

# **N. J. DOCKSEY LTD**

***“Delivering to the construction industry”***

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018

To: The Planning Inspector

Cc: David Davies, Helen Pakpahan and Mark James (Senior Regeneration Officers)

**Re: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Local Plan Site ADD009 – land to West of Basford Lane, Leekbrook**

In response to David Davies communication received on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 I am writing to supply further information which you require in relation to the proposed site and to provide additional details about the Company's own development and its role within the Staffordshire Moorlands.

N J Docksey Ltd is a family owned business which during the last 25 years has developed from a sole trader into a privately owned limited company with a current turnover of £5,000,000. Stemming three generations our focus is long term and a succession plan is in place. We have a strong commitment to good service, a care and concern for our employees, the community and environment in which we operate and live.

The Company has a wealth of experience in the delivery of goods to the construction industry with our experienced drivers working tirelessly to get bulk mortar, bag aggregates and bulk salt to, where they need to be, on time and in good condition. We actively encourage new and young drivers into the profession and financially assist new drivers and existing drivers in attaining their LGV entitlement qualifications.

We presently operate a mixed fleet of 40 HGV vehicles. This mainly consists of articulated and rigid powder tankers, but also includes specialist mortar silo carriers and curtain side vehicles. Delivery of bulk powder silos and bulk powder mortar to building sites and infrastructure projects currently accounts for 75% of our workload. We have achieved the Silver level in FORS (Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme), a national scheme which measures fleet performance and aims to drive up standards across areas such as fuel efficiency, carbon emissions and road safety. This level also meets the CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Community Safety) requirement. Many cities plan to introduce new Low Emission Zones in the near future and to remain compliant we operate a continuous vehicle replacement policy. All new vehicles are Euro V1 compliant and carry the latest camera/sensor technology to protect other road users including vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. Vehicles are purchased and not leased. A new articulated vehicle and tank trailer cost in the region of £160,000 (exc. VAT).

We work with blue chip construction companies such as Cemex and Tarmac BP and have assisted with some very high profile national construction projects such as large housing developments, Olympic stadiums and London underground upgrades. We are currently working in collaboration with Cemex to provide Shotcrete, a special mortar product to the City of London Bank Station upgrade project. Shortly we are to commence deliveries to the Sirius £2.3bn potash mine project near to Whitby. In early Spring all driver holidays have been put on hold to ensure that time critical delivery targets are met in connection with the supply of 300,000kg per day to a major railway upgrade project. On Salisbury Plain up to a thousand new homes are being built to accommodate Service families returning home from Germany and we are assisting with the Army based programme. As a SME company from the market town of Leek we are very proud to be associated with these national projects and it is important that Leek pinpoints its place on the UK map a service centre.

Due to the nature of the job all drivers prefer to live local to their place of work. Individual salaries range from a minimum of £31,000 up to £40,000 plus. Take home pay nearing £1,000,000 is being invested into local shops and the economy each year by our drivers. The town currently operates a “Totally Locally Campaign” – Invest in your town – invest in your future. Only two remaining haulage companies in Leek are able to offer any significant number of driver opportunities with N J Docksey Ltd being the largest. Where possible we purchase all parts and services from local suppliers. Within the haulage sector profit margins in comparison with turnover are low. This means that a high percentage of turnover is invested back into the economy and into local business.

Geographically we are ideally situated between the aggregate quarries in Buxton and Cheadle, our main loading locations. By efficiently running our operations we are able to reduce empty running, decrease overall journeys and maximise payload. Fewer journeys and reduced km are able to reduce the Company’s impact on the environment. Access to the haulage yard from the A523 is good and aided by a central turning lane, which prevents traffic congestion whilst waiting to turn into the access drive. Where possible, outbound and returning vehicles use the A50 to avoid entering Leek town centre.

Over the past 5 years significant growth in our business and a desire to seek an increase in our Operating License authorisation has been restricted due to lack of parking spaces for our vehicles. Disappointingly we have found it necessary to turn down additional contracts offered due to lack of capacity. This work has then been offered to and accepted by other hauliers outside the area. This has reduced the number of job opportunities open to local skilled drivers and increased unnecessary journeys made by external hauliers into the Moorlands. Our specialist vehicles are expensive to purchase and Customers have difficulty in recruiting reliable and experienced hauliers who are able to deliver to remote locations which are still building sites where access is often difficult. To remain at our current location and retain our local team of experienced and skilled drivers we decelerated our operations. The purpose of this was to wait for a local alternative property opportunity to come onto the market and the outcome of the Local Development plan. The allocation of employment land is minimal and many people have expressed their concern to us that this is ‘too little – too late’. Our opinion is that Leek needs to attract and retain established businesses which are able to achieve long term sustainable growth and offer plentiful well paid, full time permanent employment to the working class people of Leek who wish to continue to live and work in their home town.

