Road beyond which there are residential properties situated along Chelford Road. The Loach Brook SBI is positioned to the south and to the west is a track which serves the nearby Daneside Caravan Park and a small development of residential lodges forming Hunters Pointe.

The land is designated in the local plan as being within the Open Countryside and is within the Jodrell Bank 'outer consultation zone'. There are residential properties to the east and west and open countryside to all other directions.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

There is an extensive planning history for Somerford Park Farm. However, the only applications of relevance to this proposal are as follows:

15/1123C - Retrospective application for retention of a new stable building with ancillary grooms accommodation (resubmission 14/4518C) – Approved 08-Sep-2015

14/4518C - Retrospective application for retention of a new stable building with ancillary groom's accommodation – Refused 18-Dec-2014 – Allowed at Appeal

14/1118C - Erection of a stable block comprising 20 no. stables with tack / feed / wash / store areas; bulk straw and chipping storage and a muck room – Approved 23-Apr-2014

12/2794C - Erection of veterinary building – Approved 12-Oct-2012

11/0561C - Erection of a Satellite Stable Block Comprising 20no. Stables with Tack / Feed / Wash / Store Areas; Bulk Straw and Chipping Storage and a Muck Room – Approved 28-Jul-2011

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 17, 28 and 32.

Development Plan:

Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (Saved Policies):

PS8 - Open Countryside
GR1 - New Development
GR2 – Design
GR6 – Amenity
GR9 - Accessibility, Servicing & Parking Provision
GR16 – Footpath, Bridleway and Cycleway Networks
NR2 - Wildlife & Nature Habitats
RC5 – Equestrian Facilities

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS):

Policy MP 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy PG 1 Overall Development Strategy
Policy PG 2 Settlement Hierarchy
Policy PG 7 Spatial Distribution of Development
Policy SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
Policy SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
Policy IN 1 Infrastructure
Policy EG 1 Economic Prosperity
Policy EG 2 Rural Economy
Policy SE 1 Design
Policy SE 2 Efficient Use of Land
Policy SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Policy SE 4 The Landscape
Policy SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
Policy SE 6 Green Infrastructure
Policy SE 7 The Historic Environment
Policy SE 13 Flood Risk and Water Management
Policy SE 14 Jodrell Bank
Policy CO 1 Sustainable Travel and Transport
Policy CO 2 Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure
Policy CO 4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

Somerford Neighbourhood Plan (made on the 15 of February 2018):

Policy E1: Commercial and Industrial Development

Policy D1: Design
Policy N2: Trees and Hedgerows
Policy HA1 – Local Heritage Assets
Policy T1: Sustainable Transport, Safety and Accessibility

Other Material Considerations:

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
Cheshire East Design Guide

CONSULTATIONS:

Environmental Protection: No objection subject to conditions in relation to noise control.

Flood Risk Officer: No objection subject to drainage conditions

Highways: No objection subject to subject to an informative requiring a S278 Agreement and a condition requiring the new access to be implemented prior to any events being held on the site

Jodrell Bank: No comments received

Natural England: No objection

SOMERFORD PARISH COUNCIL:

Object on the following grounds:

- “1. The proposal includes a large area of historically important agricultural parkland 29.07 hectares. The soil resources and agricultural use and quality of land report this is good grade agricultural land suitable for growing a variety of crops, therefore this should be maintained. The cost of losing agricultural land to development is assumed to be simply the current market value of the land, which is incorrect as when the land is built on and changed, society loses an asset – we need to plan for long term and food security.
2. The proposal is not allocated for development in the emerging local plan.
3. The proposed application is outside the boundary of the Congleton Link Road
4. The proposal is premature as the CLR will not be completed until 2020.
5. The application will be not suitable for 490 vehicles plus trailers accessing the site, left turn in and out, having to travel to next roundabout near Radnor Trading estate to then return to Sandbach or Holmes Chapel Road.
6. The effect on the natural environment will be sustainable and therefore the application requires a more detailed Environmental Impact Assessment report.
The proposal would negatively impact on areas designated as an SBI and a SSSI.
7. The proposal would negatively impact on the setting of the listed Somerford Chapel.
8. The Proposal would negatively impact on the health and well being of Somerford residents in respect of light and noise pollution. The impact will be significant for the residents of old Somerford Hall and for surrounding properties. The speaker system from events at present can be heard from miles away. The noise of the loud speaker

