

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	14NP0095
Description / Site Address	Forestry Determination in respect of proposed road at Wark Forest, approx 1 km East 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 north) – proposed track would go off to the right

The proposal will involve the creation of a track approximately 250 metres in length, to enable the felling and extraction of timber from part of Wark Forest that cannot currently be accessed by forestry vehicles. The track will be constructed from crushed blue whinstone stone on a sandstone base.



Location of new track (looking 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 bridleway 26 to the north and Wark public bridleway 42 to the west. From the details provided, the proposed development will not 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 and is likely to improve public access to the Forest Estate.

The requirement of this forest road 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 and the proposed development will not affect any notable trees or hedges on or adjacent to the application site.

NNPA Access/Recreation Officer: There is one public bridleway (Wark 26) which has the potential to be impacted upon during the construction of the new road. Although located over 350 metres to the south west, this route crosses the current forest road which will probably used to access the site.

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

NNPA Ecologist: No objections.

NNPA Historic Environment: No comments received.

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 dull blue/grey appearance and are largely overgrown with vegetation, further softening the impact. The materials are typical of those used in the construction of a forestry track.

The proposed track is located within an extensive forest plantation and could not be seen at all from outside of this plantation, much like the track that it would lead from and most parts of the network of tracks in this part of Wark Forest.

In light of this, the track would not have any adverse landscape effects, when considering this. The National Park's Landscape and Forestry Officer has raised no concerns.

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

NNPA's Ecologist has assessed the proposal and raised no objections about impacts on ecology that could arise from the siting and construction of the track.

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

There are no known heritage assets that would be affected by the proposed track and NNPA's Historic Environment Officer has not commented to raise any concerns relating to impacts on the historic environment.



View of the existing forest plantation from the road to the south of the proposed new track

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		