During 2015 we were introduced to Helen Pakpahan, Senior Regeneration Officer for the Peak District Council. At this point we were seriously considering moving our business out of the area to Stoke on Trent where a more suitable operating centre might be available. Her guidance has been invaluable, but there are many businesses similar to us looking for employment sites with substantial outside storage space. To operate on a single site we currently require 2-3 acres of land. Low availability creates demand, and demand creates inflated property pricing. We have seriously viewed every local site that has become available over the last 5 years and have even requested neighbouring businesses to consider the sale of their sites to us. Over the last decade, numerous suitable employment sites in Leek have been granted planning or have applied for permission for housing development before local businesses have had full opportunity to purchase the land for themselves. The prospect of placing land up or sale for housing is far more attractive to the seller but makes land unaffordable to local business.

As it appeared that no other options were available, in 2016 we put the land designated under ADD09 forward as an option under the local plan for employment land. In 2018 after much negotiation we were successful in purchasing the land. The asking price for this land greatly exceeded the value of the land for agricultural cattle grazing and demonstrates our commitment to the Local Plan and remaining in Leekbrook.

Please accept my apologies for providing so much background information about Company but I believe this is relevant to the regeneration of the area and the fact that Leek has been identified for growth as a service centre with a high proportion of the District’s jobs.

Following the examination hearings which recently took place I understand from the Senior Regeneration Officer David Davies that you require further information regarding our plans for the site.

In relation to the questions raised in Mr Davies email dated 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018 I confirm the following:

- a) Access to the site will be via N J Docksey Ltd neighbouring premises from the A523. The A road has a 'central turning lane' allowing access to site and eliminates congestion affecting other road users travelling in the direction of Leek. The Company presently rents parking facilities close to Leekbrook Depot site. Relocation to one site will reduce vehicle movements in the vicinity of the existing depot.
- b) N J Docksey Ltd intends to develop the proposed site solely for the purpose of extending its own premises. The Company has demonstrated its urgent requirement for additional parking and has no plans to place the site onto a commercial property market.
- c) N J Docksey Ltd agrees to be identified as the business promoting ADD09 in the Local Plan.
- d) N J Docksey Ltd does **not** consent to the emails dated 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015 plus attachments to be forwarded to the inspector or to be considered as public domain and requires confirmation from David Davies that these have not been released. Both emails have been classified as private communications between Linda Docksey and the addressees. The information contained above clarifies information which is relevant to the Local Plan.
- e) See below:
  - Subject to planning and a favourable decision being granted on the Local Development plan, N J Docksey Ltd intends to develop the land as an extension to its adjoining haulage depot. Relocating the fleet to one site will decrease vehicle movements in the vicinity of the depot and will benefit the Company as a business and the working environment of the employees. The new development will be used for vehicle parking and staff car parking. A vehicle wash area will also be required.
  - The increased parking area will enhance driver safety whilst working in and around vehicles and noise levels will be reduced due to vehicle carrying out fewer manoeuvres in order to park safely and to access and exit the premises. We believe that the increased depot size will reduce the intensity of activity on the existing site. We would also like to bring to the inspectorate's attention that there is only an average vehicle movement of 62 vehicle movements (in and out) each day because all vehicles go out am and do not return until pm and subject to customer requirements a percentage of vehicles do not return to base every evening. During the day the yard is empty. In accordance with planning policy and protection of the local environment and standard of amenity for existing residential occupants all practicable measures will be taken to mitigate any adverse effects of business activity. Following the completion of all required surveys we will be able to put forward a plan of measures to be taken to protect the surrounding environment. A combination of natural and constructed acoustic noise barriers will be planted/constructed to, as far as possible minimise noise pollution.
  - Previously the Company has turned down business opportunity due to insufficient numbers of vehicles being authorised on our licence. Additional parking allocation would enable growth and allow us to increase the number of deliveries carried out as required by Cemex and Tarmac who operate aggregate quarries in the area. These are successful local blue-chip companies working on national projects who are constantly in need of additional haulage capacity. We expect annual sustainable growth to increase our fleet by 5 vehicles per year. This will result in an annual 13% increase in employment creating additional fulltime permanent jobs.
  - The project is still in early planning and total cost has not yet been finalised. Failure to receive consent to develop the land may result in the Company relocating outside the Staffordshire Moorlands area. The existing haulage depot has all required facilities in place to service the fleet i.e. waste interceptors, onsite maintenance garage, fuel tanks, offices etc. We have calculated that the cost of establishing a serviceable new depot on a relocation site would cost in excess of £200,000 and this substantial amount will offset part of the cost of extending the current depot.
  - Due to existing topography of site it is evitable that a 'cut and fill exercise of the land will have to be undertaken to enable a successful and safe development. Proposed finish levels and sections can be demonstrated by appropriate drawings. The use of the land will need to be laid to appropriate gradients akin to vehicle movement and safe operation. With regard to retaining walls, again heights can be