system would be an issue located so close to housing on Chelford Road despite control measures proposed. (those implemented currently have little effect in reducing noise levels)). The lighting on the proposed show ground will be intrusive to many nearby properties. The cumulative impact of noise and pollution from the urban sprawl, the CLR and this application should be considered.

9. Traffic accessing the site from the east will use the roundabout junction at Holmes Chapel Road to perform a 180 degree manoeuvre to get onto the east-bound and those leaving the site intending to travel, say, to the M6, will have to travel east to the first roundabout to again perform a 180 degree turn.

10. Noise pollution will intrude into the surrounding area. We can clearly hear the loudspeakers from the existing venues, both from the show jumping and the showing / dressage arenas. This noise carries across the Loach Brook valley, which is heavily wooded. The proposed show ground has no such barriers as the ground is both flat and virtually treeless. The application claims that the noise from the loudspeakers will be monitored, this hasn't happened with the existing speakers and have no doubt that this will not change for the proposed show ground.

11. The use of this site will also allow those attending shows to have access to the surrounding countryside beyond Hawthorne Lane. This is not desirable .

12. There is currently no power, water or drainage on or around the site. The amount of waste and effluent from 490 occupants of horse boxes, let alone spectators, will be enormous. Insufficient thought has been given to this problem.

13. There are a small number of mature trees in this area, which should be given TPO's

14. The proposal also has the potential to pollute the small pond on the site. The fact that there is currently a muck heap next to the pond, which surely is releasing fluids into the pond, shows the lack of care applied to this area of natural beauty."

REPRESENTATIONS:

Letters have been received from 12 addresses objecting to this application on the following grounds:

- Could be used as a major events venue capable of hosting any number of events that are not equestrian related
- Impact on local community from noise emanating from the site and frequency of use
- The PA systems currently used at Somerford Park Farm can already be heard over a mile away
- Controls on the PA system should be put in place
- This entertainment venue will attract large volumes of people
- Contrary to the emerging Local Plan in that it is not an allocated site for development and is beyond the outer boundary of the Congleton Link Rd (CLR)
- The development is reliant upon the CLR which may not be delivered
- Would lead to congestion and undermine the purpose of the CLR
- Site is not sustainable given the absence of access via walking, cycling or bus
- Traffic Assessment is incorrect
- Traffic noise and emissions from the CLR will also be increased
- Lack of consultation and incorrect process
- Application has not appeared on solicitors searches
- Site location misleading
- Air and light pollution

- Impact on wildlife and SSSI
- Impact on a peaceful landscape
- Number of car parking spaces and horse box spaces indicates how much traffic would be expected
- Loss of agricultural land
- The existing manure management plan is not fit for purpose
- Hawthorn Lane could be used as an unofficial access
- Conflicts with Somerford Neighbourhood Plan
- Nearby properties have a right of way over the fields
- Site is an area of historically important good grade agricultural park land
- Impact on setting of Somerford Chapel

OFFICER APPRAISAL:

Principle of Development

In terms of the Local Plan, the site is located within the Open Countryside, where Saved Policy PS8 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan (CBLP) states that development involving facilities for outdoor sport and recreation are acceptable in principle provided that they preserve the openness of the countryside and comply with other relevant local plan policies.

Policy RC5 of the CBLP deals specifically with proposals for equestrian facilities and states that proposals will be acceptable where they do not adversely affect; the character and appearance of the area; ecology; landscape; agricultural land; residential amenity; and provide adequate parking and access from a public highway and there is no excessive traffic generation on to the existing highway network.

This advice is further supported in the explanatory text to Policy EG2 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPs) which explains that 'breeding, training and livery as horse related enterprises are considered to form part of the rural economy' and therefore subject to other material planning considerations, should be supported where appropriate.

