

Continuation Sheets: Supporting Planning Statement for prior notification

Location: Old Langho Field, Blackburn

Applicant: Mark Goucher

Applicant Address: Nuttalls Farm House, 32 Squires Lane, M29 8JF

Site: Puddeltown Farm Field, Old Langho Road, Old langho BB6 8AW

Easting: 370170 **Northing:** 435460

Application Reference: Sections 4, 5.1, and 5.2

Master Design & Research Statement

This proposed agricultural track is the result of rigorous research, environmental analysis, and targeted design engineered to balance the critical operational needs of the apicultural unit with absolute landscape protection.

- **Landscape Mitigation & Softening:** The track is custom-designed to minimize visual impact from day one. By utilizing natural local aggregate, aligning with existing mature field boundaries, and incorporating a strategic "clumping" design of native tree planting, the infrastructure will naturally soften and blend seamlessly into the rural landscape over time.
- **Absolute Reversibility:** To guarantee zero permanent change to the agricultural character of the holding, the track utilizes a specialized, zero-excavation "no-dig" construction method. The entire installation is fully reversible; it can be lifted and removed in the future, restoring the field to its baseline state with zero lasting soil damage.
- **Pedosphere & Hydrological Protection:** The design actively safeguards the delicate topsoil layer (pedosphere) and maintains the natural water cycle (hydrology) of the holding. By utilizing a highly permeable geocellular structure, the track prevents soil compaction, preserves subsoil drainage, and eliminates surface water runoff or pooling.
- **Agricultural Alignment:** While minimizing environmental impact, the track is engineered to fully satisfy the precise, time-sensitive, and all-weather operational needs of a modern, biosecure queen-breeding and wholesale honey-production unit.

Executive Summaries

For detailed technical specifications, operational justifications, and scientific references, please refer to the corresponding detailed sections in Parts B and C of this document.

Summary of Part B (Section 4 – Proposed Road Details)

- **Minimal Footprint:** Designed as two parallel 40cm wheel strips separated by a natural grass strip to minimize physical site impact and preserve natural green space.
- **Low-Impact Materials:** Constructed with highly permeable local aggregate over a flexible, zero-excavation geocellular grid, ensuring the entire track is structurally sound but fully reversible.
- **Landscape Integration:** Routed directly along existing mature hedgerows and tree lines to utilize natural screening, enhanced by strategic native tree planting in "clumps" to break up any artificial linear sightlines.
- **Neighbor Shielding:** Strategically routed away from neighboring residential boundaries and positioned on the opposite side of established mature tree and hedge lines, ensuring adjacent neighbors' views remain completely unchanged.

Summary of Part C (Section 5.1 & 5.2 – Agricultural Justification & Design)

- **All-Weather Access:** Required exclusively to secure daily, year-round access to highly dispersed apiary sub-units across the 5.5-hectare agricultural holding during wet, waterlogged seasons.
- **Wholesale Logistics:** Necessary to transport heavy, high-volume bulk honey supers, bulk feed, and heavy extraction machinery without causing vehicle damage or devastating soil rutting.
- **Scientific Biosecurity:** Essential to manage a decentralized sub-apiary model that prevents bee "drifting" (the primary vector for diseases like *Varroa destructor* and Foulbrood), which is physically impossible to manage on foot.
- **Queen Breeding Safeguards:** Vital to support a climate-resilient local breeding program by allowing vibration-free, rapid transit of highly fragile queen cells and mating nuclei on strict, non-negotiable biological timetables.
- **Soil and Drainage Protection:** Features a zero-excavation "no-dig" build to keep the pedosphere (topsoil) entirely undisturbed and fully reversible.
- **100% Permeable:** Combines a porous geocellular grid structure and open aggregate, allowing 100% natural rainfall infiltration to eliminate water logging and prevent soil runoff.
- **Protected Root Zones:** Meets strict arboricultural standards (**BS 5837:2012 / APN 12**) near established hedge and tree lines by laterally dispersing vehicle weight over the geocellular grid, preventing critical root compaction or severance.