demonstrated and material and construction of same will need to be agreed with the local authority . The proposed line of the embankment/retaining wall will not impede on any tree route protection zones and as such the extent of the yard area will create a natural buffer zone between the yard and the existing woodland area. The minimum dimension from retaining wall to woodland is given as 16m at its minimum point.

- We will engage with the necessary professional consultants to undertake all relevant reports as requested by the local planning department and undertake any recommendation as suggested within the said reports to mitigate any disruption to natural habitat (as stated under f)
  - Background minimal lighting will be required for security purposes only and this will obviously be designed by specialist contractors and approved by the local authority at planning stage
  - 13 staff vehicle numbers are to be provided along with circa 50 vehicle / trailer spaces with adequate and safe vehicle turning. It is preferable for ourselves to use a crusher run limestone finish or similar approved material. This will give a natural appearance and reduce rain water run off
  - Appropriate soft landscaping can be installed however we bring to your attention that an existing established hedgerow running the length of Basford lane already exists
- f) The Company is willing for their outline plans to be submitted to Council officials and the Inspector, subject to them not being released into any public domain. The reason for our reluctance for them to be posted onto any media site or public file connected to the Local Plan is that these plans are still in an early development stage. Subject to the Inspector's decision and the adoption of the Local Plan N J Docksey Ltd will be arranging for extensive and detailed environmental surveys to be carried out in accordance with planning policy. This will involve a very large financial commitment to our proposed project which may result in costs ranging from £20,000 - £30,000. Subject to findings our plans would be evaluated and amended to take into account further action required to protect the local environment.

With regard to the Local Plan Examination – Agenda – Session 8 we provide the following information:

7 Land West of Basford Lane, Leekbrook. (DSR3)

7.1 SMDC have acknowledged that employment land is required locally and as such have tentatively earmarked this land for such purposes. One has to take in to account the proximity of the dwellings to an already busy industrial land use however with this in mind all relevant reports and mitigation measures will be put in place to safeguard existing residents within the immediate vicinity.

Adequate screening and protection to mitigate light and noise pollution will be implemented where necessary with soft landscaping as required. We acknowledge our neighbours concerns and aim to embrace a good relationship in the future.

We will undertake any necessary works as recommended within the associated reports and adhere to any ongoing maintenance that may be required. All noise light pollution will be kept to a minimum at all times.

7.2 To safe guard the wellbeing of habitat and established woodland, we will relinquish approximately 30-40 % of the land required. This will also reduce any impact of the development.

7.3 All relevant policies will be put in place and adhered to. The contents of Policy DSR 3 have been noted.

7.4 The site is deliverable however a cut and fill exercise will be required together with formation of retaining walls. Construction material of walls to be agreed with the local authority planning department.

Considerable upfront costs will need to be incurred to undertake the necessary arboriculture / ecology/ habitat and various searches. These will also be met by the landowner to accompany the planning application with hopefully a successful outcome as requested by the local authority planning department.

I trust the information provided answers your questions. I will be pleased to supply any further details which you or the Local Plan team may require. My contact details are:

Linda Docksey

N J Docksey Ltd, Leekbrook Depot, Cheadle Road, Leekbrook, Leek ST13 7DR

Many thanks

Linda Docksey

Director