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To Whom it may concern

Hillyfield application for permitted development rights to construct a wood storage barn

Timber Strategies has been involved in supply chain development and investment in the forestry and timber industries for 15 years. We work across all scales; with forest owners and timber processors; private and public funders. We have been in discussion with Mr Doug King-Smith at Hillyfield woodlands over the application for the construction of a storage shed for timber within the woodland. We understand that three main hurdles exist to the successful outcome of the permitted development application:

- We understand that the planning authority considers firewood processing and sawmilling to be an industrial process rather than forestry process. In contrast the EU considers all primary processing of wood to be within the realm of forestry enterprises. This is most clearly spelt out in the ongoing Rural Development Programme and European Rural Development Framework which specifically puts primary breakdown of timber into the forestry sector for funding purpose. Firewood production and sawmilling of logs to planks come under the forestry and forestry contracting priorities of the programme whilst any further processing (i.e. kiln drying) would be considered industrial. The same would apply to production of charcoal that would be considered primary processing rather than industrial.
- The economics of small woodland management, especially the conversion of undermanaged woodland to well-managed ecologically resilient woodland, require as much money to be made as possible from the generally very low quality material to fund the work. In most circumstances woodlands remain unmanaged because the price received for "roundwood" plus the costs of transport to processing facilities are greater than the cost of harvesting the timber. The Hillyfield proposal is to break this uneconomic cycle by installing small-scale in-forest facilities at the site. Costs of transporting low value material become zero and only the costs of transport of added-value product (firewood and sawn boards) is borne. Rather than receiving negative margins through the sale of roundwood and surplus is made through sales of firewood and boards which can be reinvested into the woodland. This is the type of investment being encouraged by the European Union through the RDPE, by the Forestry Commission and by NGOs seeking to increase the amount of well managed woodland in England.
- The need for a barn structure compared to sheeting of firewood stacks. Firewood must either be sold as seasoned or un-seasoned, with unseasoned firewood having limited markets and low returns. To season properly to required moisture content within an economical time frame requires dryness and air movement in equal measures and unlike continental climates characterised by long dry spells this is almost impossible to achieve in southern England by in-forest stacking. Whilst covering a stack with tarpaulin or tin sheeting partially fulfils the dryness requirement it does not promote air movement, encourages high humidity and leads to rotting rather than drying. In contrast a 3 sided barn with well spaced bays and spaced boarding is not only dry but promotes air movement ensuring that timber seasons well and quickly.

We are convinced of the need for a small in-forest development at Hillyfield to make the management of the woodland viable. Hillyfield at 11ha fits into what we would consider a viable size for investment in silviculture and processing.

If there are any queries or you would like to discuss this further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Ralph