- **Ecological Core:** Integrates a central wildflower forage corridor directly into the dual-strip layout to actively support pollinator health and honey bee colony nutrition.

Part B: Detailed Specifications (Continuation Sheet Section 4: Proposed Road)

Materials

- **Track Construction:** The proposed access track will be constructed using clean, permeable, open-graded angular aggregate (such as local limestone) to a depth of 150mm.
- **Dual-Strip Layout:** The track is designed as two parallel wheel-strip tracks, each 40cm (0.4m) in width, separated by a natural center green strip.
- **Substructure:** A flexible, three-dimensional geocellular confinement grid system will be laid directly onto the existing grass surface to house and stabilize the aggregate.
- **Functional Benefits:** This layout provides a highly durable, load-bearing surface for agricultural vehicles while minimizing the physical footprint, eliminating soil compaction, and preserving 100% natural water infiltration.

Colour & Landscape Integration

- **Aggregate Colour:** The aggregate used will be a natural grey/brown, consistent with local stone typical to the Ribble Valley area. This ensures the tracks remain visually unobtrusive and match the local geology.
- **Natural Alignment:** The track has been intentionally routed to run alongside existing mature tree lines and established hedgerows, utilizing these natural boundaries to naturally screen the track from wider public view.
- **Visual Mitigation:** To break up the linear nature of the parallel tracks, a strategic "clumping" design of native tree planting will be implemented in natural clusters along the route, softening sightlines and blending the infrastructure seamlessly into the rural landscape.
- **Neighbor Protection and Visual Screening:** The track and the decentralized apiaries have been strategically located away from neighboring residential boundaries. By placing the track on the far side of the mature, established boundary hedgerows and tree lines, the physical infrastructure is completely screened. This ensures that the neighbors' rural outlook remains entirely unaffected and the track is visually shielded from their properties.

Part C: Detailed Justifications (Continuation Section 5: Agricultural Necessity and Design)

Section 5.1: Reasonably Necessary for Agriculture

Context of the Apicultural and Agricultural Operations

- **Active Holding & Feed Production:** The 5.5-hectare agricultural unit at Old Langho Field, Blackburn, maintains a continuous, 200+ year history of agricultural productivity (specifically the production of animal feed) alongside active, professional apiculture and commercial, wholesale honey production.
- **Essential All-Weather Access to Livestock:** The proposed track network is required exclusively to guarantee reliable, all-weather vehicle access to the decentralized sub-apiary stations dispersed across the 5.5 hectares. While the physical path of the track naturally runs through the existing forage meadows—subdividing them as a practical consequence of its routing—this layout is purely a byproduct of the topography. The sole agricultural driver for the track is the physical necessity of transporting heavy equipment, hives, and winter feed to these dispersed stations during wet or winter conditions.
- **Wholesale Scale and Logistics:** Operating at a commercial scale requires the routine transport of heavy bulk supers, honey extraction equipment, and high-volume storage drums. The proposed track network is a functional necessity to safely move these heavy yields from the apiaries to transport vehicles without risking vehicle damage, soil compaction, or physical ground breakdown.

Specialized Queen Rearing Unit

- **Local Genetic Breeding Program:** A core function of this holding is the operation of a specialized queen rearing unit. The objective is the production of entirely home-bred, locally fertilized queen bees.
- **Import Independence:** This local breeding program is designed to eliminate reliance on foreign honey bee imports, directly safeguarding the holding and the local area against the introduction of devastating exotic pests (such as the Small Hive Beetle).

Developing Climate Resilience (Linked to Track Necessity)

- **Climate Disruption Adaptation:** By breeding exclusively from surviving local stock, we are developing essential genetic resilience against regional pathogens and increasingly volatile weather. Because selective breeding requires daily, hyper-precise interventions (such as grafting, queen cell transfers, and mating checks), the proposed track is essential to guarantee rapid, all-weather vehicle access to these breeding lines without delay during volatile weather windows.
- **The Science of the 2025/2026 UK Winter Losses:** The unseasonably warm autumn of 2025 followed by the relentless rain of early 2026 created a "perfect storm" of colony failures. Weakened, aged cohorts dwindled rapidly, requiring urgent, immediate feeding. The proposed track is functionally necessary to transport heavy emergency feed and syrup to these vulnerable colonies during narrow, hours-long winter weather windows where unmade ground is completely impassable.

