

This application seeks permission for the erection of 2 No. poultry houses and associated infrastructure at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm, Willoughbridge Lane.

The site lies in the open countryside in an Area of Landscape Maintenance as identified in the Newcastle-Under-Lyme Local Plan. The farmhouse, Willoughbridge Lodge, is a Grade II* listed building and a Scheduled Ancient Monument Moated site, four pond bays and an associated enclosure at Willoughbridge Park lie to the west of the application site.

The proposed poultry units would be located on lower ground to the east of the main farm complex, with a new access track linking the development to the existing farm track. The associated infrastructure would include control rooms, 4 No. feed bins, feed weighing room, concrete apron, dirty water tank, water tank, plant room, gate house, backup generator and attenuation pond. Overall, the development provides 5643 sq. m of new agricultural floor space and will provide accommodation for 70,000 broiler chickens.

The 13-week period for the determination of this application expired on 6th August 2025. An extension of time has been agreed to 10th October 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

Permit, subject to conditions relating to the following matters: -

- 1. Standard time limit**
- 2. Approved plans and supporting documents**
- 3. Provision and hard surfacing of parking and turning areas**
- 4. Materials**
- 5. Boundary treatments**
- 6. Construction Environmental Management Plan (Pre-commencement)**
- 7. Noise mitigation measures/attenuation scheme**
- 8. Ground contamination report/any unexpected contamination**
- 9. Details of external lighting**
- 10. Bat and bird boxes**
- 11. RAMMs**
- 12. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment and drainage strategy drawings**
- 13. Detailed drainage design (Pre-commencement)**
- 14. Details of dirty water to be exported to an appropriate licensed treatment facility (Pre-commencement)**
- 15. Development operated in accordance with approved Manure Management Strategy**
- 16. Tree and hedgerow protection measures for retained trees/hedgerows**
- 17. Arboricultural method statement**
- 18. Verification noise assessment report**
- 19. Details of noise generating plant including mechanical ventilation or refrigeration/air conditioning, refuse compacting**
- 20. Noise and odour control**
- 21. Biodiversity Gain Plan**
- 22. Habitat Management Monitoring Plan (HMMP)**
- 23. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan**

Reason for Recommendation

The principle of development is acceptable and Officers are satisfied that the proposal would not adversely impact on the setting of the listed Willoughbridge Lodge or the Scheduled Monument. It has been demonstrated through the various supporting information/documents that the environmental impact of the development would be acceptable, the visual effects on the landscape would be limited

and there would be no impact on highway safety. It has also been demonstrated that the proposal would not increase flood risk on the site or surrounding land, and that appropriate mitigation measures have been put in place to ensure that wastewater and manure does discharge into nearby watercourses. Subject to mitigation measures, the development would not adversely impact on ecology, with on-site enhancements to be provided, securing the necessary 10% increase in BNG.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be a sustainable form of development that complies with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application

Additional information and amended plans have been sought and provided and the scheme is now considered to be a sustainable form of development that complies with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Key Issues

This application seeks permission for the erection of 2 No. poultry houses and associated infrastructure at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm. The farm is currently operated as a dairy and arable farming business by the applicant who runs Partons Poulet's Ltd based in Norton in Hales, Market Drayton. It lies in the open countryside and is situated off Willoughbridge Lane, a narrow country lane to the south-west of the hamlet of Willoughbridge and north/north-east of Mucklestone/Loggerheads. The main farm complex which is accessed off a long concrete access road, comprises of both traditional and modern agricultural buildings and a farmhouse (Willoughbridge Lodge) which is a grade II* listed building. There are also several other residential dwellings which are situated off the main access road which are owned/occupied separately from the farm.

A Scheduled Monument Moated site, four pond bays and an associated enclosure at Willoughbridge Park lie to the west of the application site. Willoughbridge Lodge Farm is also partly located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel and adjacent to the safeguarding zone for Trentham / Lordsley Quarry and in an area of Landscape Maintenance as identified in the Newcastle-Under-Lyme Local Plan.

The application site extends to 2.42ha and is currently cultivated grade 3 agricultural land i.e. land of moderate to good quality. An application for an Environmental Permit (EP) was submitted separately to the Environment Agency (EA) in February 2025 which will assess, amongst other things, emissions to water, air and land, including to groundwater and odour, noise and vibration monitoring.

The proposed poultry units would be located on lower ground to the east of the main farm complex, with a new access track linking the development to the existing farm track. The associated infrastructure would include control rooms, 4 No. feed bins, feed weighing room, concrete apron, dirty water tank, water tank, plant room, gate house, backup generator and attenuation pond.

In detail, the process operating from the site would involve the rearing of broiler chickens from day old chicks through to finished table weight. The site would operate on a 48-day cycle, with chicks delivered to the site as day olds on day 1 of the rearing cycle and reared within the buildings for around 38 days. The first batch of birds would then be removed from the site at around day 30 of the flock (thinning), and the balance removed at the end of the flock on day 38. Following the removal of the birds, the site would be empty for 10 days for cleaning and preparation for the next batch of chicks. The site would operate with 7.5 flocks of birds per annum. Overall, the development provides 5643 sq. m of new agricultural floor space and would provide accommodation of 70,000 broiler chickens.

Interested parties have suggested that an appropriate Assessment is required to assess impact on River Tern. However, as the River Tern is not a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), an Appropriate Assessment which forms part of a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) is only required where the site is within the impact zone of a SAC. The Habitat Regulations do not apply to this development as it is not within the impact zone of any SAC site.

Taking account of the above background, the key planning matters in the determination of the application are:

- Principle of development,
- Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the setting of the grade II* listed Willoughbridge Lodge and adjacent scheduled ancient monument,
- Impact of the environmental effects of the development on the amenity of the area and nearby residents in terms of noise, smell, air pollution, ammonia, nitrogen deposition and dust,
- Impact on landscape character,
- Highway safety and parking implications,
- Flood risk and drainage, including the impact of wastewater/manure disposal on nearby watercourses,
- Ecology and biodiversity net gain,
- Other issues raised by interested parties,
- Conclusion/Planning balance

Principle of development

The application would involve the development of an existing agricultural field to provide 2 poultry houses and associated infrastructure. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF confirms that amongst other things, planning policies should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings; the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. Paragraph 89 advises that planning decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).

The proposal would involve the expansion of the existing farming operations at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm and would therefore support economic growth and productivity of an existing rural business. Thus, the proposal would accord with the objectives of paragraphs 85, 88 and 89 of the NPPF and the principle of development is therefore acceptable. The environmental, highways and landscape impacts are discussed in detail below and weighed into the 'planning balance' at the end of the report.