It is important to recognise that Somerford Park Farm is an important employer in the local area. The existing enterprise currently employs 60 full time equivalent (FTE) staff excluding the retail shop and the veterinary practice which are located at Somerford Park Farm. This proposal would further support this existing rural enterprise, which by its nature, is appropriate in this rural area. Accordingly, there would be significant economic benefits arising from the scheme as the proposals would support the rural economy in both the locality and the Borough as a whole.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Planning applications that encourage sustainable economic development should be treated favourably and this view is further reinforced in Policy EG 1 of the Council's Local Plan Strategy. Local Plan Policies PS8, RC5 and Policy E1 of the Somerford Neighbourhood Plan are also supportive of equestrian facilities appropriate to the area in which they are located. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant planning considerations.

Design

The NPPF and Local Plan Policies SE 1 and SD 2 emphasise the importance of securing high quality design appropriate to its context. NPPF paragraph 61 states that:

“Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”

The proposed use of the land as an equestrian showground would not require the provision of any permanent above ground structures. The only permanent features of the proposal would be those forming the access spur taken directly from the Congleton Link Road (once constructed) and the access tracks for the main vehicular routes and surfaces for areas where the arenas and temporary stabling would be provided. The temporary stabling, parking areas and associated marquees would only be in situ on event days. On non event days the remaining land would be left to grass and as such, the visual impacts of the proposal would be minimised and would be moderate within the local context. The effects could be reduced through appropriate landscaping. Subject to further consideration relating to landscaping, the design is found to be in accordance with CELPS Policies and SE 1 and SD 2 (Design) and Policy D1 of the Somerford Neighbourhood Plan.

Landscape and Trees

The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA). The site is located between the Dane and Loachbrook valleys within the Lower farms and Woods (LFW2) Brereton Heath Character Area. The boundary to the application area lies outside of the Dane Valley landscape character area which is also a locally designated landscape and contains Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and a Site of Biological Importance (SBI). The application area is slightly raised and open, having very few mature trees (southern boundary) and being one large field under arable production. Apart from the access point and internal stone trackways the showground facilities are all proposed to be of a temporary nature, so that between events there will be very little landscape impact. Landscape impact will principally arise from the use of the site including the parking of cars at the eastern end and horse boxes/lorries to the western end of the site.

The extent of landscape impact will depend on frequency of use. The Council's Environmental Planning Manager anticipates little landscape impact on the Dane Valley due to a combination of a relatively flat landscape and the existing woodland which borders the southern edge of the woodland. Over time the existing woodland will be reinforced by tree planting within the site. The site cannot be accessed until the Congleton Link Road has been built and this will change the landscape setting of the site on its eastern side in any event. The choice of tree and hedgerow species is appropriate to the area. A management plan will be required to set out the measures required to establish the planted trees, shrubs and grassland over a 5 year period and all failures should be replaced on an annual basis during this time. A long term management plan is also required for a 25 year period that will address issues such as thinning of the woodland areas, removal of guards, stakes and ties and replacement of any trees damaged by parking or ground compaction.

As such, the proposals (as amended) will create a landscape structure of woodland and parkland trees which will in time integrate the proposed temporary facilities into the surrounding landscape and create a parkland landscape. Subject to the mitigation planting, the proposal is found to be acceptable in landscape terms.

Impact on Heritage Assets

The Grade II* Listed Chapel at Somerford Hall is located approximately 580 metres distance from the western boundary of the site. Owing to this generous separation, and the fact that the landscape impact of the proposals is deemed to be acceptable, it is not considered that the proposal would negatively affect the setting of this designated heritage asset.

Parking, Highway Safety and Traffic Generation

Saved Policy GR9 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan states that proposals for development requiring access, servicing or parking facilities will only be permitted where a number of criteria are satisfied. These include adequate and safe provision for suitable access and egress by vehicles, pedestrians and other road users to a public highway. This is further supported by advice within the NPPF para 32 which advises that 'proposals must take account of whether the safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people'.