- **Damp and Cleansing Flight Restrictions:** Persistent wet weather in early 2026 trapped bees inside, causing internal hive condensation, dysentery, and toxic mold. Mitigating this dampness requires rapid physical adjustments to hive ventilation and the immediate replacement of spoiled comb. The track allows vehicles carrying replacement parts, dry insulated roofs, and sanitization equipment to reach the hives instantly, preventing colony collapse during prolonged wet periods.
- **The Evolutionary Advantage of Local Stock:** Locally adapted honeybees (*Apis mellifera mellifera*) naturally cease brood rearing early to conserve stores and tolerate high-humidity overwintering. The track is designed specifically to support this local stock management by ensuring that we can access, monitor, and record the traits of these resilient colonies year-round, which is impossible if we are cut off by mud during the critical autumn and winter assessment months.
- **Proven Survival Rates:** Subjecting colonies to regional pressures to select the strongest survivors (Büchler et al., 2014) requires intensive, hands-on data collection at every hive. The track makes this rigorous scientific monitoring operationally viable by providing a stable, reliable transit route across the wet, heavy clay soil of the holding.

Decentralized Sub-APIary Design (Linked to Track Necessity)

- **Biosecurity Management:** To manage biosecurity and protect colony health, the holding is organized into a decentralized "sub-apiary" model, with distinct, isolated groups of hives strategically spaced across the 5.5 hectares. Because this multi-apiary design physically disperses the livestock, it exponentially increases the transit distance for heavy equipment. The proposed track serves as the essential physical spine of this biosecurity layout, allowing us to move hives, supers, and portable washing stations directly to each isolated unit.
- **Scientific Disease Mitigation:** Spacing colony groups is a scientifically proven method to prevent "drifting" (foraging bees returning to the wrong hives), which is the primary vector for the horizontal transmission of *Varroa destructor* and Foulbrood. To maintain this vital biosecurity spacing, the sub-units must remain highly dispersed. The track is a necessity because managing these distant, isolated sub-units on foot while carrying heavy equipment is physically impossible and would cause severe, repetitive soil compaction and rutting across the entire 5.5 hectares.
- **Scientific Proof of Spacing:** Peer-reviewed research (Nolan & Delaplane, 2017) proves that physical distance between colony groups regulates pest growth and public health risk. To operationalize this scientific spacing, we must have a reliable, low-impact transport route. The track enables the clean, swift movement of vehicles between these isolated sub-units, ensuring we do not cross-contaminate the clean zones of the holding via muddy boots or tires.
- **Imitation of Natural Density:** Physically isolating the hive clusters mimics the natural spacing density of wild honey bee colonies to contain disease outbreaks (Seeley, 2019). This highly spaced, natural density layout is only operationally viable with the proposed track network, which connects these wild-simulated pockets into a single, cohesive, and highly manageable agricultural breeding unit.

Technical Necessity of the Track for Queen Rearing

- **Protection Against Vibration and Temperature Shock:** The transport of capped queen cells and newly emerged virgin queens is an incredibly delicate biological process. During the critical pupal stage (days 10 to 14 of the rearing cycle), queen larvae are highly sensitive to drop-shock and physical vibration. Transporting these delicate cells across unmade, rough, or waterlogged ground risks killing the developing queens. The proposed track provides a smooth, stable surface for safe transport and allows the use of specialized, climate-controlled portable incubators powered by transport vehicles.
- **Strict, Non-Negotiable Biological Timetables:** Queen rearing operates on a rigid, day-specific developmental calendar (including precise windows for grafting, cell capping, and transfer to mating nuclei). These biological windows are absolute and cannot be postponed due to poor weather or wet ground. If vehicle access to the mating nuclei is blocked by mud, the entire breeding cycle of genetically valuable queens will fail. The track is a necessity to guarantee precise, time-sensitive access regardless of ground conditions.
- **Survival of Mating Nuclei (Nucs):** Newly established mating nucs contain very small starter colonies with minimal food reserves. During adverse weather, they require urgent, daily feeding and insulative management. If access is delayed by impassable, wet field conditions, these vital genetic starter colonies will starve and perish within 48 hours. The track ensures rapid, reliable access for daily supplementary feeding.