Setting of the grade II listed Willoughbridge Lodge and scheduled ancient monument

The application site is situated in the vicinity of two designated heritage assets: Willoughbridge Lodge, a grade II* listed building of sixteenth century origin, and a Scheduled Monument (SM) ('Moated site, four pond bays and an associated enclosure at Willoughbridge Park').

Willoughbridge Lodge which lies around 300m north of the proposed poultry unit, was originally constructed in the mid-sixteenth century as a hunting lodge. It has been much altered over the successive centuries, with extensions and additions dating up to the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest part is a square, three stage tower flanked by gabled wings. The list description notes that from here are 'Magnificent views across the Cheshire Plain' referring to views from the main, north elevation looking to the north and northwest rather than the south (i.e. away from the siting of the proposed poultry unit). Nevertheless, the site lies within the setting of Willoughbridge Lodge and should be assessed on this basis.

The proposed poultry unit would lie approximately 50m to the southwest of the SM at its nearest point. This part of the monument relates to a series of in-filled ponds and retaining banks. The stream / watercourse on the eastern boundary of the application site flows alongside and through these in-

filled ponds and past the moated site in the north. The moated site itself lies just over 400m to the north of the proposed sheds.

As well as setting, the ponds hold significance as evidence of a complex medieval water management system and land-uses associated to the moated site and are important for their potential to contain preserved palaeoenvironmental remains within their waterlogged deposits.

The landscape which surrounds the moated site forms part of the setting of the SM and includes the application site, which could have been part of its the agricultural hinterland. This landscape retains an open, rural and agricultural character which, where experienced in combination with the SM, helps to provide historic context and enhances understanding and appreciation. This is considered to be a positive element of the monument's setting which contributes to significance. Not all parts of the monument's setting will contribute the same amount of significance or be as sensitive to change. For example, intrusion and visual impacts in views from and towards the moated site itself would have a higher sensitivity than from within or alongside the ponds, where the historic character, context and legibility of the landscape would be the more important factors.

Listed buildings and their settings are protected in law by the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (the Act), Sections 16(2) and 66(1), the latter of which states: 'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Scheduled Monuments are protected in law by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required for any intrusive or invasive works to a scheduled monument. Applications in the setting of a Scheduled Monument such as the current scheme do not require SMC. The NPPF treats scheduled monuments as assets of the highest significance.

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 213 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. If the development will lead to 'substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 214 of the NPPF indicates that the development should be refused consent by the local planning authority, unless the proposal can meet a number of specific conditions. If the development leads to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 208 indicates that this harm still needs to be assessed against the public benefit of the scheme and whether or not the viability of the site is being optimised.

The proposed bird houses are the most visually prominent aspect of the proposals due to their large footprint and height. However, they are located in a depression in the landscape at a considerably lower elevation than the listed Willoughbridge Lodge. Despite this, and the three hedged boundaries that lie between, they will be visible from the vicinity of Willoughbridge Lodge, though not from the garden which is screened by a dense 4m high evergreen hedge. They will not however be visible in any of the designed/valued long-distance views from the house and none of the house windows face in this direction apart from a small minor window on the first floor of the eastern elevation.

The poultry unit will represent a change in the farmland setting that contributes to the significance of Willoughbridge Lodge in a generalised way. However, the change is very small, representing only a small fraction of the land around the house and is not readily visible from the house itself or its garden. The proposed poultry units remain a recognisably agricultural feature. They are broadly comparable in size and appearance with the modern sheds that dominate the immediate setting of Willoughbridge Lodge, which are the main part of the farmstead to its immediate south. This lessens

their impact in a rural landscape where there are other similar examples and are readily recognisable as such.

In summary and as confirmed by the Conservation Officer, whilst the proposed development will result in a change to the setting of Willoughbridge Lodge, it would not be a change that will harm its significance or the ability to appreciate that significance.

Turning to the impact on the setting of the SM, Historic England (HE) have confirmed that the introduction of these large buildings and associated infrastructure within close proximity to the ponds would impact and change our experience of this part of the scheduled monument's setting. This would erode into some of the positive historic open character around the site, although the buildings would retain an agricultural context.

There is a potential for some wider visual intrusions, which would be exacerbated by the separation between the chicken sheds and the rest of the farm complex. There would also be a juxtaposition - in plan form at least - between the alignment of the sheds and the pattern of the surrounding fields and historic boundaries.

The application is supported by a Heritage Statement (HS) which has examined the impacts on the scheduled monument. HE broadly agree with its views on the relative sensitivities of the monument and the lower impact of this scheme. Additional information has also been provided by the applicant detailing the proposal's interactions with and changes to the watercourse on the eastern boundary of the site, and the potential for these to impact the condition or preservation within the SM further downstream (Moated site, four pond bays and an associated enclosure at Willoughbridge Park- List Entry Number:1011052). Further details have also been submitted regarding the impact on the watercourse, nature of the proposed attenuation pond and proposed drainage strategy. This confirms that no alterations are proposed to the watercourse itself beyond routine land management activities. This is limited to mowing and the removal of any blockages to ensure the continued functionality of the channel and are not expected to alter the condition or flow dynamics of the watercourse.

The proposed attenuation pond will manage only clean surface water and is designed to discharge into the watercourse at the established Greenfield runoff rate. As a result, there will be no increase in the volume or rate of surface water entering the watercourse compared to existing conditions. The proposed development will also not affect the condition of the watercourse or the preservation of the scheduled area downstream. As such, HE is satisfied that the risk of indirect impacts upon the SM would be low.

In conclusion, whilst there is potential for the proposals to result in some harm to the significance of the scheduled monument through the impacts upon its setting, HE confirms that the level of harm would however be at the lower end of the less than substantial category, and they therefore raise no objections to the proposal. As required by paragraph 208 of the NPPF, given that the development would lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, in this case the SM, this harm still needs to be weighed against the public benefit of the scheme.

HE has queried whether it would be possible to re-position the building further away from the SM to ensure that there would be no impact on its setting. However, the proposed buildings have been carefully sited in the corner of an existing arable field in order to minimise its impact on the surrounding landscape and retain the efficient agricultural use of the remainder of the field. Relocating the development further into the field would compromise the functionality of the land for farming, effectively sterilising a large central portion of it and creating significant operational difficulties. This would reduce the productivity of the land and undermine its established use, which has been an important consideration in the design and siting of the proposal. Furthermore, the current position has been selected to balance a number of competing constraints, including landscape impact, access, and proximity to the SM. Thus, the current location represents the most appropriate and balanced solution given the constraints of the site.