It is proposed that there are a range of uses on the site associated with the equestrian use and includes temporary stables, arenas, and temporary structures. The parking areas within the site are to be informal and there are 490 spaces proposed. There are no proposed walking/cycling links to the site although the showground is not in permanent use and events will be held on a number of occasions throughout the year.

There is one access point proposed to the site and this is taken from the proposed Congleton Link Road (CLR). The proposed junction would be a priority junction with a left in left out arrangement. The ban of right turns from the access would be enforced by the construction of a central island. As this would be the only access to the site, this scheme is reliant on the delivery and construction of the CLR. Without the delivery of the CLR, the proposal would not be able to be safely accessed by the traffic likely to be generated by it. The CLR has the benefit of planning approval and it has been indicated that works are due to commence on site in 2019. Given that this proposal would not be capable of being served by a safe and suitable access in the absence of the CLR, a condition would be necessary to preclude the proposed use until such a time as the proposed access and CLR are constructed and operational. Subject to this, The Head of Strategic Infrastructure (HSI – Highways) has confirmed that the access proposals are acceptable.

The traffic impact of the showground has been assessed by the applicant in the submitted Transport Assessment and has considered the capacity impact at two of the adjacent roundabouts on the proposed CLR. The results of the capacity assessments in 2032 at the roundabouts indicate that with development included, that they will operate well within capacity limits. Consequently, in terms of highway impact, the likely traffic generation by the proposal can be accommodated on the new CLR. As the access to the site is directly onto the CLR this application does depend on the link road being constructed. The design of the access to the showground has been designed to an appropriate standard and is acceptable to serve the predicted level of traffic accessing the site.

Taking the above into account, the scheme is found to be acceptable in terms of its impacts on the local highway network and the parking provision would be sufficient to accommodate the proposed development. The proposal therefore accords with Saved Policy GR9.

Ecology

The application has been supported by an Ecological Assessment dealing with the following:

Statutory designated sites - The River Dane SSSI is located to north of the application site. Natural England have been consulted on the application and have advised that the proposal is unlikely to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes

Non-statutory designated sites - Pool Wood Local Wildlife Site, which includes ancient woodland habitat is located to the south of the proposed development and River Dane Local Wildlife Site is located to the north. The Council's Nature Conservation Officer (NCO) has advised that there is a sufficiently wide buffer between the proposed development and the boundary of these Local Wildlife Sites to ensure that they not be directly affected by the proposed development.

The submitted ecological assessment identifies potential impacts on these sites as a result of contamination during the construction phase. To minimise this risk, a condition could be attached requiring the submission of a construction environmental management plan prior to the commencement of development. Similarly, inappropriate management of horse manure could have an impact upon adjacent habitats. A condition could also be attached requiring the submission of a horse manure management plan. Subject to this, the scheme would be acceptable in this regard.

Great Crested Newts - A number of ponds are located within 250 metres of the proposed development. However, the application site offers very limited habitat for great crested newts and would not result in the fragmentation or isolation of great crested newt habitat. There is a 'low risk' of newts being killed or injured during the construction process. Nonetheless, in order to address this risk, the applicant's Ecologist has recommended a suite of 'reasonable avoidance measures'. The NCO has confirmed that subject to these measures being implemented, the proposed development would be highly unlikely to result in a breach of the Habitat Regulations. Consequently, it is not necessary for the Council to have regard to the Habitat Regulations during the determination of this application.

Badgers - A number of badger setts have been recorded in close proximity to the proposed development. The majority of these setts are located a sufficient distance from the proposed development so as to not be affected by it. However, one sett is located on one of the site's boundaries. To mitigate the risk of any impacts on this, sett the submitted ecological assessment recommends the provision of a 30 metre undeveloped buffer around the sett. The Council's NCO has confirmed that this approach is acceptable. As the status of badgers can change within a short time scale, it is recommended that a condition should be attached which requires an updated badger survey to be undertaken prior to the commencement of development.