Section 5.2: Design for Agricultural Purposes

No-Dig Reversible Construction (Pedosphere Protection)

- **Zero Excavation:** To preserve the existing pedosphere (topsoil layer) and local soil biology, the track is designed to be built directly *atop* the existing grass level, requiring absolutely zero excavation, stripping, or grading.
- **Fully Reversible:** This "no-dig" design ensures the entire development is fully reversible. The aggregate and geocellular system can be easily lifted and removed in the future, restoring the field to its baseline agricultural state with zero lasting soil damage or compaction.

Hydrology and Permeability

- **Natural Water Infiltration:** The combination of an open-graded aggregate and a highly porous geocellular grid structure ensures 100% water permeability.
- **Preventing Runoff:** Rainwater drains directly through the track surface into the subsoil, fully preserving the field's natural hydrological drainage patterns and preventing any surface water pooling, localized flooding, or mud runoff.

Compliance with Tree Root Protection Standards

- **Arboricultural Protection:** Because the track is aligned alongside existing mature tree lines and hedgerows, the "no-dig" cellular confinement system is specifically designed to satisfy the strict root-protection requirements of **British Standard BS 5837:2012 (Section 7.4)** and **Arboricultural Practice Note 12 (APN 12)**.

- **Weight Dispersion:** The geocellular grid laterally distributes the weight of agricultural vehicles, preventing soil compaction within the Root Protection Area (RPA) and eliminating the risk of root severance or structural damage to the adjacent trees and hedges.

Ecological Enhancement

- **Pollinator Forage Corridor:** The natural central green strip separating the two 40cm-wide wheel tracks will be deliberately planted with native wildflowers. This establishes a permanent, dedicated forage corridor for the bees, directly integrated into the physical infrastructure of the agricultural unit.

Part D: Conclusion & Permitted Development Compliance

Legislative Alignment & Legal Standards

- **General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 2015:** The applicant has consulted extensively on the relevant statutory criteria set out under **Part 6 (Agricultural and Forestry), Class A (agricultural developments on units of 5 hectares or more)** of the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015* (as amended).
- **Satisfaction of the 5-Hectare Threshold:** The agricultural unit at Old Langho Field comprises 5.5 contiguous hectares. It is an active, established agricultural holding occupied as a single unit for the purpose of commercial apiculture and agriculture.
- **Reasonably Necessary for Agriculture:** As detailed extensively within this statement, the private way (access track) is a direct, operational response to the physical, biological, and logistical demands of commercial-scale apiculture and livestock (queen bee) breeding. It satisfies the statutory "reasonably necessary" standard, which requires that the works directly support the active agricultural trade being carried out on the holding.

Exacting Legal Criteria Checklist (Class A.1 Restrictions)

Under **Paragraph A.1 of Part 6, Class A**, development is permitted subject to specific exclusions. The proposed private way strictly satisfies each of these statutory constraints:

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(a) — Separate Parcel Size: Restriction:** Development is not permitted on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area.

Compliance: The proposed access track is situated entirely within a single, contiguous, unsubdivided 5.5-hectare agricultural holding. There is no development on any separate parcel of less than 1 hectare.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(b) — Class Q & S 10-Year Rule: Restriction:** Development is not permitted on an established agricultural unit where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use to residential or state-funded schools) has been carried out within the preceding 10 years.

Compliance: No development under Class Q or Class S has been carried out on this agricultural unit within the preceding 10 years.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(c) — Exclusion of Dwellings:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted if it consists of, or includes, the erection, extension, or alteration of a dwelling.