The applicant has provided an additional statement setting out the public benefits associated with the scheme. Firstly, it sets out how the proposal would contribute to national food security by supporting the UK's self-sufficiency in poultry meat production at a time when the sector is undergoing major structural change due to the adoption of the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) by most UK

supermarkets. The BCC mandates a 20% lower stocking density, meaning additional poultry housing is required to maintain current output levels while adhering to higher welfare standards. This development ensures continued UK production, thereby reducing the need for imports, shortening supply chains, and lowering food miles. Moderate positive weight should be attached to such benefits.

In terms of economic and employment benefits, the construction phase will generate contracts for a wide range of local and regional trades and suppliers and once operational, the development will create a permanent full-time role on site. Indirect economic benefits will also arise from ongoing contracts with hatcheries, feed mills, bedding providers, and haulage contractors. Again, moderate weight should be attached to these economic benefits.

In terms of environmental and welfare advancements, despite concerns having been raised by interested parties, the proposed unit will be compliant with higher animal welfare standards under the BCC. Efficient management of resources and emissions through a carefully designed drainage system (detailed below) will minimise environmental impact and ensure alignment with modern, sustainable agricultural practices.

In conclusion, the proposal would preserve the setting and significance of the grade II* listed Willoughbridge Lodge. The level of harm to the setting of the SM would be at the lower end of the less than substantial category and it is therefore considered that the public benefits set out above would on balance outweigh this harm.

Impact on amenity/environmental effects

The NPPF states at paragraph 135 that planning decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Paragraph 198 of the NPPF confirms that planning decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development.

A significant number of representations have been received from interested parties raising concerns about the impact of the development on the amenity of the area and its potential environmental effects. Particular areas of concern relate to the air quality impact, odour control, ammonia emissions, manure management, noise and dust emissions, and potential attraction for vermin/fly. As part of the original submission and to address the aforementioned concerns, the applicant has submitted an Ammonia Impact Assessment (AIA), Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) and Updated Acoustic Note (AN), Odour Impact Assessment (OIA), Manure Management Strategy (MMS) and Pest Control Management Plan (PCMP).

The submitted AIA sets out how ammonia emission rates from the proposed poultry rearing houses have been assessed and quantified based upon EA standard ammonia emission factors. The modelling predicts that at all the wildlife sites considered, the process contribution to ammonia concentration and nitrogen deposition rate would be below the relevant EA lower threshold percentage of the relevant Critical Level or Critical Load and process contributions would be below 1% of the relevant Critical Level or Critical Load at all Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Therefore, the requirement for a cumulative assessment in terms of ammonia impacts does not apply to this application. Thus, ammonia emissions would not cause environmental harm or adversely impact on amenity or to the Dorothy Clive Garden.

Turning to the noise and dust impacts of the development, the NIA and AN detail how a noise survey was conducted to determine representative background noise levels at the nearest dwellings to the proposed poultry units. The noise emissions from the ventilation fans, HGV movements and stock deliveries generated by the proposed development have been assessed and it has been demonstrated that the individual and aggregate noise impact of the assessed noise sources will not be greater than low during day and evening periods.

On the basis that the occupiers of the nearest dwellings will be expected to be indoors during the night period, the noise ingress via an open window has been reviewed. The resultant ambient noise ingress levels are significantly below the existing background noise levels and the suggested noise ingress limit (5dB below the noise ingress limits given in BS8233). The maximum noise ingress level generated by transport operations on the concrete apron also does not exceed PRoPG's L_{Amax,F} 45dB threshold (value that should not be exceeded more than 10 times during the night) with regard to sleep disturbance. It is therefore concluded that during the night both the ventilation fans and concrete apron transport activities will result in a very low noise impact. On the basis that the development will not result in an adverse noise impact at the nearest dwellings, it is concluded that on noise grounds it is acceptable, subject to the conditions recommended by Environmental Health (EHO) regarding precise details of the noise generating plant being submitted for approval combined with a verification report.

The submitted AN confirms that the closest dwellings are fully acoustically shielded from the proposed poultry units by local topography. Commercial vehicles for the poultry development will use the existing farm access road, which passes in front of the dwellings. As highlighted in the NIA, the commercial vehicles using the access road are within context of the existing farm operations i.e., there will be no change in the nature, type or character of vehicle noise affecting the dwellings as a result of the development, although there will be a slight increase in the total number of vehicle movements associated with the development. As with the impact on highway safety, it is not considered that these additional movements will have a significant impact on residential amenity, particularly as most of these movements will take place infrequently at the start and end of the poultry cycle for a short period of time.

The modelling contained in the OIA calculates that odour exposure levels in the surrounding area from the proposed unit would not exceed the EA benchmark for moderately offensive odours, which is a maximum annual 98th percentile hourly mean concentration of 3.0 ouE/m³ at any of the nearby sensitive residential receptors. No objections have been received from the EA or the EHO regarding odour emissions from the facility, subject to conditions.

The MMS details how poultry manure generated at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm will be managed. This will involve removing all manure off-site and directing it to a purpose-built anaerobic digestion facility and fertiliser factory. This will ensure that there is no on-site or land-based spreading, risk of nutrient run-off or groundwater contamination and that the development complies with the necessary legal and environmental requirements. A condition is recommended, requiring that the unit is operated in accordance with the approved MMS at all times. A detailed assessment of the management of manure to ensure that it does not pollute nearby watercourses is undertaken in the flooding and drainage section of this report.

Interested parties have also raised concerns that the development would attract vermin and flies. A PCMP has been submitted which details the measures which would be put in place to manage manure/waste and monitor the birds, to ensure that any fatalities are swiftly removed from the buildings. The mitigation measures contained in the PCMP should ensure that the proposal does not cause any undue nuisance in terms of pests.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not raise any adverse implications for residential amenity and, subject to conditions, the environmental impacts of proposed unit would be acceptable and accord with the principles of the NPPF.

Landscape character

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 135 of the framework lists 6 criteria, a) – f) with which planning policies and decisions should accord and details, amongst other things, will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding

built environment and landscape setting while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. It also seeks to ensure that proposals create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

CSS Policy CSP1 states that new development should be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent's unique townscape and landscape and in particular, the built heritage, its historic environment, its rural setting and the settlement pattern created by the hierarchy of centres. It states that new development should protect important and longer distance views of historic landmarks and rural vistas and contribute positively to an area's identity and heritage (both natural and built) in terms of scale, density, layout, use of appropriate vernacular materials for buildings and surfaces and access. This policy is considered to be consistent with the NPPF.