Himalayan Balsam - This non-native invasive plant species is present on site. A habitat management plan will need to be secured by condition to ensure the appropriate control of this species.

Bats - Whilst the application site offers limited opportunities for roosting bats, bats were recorded commuting and foraging around the woodlands to the north and south of the site and the on-site pond. To avoid any adverse impacts on bats resulting from any lighting associated with the development, a condition should be attached requiring any additional lighting to be agreed prior to its installation. Any proposed lighting should be low level and directional and the design of the lighting scheme informed by the advice in *Bats and lighting in the UK- bats and the built environment series*, (Bat Conservation Trust, 2009).

Biodiversity Enhancement - The proposed development provides an opportunity to provide a north-south habitat link along the western boundary of the application site which would link up the designated woodlands to the north and south of the application. This would serve as a significant ecological benefit whilst also softening the impact of the proposed development from the west. This landscaping detail could be secured by condition.

Residential Amenity

CBLP Policy GR6 and CELPS Policy SD1 require that new development should not have an unduly detrimental effect on the amenities of nearby residential properties from loss of privacy, loss of sunlight or daylight, visual intrusion, environmental disturbance or pollution and traffic generation access and parking.

The impact of the development upon nearby residential properties is a material consideration. There are some residential lodges located at a development referred to as Hunters Pointe located 185 metres to the north west of the site. Given that there is very little above ground development by way of buildings / structures and given the separation involved, the proposal would not materially harm neighbouring residential amenity by reason of loss of light, overlooking or visual intrusion. The key issue to consider in this case, is the impact on residential amenity in terms of noise.

The Council's Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) has assessed the application together with the submitted noise assessment. The applicant has confirmed that the number of events to be held on the proposed showground will be 43 days / 20 weekends and includes 3 international events. The applicant states that shows and events will be held during the summer months i.e. from mid March to mid September and that the times / duration of events will be from 8am to 8pm.

In light of the fact that the above represents a significant number of events – which will be held at the weekends – i.e. at times when nearby residents expect to be able to enjoy their own leisure times from work at their homes – in conjunction with the summer months when residents expect to be able to enjoy outdoor garden areas and have house windows open – the EPU recommends that the noise control measures need to be more robust in terms of the public address system (tannoys) in order to protect residential amenity and quality of life to residents in the locality and to avoid potential noise nuisance.

The submitted Noise Management Plan states that the public address system should be designed and installed to minimise noise impact on residential locations. It further states that “for events where a public address system is necessary in arenas, the sound output levels will be set to avoid any excessive noise at site boundaries nearest to dwellings”. The report further states that ‘during shows / events, periodic inspections will be made by management staff to check there is no excessive noise at site boundaries near to dwellings.’

The terms ‘excessive noise’ - in situations where it is necessary for noise to be controlled is subjective, as one person’s perception of what constitutes is or is not excessive noise may be much different to what another person considers to be excessive or not. Accordingly, the EPU recommends a condition requiring submission of a scheme detailing the Public Address System scheme which includes the location of any speakers, the number, the type, the direction and the measures which will be taken to provide a system which will result in public address announcements being inaudible at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive property. A condition is also recommended with respect to noise monitoring. Subject to this, the EPU is satisfied that the noise impacts would be acceptable from the nearest noise sensitive dwelling.

In terms of traffic generation, the likely increased in vehicle movements will not be significant relevant to the current uses in the vicinity of the site as the traffic will be accommodated by the proposed Congleton Link Road. In terms of air quality, the Council’s Environmental Protection Unit has not objected to the scheme on air quality grounds. Consequently, in respect of residential amenity, this will not cause material harm to the residential amenity afforded to the nearest occupiers.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would not materially harm neighbouring amenity by reason of loss of light, direct overlooking, visual intrusion or noise and therefore complies with local plan policy GR6 and SD 1.