Compliance: The proposed works consist entirely of the formation of a private access track (Class A(a)). No residential structures or extensions of any kind are proposed.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(d) — Designed for Agricultural Purposes:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted if it involves a building, structure, or works not designed for agricultural purposes.

Compliance: The private way is designed as a dual-strip, permeable aggregate track specifically engineered to support agricultural transit (compact tractors, utility vehicles, transport trailers). Its structural composition, geocellular reinforcement, and dimensions are strictly agricultural.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(e) — Ground Area Limitations:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted if the ground area covered by any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock, or any plant/machinery from engineering, would exceed 1,000 square metres; or if any agricultural building exceeds 1,500 square metres.

Compliance: No buildings, plant, or machinery are proposed under this application. The private way is an engineering operation (Class A(b)) and does not involve any livestock accommodation structures, meaning the ground area limitations for buildings do not apply.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(f) & (g) — Physical Height Limitations:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted if the height of any structure or works within 3km of an aerodrome perimeter would exceed 3m, or 12m in height elsewhere.

Compliance: The proposed access track is a flush, ground-level roadway with a physical height of 0m. It sits completely outside this restriction.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(h) — Distance from Classified Roads:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted if any part of the development would be within 25 metres of the metalled portion of a trunk road or a classified road.

Compliance: No portion of the proposed private access track is located within 25 metres of the metalled part of any trunk road or classified road (such as an A, B, or C road). The track is entirely situated within the interior of the private agricultural holding, set back far beyond the 25-metre statutory threshold.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.1(i) — Protected Buildings & Livestock:** *Restriction:* Development is not permitted for livestock accommodation or slurry storage within 400 metres of a protected building (e.g., non-farm dwellings).

Compliance: The track is for transit and biosecurity access only. It does not involve livestock housing or slurry storage, and therefore is not restricted by proximity to adjacent protected buildings.

Exacting Legal Conditions Checklist (Class A.2 Conditions)

Under **Paragraph A.2 of Part 6**, permitted development is subject to clear operating conditions:

- **GPDO Paragraph A.2(1)(c) — Mineral and Waste Materials:** *Condition:* Waste materials must not be brought onto the land except for direct, immediate use in the permitted works.

Compliance: Absolutely no waste material will be imported or deposited on-site. The only materials brought onto the land will be clean, natural, open-graded aggregate (local limestone) sourced from local quarries to be immediately incorporated into the geocellular confinement grid.

- **GPDO Paragraph A.2(2)(i)(aa) — The Prior Notification Procedure:** *Condition:* The developer must apply to the LPA for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority is required for the "siting and means of construction of the private way".

Compliance: The submission of this comprehensive planning statement, detailed drawings, and prior notification forms fully executes this statutory condition.

Part E: Technical and Scientific References

Arboricultural & Construction References

- **British Standards Institution. (2012).** *BS 5837:2012: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations.* BSI Standards Limited.
- **Patch, D. (1996).** *Arboricultural Practice Note 12 (APN 12): Through the Trees to Development.* Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service.

Apicultural & Disease Mitigation References

- **Nolan, M. P., & Delaplane, K. S. (2017).** *Distance between honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) colonies regulates *Varroa destructor* population growth and public health risk.* PLOS ONE, 12(12), e0189262.
- **Seeley, T. D. (2019).** *The Lives of Bees: The Untold Story of the Honey Bee in the Wild.* Princeton University Press.

Climate & Winter Loss Industry References

- **ITV News. (2026).** *'Unprecedented' number of bee deaths: How the recent wet weather is threatening hives.* ITV West Country Report (March 20, 2026).
- **Oxfordshire Natural Beekeeping Group. (2026).** *Winter losses and lessons: Climate disruption and late-season dwindle in UK apiaries.* Technical Report (May 2026).
- **Büchler, R., Costa, C., Hatjina, F., et al. (2014).** *The influence of genetic origin and its interaction with environmental effects on the survival of *Apis mellifera* L. colonies in Europe.* Journal of Apicultural Research, 53(2), 205-214.