Policies LNPP1 and LNPP2 of the Loggerheads Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) require that new development must demonstrate high standards of design which reinforce local character. Buildings, streets, spaces and landscaping to create attractive, safe and well-functioning environments, with a sense of place. It also sets out how new development should complement the surrounding context, provide active frontage and retain important trees. In addition, development proposals should create a strong green infrastructure buffer on the interface between urban and rural to buffer surrounding landscape from development.

RE5 of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance SPD (2010) states that new development in the rural area should amongst other things respond to the typical forms of buildings in the village or locality and that new buildings should respond to the materials, details and colours that may be distinctive to a locality.

The site occupies a broadly triangular field to the east of the main farmstead of Willoughbridge Lodge Farm. The existing farm complex features a number of relatively extensive agricultural buildings and is situated within a locally elevated position, with the application site occupying lower ground within a small valley that falls to the north. Higher ground is located to the east, west, and south of the proposed site. Overhead electricity lines cross the field of the site from east to west.

The eastern boundary of the field is marked by a narrow watercourse that flows northwards to eventually join the River Tern. The majority of the watercourse adjacent to the site is lined by mature and mostly deciduous trees, including areas of woodland to the north and south. The surrounding land principally comprises agricultural land, with a mix of both pasture and arable uses. There are a number of public rights of way in the locality (Loggerheads 8 to the north, Loggerheads 7 to the east and Loggerheads 44 to the north-west).

The Newcastle-under-Lyme Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment Study (2022) sets out detailed descriptions and evaluations of seven broad and generic Landscape Character Types (LCTs). These LCTs are subdivided into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which are unique, individual, geographical areas that share common characteristics. The development would impact on the Loggerheads and Maer Sandstone Hills and Farmlands LCA, and the Knighton Ancient Sandstone Farmlands LCA. The key characteristics of these LCA include, rolling/undulating landscapes, blocks of woodland/trees, together with arable and pastoral farmland. The development also has the potential to impact on the Principal Settled Farmlands within the Shropshire Landscape Character Assessment which is characterised by mixed farming land and the varied pattern of sub-regular, hedged fields.

The application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which identifies a number of visual receptors which could be affected by the proposed development. This includes public rights of way, residential properties and roads within the vicinity of the site. It also assesses the landscape and visual effects of the development. In this respect, the LVA concludes that in terms of its landscape effects, the proposal would have a negligible effect on vegetation on the site and its boundaries and a slight adverse impact on the landform of the site and its environs.

In terms of the landscape character areas referred to above, the LVA contends that the scheme would have a negative/slight adverse impact on these areas. Turning to the visual effects, the LVA sets out that the scheme would have a negligible/slight adverse impact on the listed public rights of way and

nearby residents and a negligible effect on road users. As such, the overall conclusion of the LVA is that proposed development is considered acceptable in terms of its likely landscape and visual effects.

Having reviewed the submitted information, responses from interested parties and visited the site, your officers concur with the conclusions contained within the LVA. The landscape impact and visual effects of the proposal is reduced due to the siting of the buildings on lower ground, with the undulating topography and intervening landscape features/buildings (i.e. tree planting and farm buildings) combined with the distance to the identified visual receptors. Moreover, whilst it is acknowledged that the facility would introduce a substantial building within what is currently an undeveloped field, such structures are not an uncommon occurrence in a rural landscape. The poultry unit would also lie adjacent to the main farm complex at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm and would therefore be viewed alongside these structures which are of a similar scale and height to the proposed development and occupy higher ground. As such, they are more imposing within the surrounding landscape than the proposed poultry unit.

Interested parties have also raised concerns about the potential visual impact from the Dorothy Clive Garden which lies approximately 1,500 metres north-east of the application site and has not been included as a visual receptor in the LVA. Whilst the concerns are noted, given the substantial separate distance between the Dorothy Clive Garden and the proposed buildings, combined with their position on lower ground, it is not considered that the development would impact on the visual amenity of users of the gardens. For these reasons, officers are satisfied that it is not necessary to include the Dorothy Clive Garden as a visual receptor in the LVA.

Overall, officers are satisfied that the landscape and visual effects of the development would be limited, and the proposal would accord with the afore mentioned policies in the NPPF and the development plan in this respect.

Highway Safety/parking

CSS Policy SP3 addresses the need to secure more choice of, and create better access to, sustainable modes of transport whilst discouraging less sustainable modes. CSP1 expects new development to be accessible to all users and to be safe, uncluttered, varied, and attractive.

NP Policy DC3 expects the form and layout of development to provide ease of movement for pedestrians and cyclists, cater for a people with a range of mobility requirements and avoid severe adverse impacts on the capacity of the highway network

NPPF Paragraph 114 notes that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
- c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code 46; and
- d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

Paragraph 115 advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Willoughbridge Lodge Farm is located approximately 2km north-east of Mucklestone and 3km north of Loggerheads. The farm is currently an active dairy unit, and the application seeks to diversify the existing agricultural activities. The location of the proposed development is approximately 130m to the east of the existing farm complex and would be served via a new internal route across the farm. Access to the public highway network would be through this established farm access which is

constructed in concrete and extends around 0.6km as it descends toward Willoughbridge Lane towards the farm. This access road is also shared with several residential properties which do not form part of the farm holding. Traffic travelling to and from the proposed development would use Willoughbridge Lane to the north-east of the Farm access, which extends approximately 1.5km to its crossroads junction with the A51 and Aston Lane.

The proposed site access is as existing and at a width of more than 16 metres is of sufficient dimensions to accommodate 2 HGVs to enter and exit the site simultaneously. The Highway Authority is satisfied that the existing visibility splays in both directions are acceptable and provide safe and suitable access for vehicles, including HGVs associated with the proposed poultry when emerging onto Willoughbridge Lane. The engineered nature of the existing access would also ensure that vehicles entering the site would not adversely impact on the free flow of traffic on this part of Willoughbridge Lane. As such, it is considered that the proposed access arrangements are acceptable and would accord with the requirements of paragraph 114 of the NPPF, that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

The application has been accompanied by a Transport Statement (TS) which assesses the impact of the development on the surrounding highway network from the increased number of HGV movements associated with the proposed poultry unit. As part of the TS, traffic surveys were undertaken at two locations on Willoughbridge Lane (at and to the south-west of the site access), to assess existing vehicular movements in the locality. These demonstrate that existing traffic movements were up to 138 movements in a 24-hour period.

