

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	14NP0092
Description / Site Address	Forestry Determination in respect of proposed new road approximately 160 metres in length including a new water crossing, at Land North of Blackaburn, 1.8 km North of Stonehaugh, Wark, Hexham, Northumberland
Last date for decision	4 December 2014

Proposal

This application comprises of a request to the local planning authority for whether prior approval is required for additions to a forestry track under Part 7 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995.



Route of existing track (looking west)

The proposal will involve the creation of a track approximately 160 metres in length, including a water crossing to enable the felling and extraction of timber from Wark Forest. The track will be constructed from crushed blue whinstone stone on a sandstone base. A bridge will be required in order to cross the burn, which will be a clean span bridge, 7 metres in length, constructed from concrete abutments, a concrete deck and timber hand rails.



View of approximate route of new track (looking south-east)

Planning Policy

N/A

Relevant Planning History:

Nil

Summary of Consultations/Representations

NNPA Landscape & Forestry Officer: No objections.

From a landscape perspective the nearest publically accessible receptor sites for this proposed development are Wark public bridleways 23 and 84 and public footpath 52. From the details provided within this application I do not believe that this proposed development will have a significant effect upon the landscape character or views of this part of the National Park as the infrastructure being constructed is in keeping with the forest environment.

The requirement of this forest road and watercourse crossing is to enable the extraction of forestry timber from Wark Forest. These trees were planted as a crop with the intention to be harvested at some point. The proposed development will not affect any notable trees or hedges on or adjacent to the application site.

NNPA Access/Recreation Officer: There are 3 public rights of way in the vicinity of the proposed new road which have the potential to be impacted upon - Wark public bridleways 23 and 84 and public footpath 52.

No objection to the proposals on the condition that the Public Rights of Way in the vicinity are protected throughout.

NNPA Ecologist: No objections.

This application is replacing a section of forest road and water crossing to straighten out a bend for forestry traffic. From the aerial photo the current road goes over the burn on a proper road surface rather than a ford. If this is just a straight replacement I have no further comments.

NNPA Historic Environment: No objections.

The existing road/track, though much altered, follows the same general course as the historic track marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

It is not anticipated that the proposals will cause harm to unrecorded archaeological features or deposits. No objections are raised to the proposal on the assumption that earthworks and other surface remains for past land use are avoided or recorded by photography prior to works commencing.

Assessment

The relevant issues for consideration are whether the proposal is reasonably necessary for forestry purposes and impacts caused by the siting and means of construction of the private way on:

- *Landscape and tranquility;*
- *Protected species and/or habitats;*
- *Cultural heritage;*
- *The public rights of way network;*

As this is a prior approval application, the scope of issues that can be considered is limited to the consideration of the siting and means of construction of the track and crossing themselves. Due to the location of the development, the Local Planning Authority has also screened the application under the EIA Regulations, due to the location within a sensitive area.

Need for Forestry Purposes

To benefit from permitted development the proposal must be reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry. It is accepted that the access track is proposed to enable timber extraction for forestry purposes.



Materials used in the existing track (adjacent to the proposed)

Impact on Landscape (from siting and means of construction)

The blue whinstone chippings would match those used in the existing forestry tracks in the area, which have more of a grey appearance, typically used in the construction of a forestry track. Neither the track nor the crossing would have any adverse landscape impacts, when considering the topography of the land and the surrounding forest plantation. The National Park's Landscape and Forestry Officer has raised no concerns.



The burn "Blackaburn" looking north-west, which necessitates the requirement for a bridge

Impact on Protected Species and Habitats (from siting and means of construction)

NNPA's Ecologist has assessed the proposal and has confirmed that the siting and construction of the track will not have an adverse ecological impact.

Impact on Cultural Heritage (from siting and means of construction)

There are no known heritage assets that would be affected by the proposed track. NNPA's Historic Environment Officer anticipates that there would not be harm to unrecorded archaeological features and confirmed that he has no objections in response to the consultation.



Existing bridge

Impact on Rights of Way (from siting and means of construction)

NNPA's Access and Recreation Officer has raised no objections providing that there is no disturbance to the surface of the path, obstruction or prevention of accessing the right of way.

Conclusion

The proposed new forestry track and bridge would constitute permitted development under Part 7 of the GPDO. The siting and means of construction of the track and bridge would not be likely to have a significant impact upon the landscape or tranquility of the National Park, or on sites of nature conservation importance, or heritage assets. For these reasons it would not be appropriate for the local planning authority to request further details of the siting and means of construction for further assessment of the proposed works.

RECOMMENDATION

That prior approval is **NOT REQUIRED**.

	Signature	Date
Planning Officer		
Development Manager		
National Park Officer		