Loss of Agricultural Land

No details of the quality of the agricultural land have been submitted with the application. However, the Natural England Regional Agricultural Land Classification Map shows that the area mainly comprises of partly Grade 2 and 3 agricultural land, which is considered of a quality which is ‘very good to moderate’. Whilst the proposal would result in the partial loss of Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land, by the temporary nature of the proposals the loss would not be of any long term permanence. With respect to the land subject of the change of use, this would not result in the permanent loss of agricultural land as it would be used for the keeping and grazing of sheep and horses for the rest of the year and as such a refusal could not be sustained on this basis. Furthermore, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal to the rural economy would outweigh the partial loss of the agricultural land in this case.

Flooding and Drainage

The site is within Flood Risk Zone 1 and is not therefore at risk from flooding. However, owing to the size of the proposals, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken. The Environment Agency and the Council’s Flood Risk Team have assessed the FRA and are satisfied that subject to the recommendations within the FRA, the proposal would not give rise to flooding or drainage issues.

Jodrell Bank

Whilst no response has been received from the University of Manchester, it is not considered that the proposals would impair the efficiency of the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescopes.

PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSIONS

The principle of the proposed equestrian showground is acceptable in this location, where the impact upon the character of the existing countryside and landscape can be minimised through an enhanced landscaping and woodland planting scheme.

The proposal would bring significant benefits to the rural economy by supporting Somerford Park Farm, which is an existing rural enterprise currently employing at least 60 full time equivalent employees.

Subject to the construction of the Congleton Link Road (CLR), the access proposals would be acceptable and the likely traffic generated by the proposal could be accommodated on the new CLR and local highway network. Adequate parking would be provided on site during equestrian shows, which are proposed to take place on 43 days / 20 weekends in any calendar year.

The impact on neighbouring residential amenity can be adequately safeguarded by conditions ensuring that any public address (tannoy / loudspeaker) systems are appropriately designed and positioned so as to not cause noise disturbance. The traffic generated would also be carried by the proposed link road.

Whilst the proposal would result in the partial loss of agricultural land, this loss would not be of any permanence and in any event, such loss is considered to be outweighed by the benefits to the rural economy.

The impact of the proposal on trees and hedges would not be significant and environmental considerations relating to flooding, drainage and ecology including the nearby SSSI and SBI (subject to conditions and further information) would be acceptable. The impact on nearby heritage assets would also be acceptable owing to the temporary nature of the proposals and the separation. The proposal would not impair the efficiency of the Jodrell Bank Radio telescopes.

On this basis, the proposal is for development which is sustainable in terms of environmental, economic and social considerations. The proposal is considered to comply with the relevant saved policies of the Congleton Borough Local Plan, the policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, the 'made' Somerford Neighbourhood Plan and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard time limit (3 years)**

2. Accordance with approved plans
3. Proposed use restricted to equestrian showground for 43 days / 20 weekends in a calendar year
4. Proposal not to be brought into use until the proposed access and Congleton Link Road have been constructed and are operational
5. Surfacing materials to be submitted and approved
6. Landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved and to include woodland planting along western boundary
7. Implementation of landscaping scheme
8. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted noise assessment
9. Notwithstanding the submitted noise assessment, the details of the Public Address System shall be submitted, approved and implemented
10. Noise monitoring will be undertaken at the nearest boundary to residential property and a logbook kept and made available for inspection by the Local Authority.
11. Construction Environmental Management Plan to be submitted, approved and implemented
12. 10 year habitat management plan to be submitted, approved and implemented
13. Updated badger survey prior to be submitted, approved and implemented
14. Manure management plan to be submitted, approved and implemented
15. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted ecological survey
16. Survey for nesting birds if works carried out during nesting season
17. Access to be constructed in accordance with submitted details prior to first use
18. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted Flood Risk Assessment
19. Submission of a sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan scheme to be submitted, approved and implemented
20. Surface water drainage strategy to be submitted, approved and implemented
21. Details of external lighting to be submitted, approved and implemented (Bat friendly)

In order to give proper effect to the Board's/Committee's intent and without changing the substance of its decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation) in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) to correct any technical slip or omission in the resolution, before issue of the decision notice.