The TS confirms that following a review of the baseline (existing) and proposed development traffic movements, cumulative flows would remain at a low level even during peak hours; falling well within the capacity of the access and local road network, which accommodates the same type and size of vehicles safely (i.e. farm vehicles/HGVs). This is reflected in the empirical traffic survey and collision data.

The proposed development would attract a peak of 7, 2-way HGV movements (total 14 movements) on day 38 of the 45 day cycle of the poultry unit operations (maximum output in terms of vehicles), which could result in a cumulative total of 25 vehicle movements in the peak hour period, should they coincide with the busiest hour recorded during the week of the traffic surveys. Such an increase in vehicle movements is not considered by the Highway Authority to cause a significant cumulative impact on the adjacent highway network which has sufficient capacity to safely accommodate these additional HGV movements.

Thus, overall, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or cause a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. It would therefore accord with paragraph 115 of the NPPF which clearly identifies that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

This proposal provides 3 parking spaces within the site curtilage. This would provide sufficient parking provision for the 1 member of staff who would be directly employed at the poultry unit and visitors/contractors attending the site for routine maintenance/management purposes. A concrete apron would also be provided, allowing articulated vehicles to service the development with sufficient room to enter and exit the site in a forward gear. Thus, the proposed parking and turning facilities associated with the development are considered to be acceptable.

Flood Risk, drainage and impact on nearby watercourses from wastewater/manure disposal

NPPF Paragraph 167 outlines that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

- a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;

- b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;
- c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;
- d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that sites are suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. This includes risks arising from natural hazards or former activities.

The application site slopes towards the north and the east and lies in Flood Zone 1, land with a low risk of flooding. As the proposed agricultural buildings are classified as being “Less Vulnerable” development, such uses are permitted in Flood Zone 1. To the north of the proposed development is a small pond which can be found approximately 500m away. Further north and located approximately 740m from the site, is the River Tern with Willoughbridge Lane crossing the river at this point. There is a small watercourse to the east of the site boundary which is the proposed method of discharge for surface water and approximately 600m east of the development boundary is Willoughbridge Park and Lordsley Quarry. Within the park and quarry area, there are a number of small ponds and lakes.

The application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (FRDIA) which has considered potential sources of flooding to the site, including groundwater, fluvial, surface water, existing sewers, water mains and other artificial sources and found that the site is adequately distanced from any forms of flooding. The sustainable drainage system that has been designed will mitigate against any flood risk from additional surface water flows created by the impermeable areas. Finished floor levels will be raised by 150mm above average ground levels which would give an FFL of 130.062m AOD.

The LLFA initially requested that additional information be provided to establish if the nearby watercourse is in a suitable condition to discharge water into. Further details have been submitted, confirming that a survey of the watercourse has been undertaken and a viable point of connection is available. It has also been confirmed that the basin location lies outside an area of flood risk for surface water, with the LLFA satisfied that the detailed design of the swale, basin and headwall can be secured via condition. An additional condition is recommended by the LLFA, requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the Staffordshire SuDS Handbook; the approved FRDIA and drainage strategy/design drawings and associated mitigation measures.

Surface water will discharge via a sealed drainage network through filter strips and filter drains for pollution remediation, and into an appropriately sized attenuation lagoon, before discharging via gravity and restricted by hydrobrake into the adjacent watercourse. Any dirty water from the poultry unit is to be captured within drainage channels and fed through dirty water tanks, where it will be stored and removed appropriately, with diverter valves being used to allow for clean surface water to be discharged through the network. These measures should ensure that any wastewater does not pollute the adjacent water courses and address concerns from interested parties in this regard.

Dirty water from the poultry operation is indicated to be transferred to a wastewater treatment facility and will not be stored or spread on site. The specific treatment plant for the dirty water is currently unknown as it requires the applicant to follow commercial decisions on pricing etc. However, a condition can be imposed, requiring the dirty water to be exported to an appropriate licensed treatment facility.

Turning to manure management, a Manure Management Plan has been submitted which confirms that manure from the site will be transferred to the anaerobic digestion facility at Manby which is planned to align with that facility becoming operational in September 2026 and is considered acceptable by the EA.

Without prejudice to the outcome of the live environmental permit application which will be assessed separately by the EA, it is likely that, if granted, the EA will require the operation to have a contingency plan in place for the disposal of waste should the third-party operations be unable to accept waste at any time. The applicant has confirmed that there are numerous facilities that are

licensed to take the manure from the plant, such as litter burning power stations. Although the applicant's primary contract is with Manby, these alternative facilities would purchase the manure if Manby cannot take the waste product, therefore offering a contingency plan for the disposal of manure.

In addition, officers are mindful of the recent High Court judgment – *R (Caffyn) v Shropshire Council* [2025] EWHC 1497. This judgement requires that the determining authority (i.e. NBC) are satisfied on the assessment of cumulative impacts of intensive agricultural developments in the local catchment area, including how the disposal of 'waste' from the operation, including any indirect environmental/downstream effects of any spreading or associated treatment facilities such as Anaerobic digestion plants are managed. As previously set out, the applicant has a contact with Manby BGE Ltd to take the manure from the site to their bio refinery. The issues raised in *Caffyn v Shropshire Council* were specifically concerned with liquid digestate spreading from AD plants. The Manby facility eliminates any liquid digestate from the process, as the product will be dried and pelleted, bagged and sold as fertiliser product. As such, the issue in *Caffyn v Shropshire Council* does not arise in this case. Thus, there would be no cumulative impact with other chicken farms in the wider area in terms of the pollution of nearby watercourses and rivers.

Subject to conditions, appropriate measures would be put in place to ensure that surface and wastewater associated with the development would be effectively managed and thereby not create any additional risk of flooding or pollute the nearby watercourse. As such, the development would accord with the NPPF in this respect.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Statement (EIS) which sets out that there will be no significant (direct) loss of potential bat foraging or commuting habitat; however, the illumination of the stream corridor to the north-east and (to a lesser degree) the field boundary hedgerow to the north-west could result in the disturbance or deterioration of foraging and/or commuting habitats. It would be difficult to quantify the significance of the impact of lighting and its effect on bats since the species and status of any populations potentially present nearby is unknown. Therefore, it must be assumed (on balance) that a significant adverse effect (at the site level) is possible. However, with mitigation measures in place (appropriate lighting measures) there should be no significant residual adverse effect on bats that may roost in the local area. The provision of bat boxes mounted on mature trees within the same land ownership boundary could have a beneficial effect on local bat populations. These details can be secured by condition.

The EIS confirms that the proposal would not have any significant impacts on breeding birds, with the creation of a large area of modified grassland (to satisfy BNG requirements) providing a significant foraging resource for scrubland and farmland nesting bird species. There is also scope for installing a range of bird boxes on trees and shrubs within the same land ownership boundary. The impact of all these measures would have a significant beneficial effect on local bird populations including skylarks.

In terms of the potential impact on great crested newts, the site falls within a red impact zone, an area where there is highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence. There are over 20 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, although the site is poor quality terrestrial habitat. The submitted EIS rules out the presence of great crested newts, although no surveys were undertaken to assess this impact. However, the applicant has provided an additional statement setting out Reasonable Avoidance Mitigation Measures (RAMMs) to ensure that the proposal does not impact on great crested newts if their presence is identified. In addition, if it is confirmed that a great crested newt has been encountered, then there is a legal requirement for the works to cease, and Natural England (NE) may need to be notified. In this eventuality the site would be quickly registered under the District Level Licensing Scheme (DLLS). Naturespace raises no objections to the proposal on this basis.

A Biodiversity Metric (BM) has been undertaken to evaluate the ecological impact of the proposed development. The baseline biodiversity value of the site, prior to development, is calculated at 4.4 habitat units and 0.00 hedgerow units. Following the completion of the proposed development, the on-site biodiversity value is projected to increase to 4.9 habitat units which will take the form of modified grassland and an attenuation pool, with the latter situated to the rear of the main buildings and shown

on the updated BNG maps. This would provide the necessary 10% increase in BNG. A Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be submitted prior to commencement, together with a habitat management plan (HMP), matters which can be secured via condition/mandatory BNG condition. A landscape and ecological management plan should also be submitted prior to first occupation of the unit to ensure that the onsite biodiversity enhancements are correctly established and maintained for the necessary 30 years.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust originally raised concerns that the site boundary on the location plan differs from the BNG maps, that a Biodiversity Net Gains Scheme mentioned in the supporting documents had not been provided, further clarity on the MoRPh survey at the site, the cumulative effect of the ammonia produced by the new chicken houses, clarity should be given on the waste water disposal from the treatment plan and drainage and the habitat maps should only include habitats within the redline boundary to avoid confusion. The amended BNG plans clearly outline in red the area of on-site BNG enhancements within the wider application site, addressing this issue.

The site plan has been amended to ensure the redline boundary of the site is not within 10m of the stream to the north-east and not therefore require a river condition MoRPh survey. In addition, as set out above in the amenity/environmental impact and flooding/draining sections of this report, additional information has been submitted regarding the cumulative effect of ammonia and the disposal of wastewater from the proposed unit, addressing the above concerns.

Other matters

As the application site is partly located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel and adjacent to the safeguarding zone for Trentham / Lordsley Quarry, the Waste Planning Authority (WPA) have requested that additional clarification is provided to determine if the site would sterilise important underlying minerals; or affect management of land within the quarry in terms of drainage.

In terms of mineral sterilisation risk, the proposed development is of a scale and permanence that would not preclude future access to underlying minerals across the wider area. Additionally, there is no known active mineral extraction within or immediately adjacent to the site, and no evidence to suggest the proposal would lead to the sterilisation of economically viable mineral resources. The current operational area of Lordsley Quarry lies approximately 500 metres to the east of the proposed site. Given this separation, it is considered there to be no foreseeable operational conflict or encroachment to Lordsley Quarry. It has also been confirmed by the applicant that the development will not impact on drainage from Lordsley Quarry. A sustainable drainage system (SuDS) has been incorporated into the design of the poultry unit, with surface water discharge limited to greenfield runoff rates. The discharge point is an existing watercourse located along the eastern boundary of the application site, entirely separate from any drainage infrastructure associated with the quarry. Given the above, the proposed development will neither sterilise significant mineral resources nor interfere with the operation or drainage management of Lordsley Quarry.

A number of other issues have been raised by interested parties which have not been covered in the main body of the report. Firstly, the potential impact on nearby property values which is not a material planning consideration which can be given any weight in the assessment of this case. It has also been suggested that the proposal would have no benefit to the local economy, as it would only generate one full-time job. Whilst it is acknowledged that the number of jobs associated with the operation of the unit would be limited, there would be potential employment opportunities involved in the construction of the buildings and the supply chain which would benefit the local economy. It has also indicated that no public consultation has taken place with the local community, contrary to the Aarhus Convention, which emphasises the public's right to participate early and effectively in environmental decision-making. Given the scale of the proposed development, the applicant considered that it was not necessary to carry out consultation with the local community, although pre-application enquires were made with both the local planning and highway authorities before the application was submitted.

Various welfare concerns and wider implications of large-scale commercial farming have also been raised by interested parties including, the chickens being kept in an inhuman way, the impact on animals in nearby fields, amount of water and greenhouse gases used/emitted, deforestation associated with chicken feed production and health issues linked to consumption of chicken. The

proposed facility will be operated to industry welfare standards concerning both animal welfare and large-scale commercial farming.

Conclusion/Planning Balance

As the proposal would involve the expansion of the existing farming operations at Willoughbridge Lodge Farm and support the economic growth and productivity of an existing rural business, the proposal would accord with the objectives of paragraphs 85, 88 and 89 of the NPPF. As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable. It has also been demonstrated through the various supporting information/documents and accepted by the EA and the EHO that the proposal would not adversely impact on the amenity of the area and, subject to conditions, the environmental impact of the development would be acceptable.

Officers are satisfied that the landscape and visual effects of the proposal would be limited, and that the proposal would not adversely impact on the setting of the listed Willoughbridge Lodge. Although the proposal would cause 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of the Scheduled Monument, this harm would be at the lower end of the less-than-substantial category, and it is therefore considered that the public benefits associated with the development (contribution to national food security and economic benefits) would outweigh this harm.

The highway authority is satisfied that, having reviewed the submitted documents and TS, that safe and suitable access would be provided for the development, and the vehicle movements associated with the proposed unit can be safely accommodated on the surrounding highway network without causing a server impact on highway safety. It has also been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the LLFA and EA that the proposal would not increase flood risk on the site or surrounding land, and that appropriate mitigation measures have been put in place to ensure that wastewater and manure does discharge into nearby watercourses.

Subject to the mitigation measures contained in the EIS and RAMMS, the development would not adversely impact on ecology, with on-site enhancements to be provided, securing the necessary 10% increase in BNG.

Overall, applying the test in paragraph 11 of the NPPF and in the absence of any identified harm which is not outweighed by other considerations (i.e. the public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm to the SAM), planning permission is recommended, subject to conditions.

Reducing Inequalities

The Equality Act 2010 says public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty in addition to the duty not to discriminate. The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. If a public authority hasn't properly considered its public sector equality duty it can be challenged in the courts.

The duty aims to make sure public authorities think about things like discrimination and the needs of people who are disadvantaged or suffer inequality, when they make decisions.

People are protected under the Act if they have protected characteristics. The characteristics that are protected in relation to the public sector equality duty are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

When public authorities carry out their functions the Equality Act says they must have due regard or think about the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

The development will not have a differential impact on those with protected characteristics.

APPENDIX

Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision: -

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy \(CSS\) 2006-2026](#)

Policy ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy
Policy CSP1: Design Quality
Policy CSP2: Historic Environment
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change
Policy CSP4: Natural Assets

[Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan \(NLP\) 2011](#)

Policy N3: Development and Nature Conservation – Protection and Enhancement Measures
Policy N4: Development and Nature Conservation – Use of Local Species
Policy N12: Development and the Protection of Trees
Policy N14: Protection of Landscape Features of Major Importance to Flora and Fauna
Policy N17: Landscape Character – General Considerations
Policy N19: Areas of Landscape Maintenance
Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements
Policy B2: Scheduled Ancient Monuments
Policy B5: Control of Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building

[Loggerheads Neighbourhood Development Plan](#)

Policy LNPP1: Urban Design and Environment
Policy LNPP2: Local Character & Heritage
Policy LNPT1: Sustainable Transport

Other Material Considerations include:

[National Planning Policy Framework \(2024\)](#)

[Planning Practice Guidance \(2019 as updated\)](#)

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document \(2010\)](#)

Relevant Planning History

None relevant

Views of Consultees

The **County Council Mineral and Waste Planning Authority** has requested that more information is provided to determine if the site would sterilise important underlying minerals; or affect management of land within the quarry in terms of drainage, given that the site is partly located in a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel and adjacent to the safeguarding zone for Trentham / Lordsley Quarry.

No response has been provided to the additional information provided by the applicant to address the above concerns.

The **Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Team (HET)** confirm that the proposed scheme lies to the immediate west of the Scheduled Monument of Moated site, four pond bays and an associated enclosure at Willoughbridge Park. The Grade II* listed Willoughbridge Lodge also lies to the immediate west of the proposed site. The Heritage Statement submitted in support of the application concludes that the scheme will be visible from the scheduled monument, and likely partially visible from the Grade II listed structure.

Due to the relatively low below-ground impact of the scheme, the HET raise no archaeological concerns regarding the development in this instance, are happy to defer to the Conservation Officer with regards to the potential impact of the proposals on the nearby designated heritage assets. It is also recommended that Historic England are consulted with regards to the potential impact of the scheme of these designated heritage assets.

The **Conservation Officer** agrees with the conclusions of the heritage statement that significance of the asset and its setting will not be affected or the ability to appreciate that significance. No objections are therefore raised in this regard. The impact on the SAM will need to be assessed by the county archaeologist and Historic England.

Historic England confirm that the proposals will result in some harm to the significance of the scheduled monument through the impacts upon its setting. The level of harm would however be at the lower end of the less-than-substantial category. The application would therefore need to be assessed in line with Chapter 16 of the NPPF. They confirm that the additional information provided by the applicant highlights how the potential for indirect physical impacts on the scheduled monument as a result of interactions with and changes to the watercourse on the eastern boundary of the site would be managed. They are satisfied that the risk of indirect impacts upon the scheduled monument would be low.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust provide a holding objection to the application, until clarification is provided on the following:

- The redline boundary of the site location plan should be the same as the BNG maps.
- Provide the Biodiversity Net Gains Scheme mentioned in the EclA
- Further clarity required on the need for a MoRPh survey at the site.
- The cumulative effect of the ammonia produced by the new chicken houses should be checked.
- Clarity given on the waste water disposal from the treatment plan and drainage.
- Habitat maps should only include habitats within the redline boundary to avoid confusion, this includes trees provided as net gain.

No updated comments have been received further to receipt of this information.

The Environment Agency welcomes the additional information confirming that the proposed transfer of manure from the site to the anaerobic digestion facility at Manby is planned to align with that facility becoming operational in September 2026.

Dirty water from the poultry operation is indicated to be transferred to a wastewater treatment facility and will not be stored or spread on site. No details are provided of the destination facility or the anticipated volume of waste. Without prejudice to the outcome of the live environmental permit application, it is likely that, if granted, the EA will require the operation to have a contingency plan in place for the disposal of waste should the third-party operations be unable to accept waste at any time. Details of this need to be provided. Consideration also needs to be given by the LPA to the recent High Court judgment – *R (Caffyn) v Shropshire Council* [2025] EWHC 1497 and in particular, that the Council is satisfied on the assessment of cumulative impacts of intensive agricultural developments in the local catchment area. Including how the disposal of 'waste' from the operation, including any indirect environmental/downstream effects of any spreading or associated treatment facilities such as Anaerobic digestion plants are managed.

The **Lead Local Flood Authority** raise no objections, subject to conditions requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment and Drainage Strategy, together with the detailed design of the conveyance swale and attenuation basin.

The **Environmental Health Division** raises no objections, subject to conditions controlling noise and odour.

Natural England have no comments to make on the application.

Naturespace confirm that the findings of the ecological report are considered reasonable, though without actual surveys of extant ponds their presence cannot be ruled out completely. Hence as the application site lies within a red impact zone as per the modelled district licence impact map, it is recommended that a precautionary working statement in the form of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) is provided.

The applicant has now provided details of the RAMMS which are agreed.

The **Highway Authority** has confirmed that the proposed access, parking and visibility splays are acceptable, and that they agree with the findings of the Transport Statement that the vehicle movements associated with the development would not adversely impact on highway safety. As such, they raise no objections, subject to a condition requiring the car parking, access, servicing and circulation areas as shown on the approved plans to be constructed in a bound surface and implemented before the buildings are brought into use.

The **Landscape Development Section** raise no objections, subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the proposed tree protection measures.

Loggerheads Parish Council have raised the following concerns:

- Highway and traffic issues – the surrounding road infrastructure is not suitable to accommodate the HGV movements associated with the development;
- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) must be undertaken to assess the potential environmental effects of the development.
- Concerns over air quality, odour control and potential ammonia emissions from the poultry houses and the impact on nearby residential properties;
- Noise and dust associated with the development;
- How will manure be managed, without effective measures, there is a risk of environmental pollution and public health concerns.
- The risk of contamination to local watercourses is a critical concern. The proposed development could create receptor pathways that increase the likelihood of pollutants entering nearby water bodies. This poses a threat to local ecosystems and water quality, which must be fully addressed.
- The proposed manure disposal system and treatment plant, including the bio-disk, appear to lack the capacity to handle the volume of waste expected from the poultry houses, contrary to the NPPF requirement to ensure sustainable waste management. A detailed evaluation of the waste disposal plan is necessary to guarantee its effectiveness and compliance with environmental standards.

Maer & Aston Parish Council raises the following concerns:

- Impact of waste affecting the River Tern,
- Effects of noise, odour
- The visual impact of the development
- Impact from traffic associated with the scheme on the narrow rural lane/surrounding road network.

No comments have been received from **Shropshire Council Northern Area Planning Team** as the neighbouring planning authority on the application. The deadline for their comments was the 6 June 2025.

Representations

937 representations have been received, 717 of which are in standard petition letters. The following concerns/objections have been received:

- The land outlined in blue on the submitted plans indicating land within the applicant's ownership is incorrect.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment should have been submitted with this application
- No assessment made of cumulative impacts with other nearby chicken farms

- An appropriate assessment should have been submitted to assess the impact on the River Tern
- No details have been provided setting out how waste water and manure will be disposed of so that they do not pollute nearby watercourses
- Potential water contamination from runoff through to the nearby historical site (scheduled monument)
- No assessment of upstream and downstream greenhouse gases & contribution to climate change
- An Ammonia and Nitrogen Deposition Assessment has not been provided;
- The odours, ammonia and dust pollution may lead to illness and discomfort for residents and enjoyment of the nearby Dorathy Clive Garden which is a crucial cultural, environmental and non-designated heritage asset to the community which attracts visitors to the area.
- Ammonia deposition will have a detrimental effect upon the plant displays at Dorathy Clive Garden and the significant and historic Rhododendron collection within Elds Wood
- Air pollution concerns
- Increase in vermin/flies
- Potential impact on ecology and nearby habitat sites
- Loss of valuable agricultural land
- Highway safety concerns regarding the impact of HGV movements associated with the development on the surrounding road network which consists of rural lanes
- Welfare impacts, proposal would keep birds in a cruel and inhumane manner and increase threat from bird flu/spread diseases
- Facility insufficient as reliant of feed to feed the birds which is an unsustainable and inefficient method
- No assessment of how much water will be used.
- No assessment of deforestation linked to chicken feed production.
- Already over-concentration of this type of facility in the Shropshire/Staffordshire area and the proposal is not therefore necessary to increase food security
- Potential impact on welfare/health of horses kept on nearby land
- The water pollution from excess fertiliser/manure from factory farms is holding up housebuilding just as much if not more than the sewage crisis: this is bad for the economy.
- Antibiotic overuse fuels antibiotic resistance, a growing public health crisis causing over 2000 deaths a year in the UK (UK Health Security Agency)
- Consumption of chicken above 300g/week is also associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality from gastrointestinal cancers.
- Farming jobs have been absolutely devastated by intensification. As intensification has increased, agricultural employment has gone down. We import a lot of fruit and veg in the UK; the horticultural sector has been severely underfunded.
- Impact on property values of nearby houses
- No benefit to the local economy as only 1 new job created
- This and the surrounding area are designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
- Size and scale of the development is out of character with the surrounding rural area
- The application is speciesist, oppressive, immoral and seeks to exploit people of other species who have absolutely no legal protection against oppressive systems such as this.
- Oppose this application as a vegan
- The proposal is contrary to the NPPF and its social, economic and environmental aims, CSS Policies CSP1 & CSP3, Saved Local Plan 2011 Policies N2, N17, & N19 and LNP Policies LNPP2 & LNPP4, due to the size and scale of the development, adverse impact on the open countryside, loss of BMVAL, impact on vistas from Dorothy Clive Garden and introduce unacceptable air, water, and noise pollution.
- Proposal fails to provide 10% biodiversity net gain
- Harm to nearby heritage assets, including listed buildings and the nearby scheduled monument
- The many nearby protected habitat sites (SSSIs / SACs) must be protected from over abstraction of water (Harris v EA), as well as air pollution, under the Habitats Regulations and the Bern Convention.
- An appropriate assessment has not been undertaken under the habitat regulations

- There has been no assessment of the full greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the development, as required by the Supreme Court's ruling in *Finch v Surrey County Council* [2024] UKSC 20. This includes emissions from animal feed production (upstream), meat processing, transportation, retail distribution, and food waste (downstream). The applicant must provide a comprehensive estimate of these emissions, especially in light of the UK's legally binding Net Zero commitments. A transition to a plant-based food system is essential for meeting our climate targets, and industrial poultry operations are incompatible with this goal.
- No public consultation has taken place with the local community which contradicts the Aarhus Convention, which emphasises the public's right to participate early and effectively in environmental decision-making.
- Industrial scale of the development inappropriate for this countryside location
- Adverse impact on ecology, including skylarks
- Consideration should be given to a similar recent permission in Shropshire which was quashed on the basis that the Council had failed lawfully to assess the effects of the planned spreading of digestate on third party land.

One letter of support received, raising the following comments:

- The proposal would invest large sums in the efficient modern production of high welfare Chicken for the UK consumers to enjoy.
- Sadly, the majority of those opposing this and other similar applications across the county of Shropshire do not live in the county. They are recycling arguments prepared and rehearsed as part of a co-ordinated national campaign to deny additional supply of UK produced Chicken to British consumers. They are unaware that this policy ultimately forces consumer to purchase supplies from other countries that is produced to different and lower standards. The demand for Chicken is growing and this is a way to boost jobs and the local economy. In these times with concerns over food miles this scheme is an excellent way of boosting local productivity and reducing food miles.

Applicant's/Agent's submission

All of the application documents can be viewed on the Council's website using the following link:
<http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/plan/25/00318/FUL>

Background papers

Planning files referred to
 Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

24th September 2025