

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

**LAND AT BASFORD HALL, BASFORD
GREEN ROAD, CHEDDLETON**

MARCH 2017

Site Address:

Land at Basford Hall, Basford Green Road, Cheddleton, ST13 7ER

Applicant:

Mr. H. Scott-Moncrief

Proposal:

Erection of Biomass Building (Retrospective)

Planning & Heritage Statement:

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Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. H. Scott-Moncrief to seek retrospective planning permission for the retention of a biomass building erected on land forming part of the Basford Hall Estate, Basford Green Road, Cheddleton.
- 1.2 The biomass building erected on site occupies a footprint of 77.5 square metres and encompasses a split-level design that stands to a maximum height of 3.1 metres at its northern elevation, and 4.1 metres at its southern elevation. It encompasses a portal framed construction, with dark green exterior cladding. The biomass boiler within provides a renewable source of heating to four dwellings within the Basford Estate.
- 1.3 The building is accessed via the established track that serves nearby Lodge Farmhouse, off Basford Green Road, and which leads to an established area of hardstanding in front of the existing agricultural building. The access track leads down the side of the building to its lower level, beyond which a Laurel hedge has been planted.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site lies within the rural area, and lies to the immediate south of a concrete block agricultural building associated with Lodge Farm. To the north/northwest of the site lies Lodge Farmhouse, which is a Grade II Listed Building in need of remedial repairs. The land rises up to the west of the site, where a row of mature hedgerow trees is located. Beyond this vegetative screen to the west lie Lodge Cottages (1 – 3) which are also Grade II Listed. A pleasant stone chapel is also located at this higher level. The landscape slopes away fairly steeply to the east and south of the building before rising

up again on the opposite side of the valley. A photograph of the constructed building is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Photograph of Biomass Building



3 Planning Policy

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:
- 3.2 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the Other Rural Areas Strategy and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an

essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. Policy SS6c goes on to state that the quality of the countryside will be conserved and enhanced by ensuring renewable energy schemes are of an appropriate scale, type and location. Essential local needs will be met by allowing suitable development which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset in accordance with policy DC2.

- 3.3 Policy SD2 of the Core Strategy relates to Renewable/Low Carbon Energy and states that the District will strive to meet part of its future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources (which could be through a variety of technologies for example wind power, solar energy, biomass etc). This will be achieved by supporting small and large scale stand alone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes subject to the degree to which the scale and nature of a proposal impacts on the landscape, the degree to which the environmental benefits of a scheme has been demonstrated, the impact on protected sites, and the impact on the amenity of residents and other interests of acknowledged importance, including the historic environment.
- 3.4 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to Design Considerations and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.
- 3.5 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to the Historic Environment and states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient

monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. It will seek to achieve this by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance; and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

- 3.6 Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy relates to Landscape and Settlement Setting and states that the Council will protect, and where possible, enhance local landscape by (amongst others) resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape, as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character.
- 3.7 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to Rural Diversification and states that all development in the rural areas will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need, and sustains the historic environment. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated, or by other effects such as noise and pollution. Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings

which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development and seeks to secure the delivery of renewable energy developments. It also sets out guidance in respect of safeguarding heritage assets. The content of this document is explored in more detail in the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 This application seeks consent to retain a biomass building that has recently been constructed on this site. The site is located within the rural area and has been installed by the applicant to provide a renewable source of energy to five existing properties on the Basford Estate. The building has the appearance of a modest portal framed agricultural building, with dark green cladding, and occupies a footprint of 77.5 square metres. It is bordered to the west by a mature vegetative screen, beyond which some 35 metres away lie nos. 1, 2 and 3 Lodge Cottages. The presence of this vegetative screen, coupled with the change in levels that is also observable, serves to restrict any meaningful views of the development from this Listed Building. Similarly, the presence of the vegetative screen also serves to preclude any views of the building from the main access serving Basford Hall.
- 5.2 To the north of the building lies an existing single storey blockwork and plain clay tiled roof agricultural building that is used for the keeping of livestock.

Beyond that building to the northwest lies the Grade II Listed Lodge Farmhouse. The proposed biomass building does not impose on any important vistas of this Listed Building, as it set some distance away, and is screened by the existing vegetation.

5.3 The landscape to the east and south slopes away fairly steeply before rising up on the opposite side of the valley. Some views towards the building may be achievable from the highway running up the far side of the valley, but any such views would be softened by the new laurel hedgerow planted around the building, and by the muted colours of the building which assimilate well with the vegetative backdrop behind. The building will also be read in the content of the adjacent blockwork agricultural building and Lodge Cottages beyond, and thus not appear as an isolated or intrusive structure. The proposal will therefore not give rise to significant harm to the landscape.

5.4 The proposed biomass building will derive substantial environmental benefits by virtue of it providing a renewable source of heating for five existing properties on the Basford Estate. These are as follows:

- The Bath House (Grade II Listed)
- Rock Cottage (Unlisted)
- 1, 2 & 3 Lodge Cottages (Grade II Listed)

5.5 These existing dwellings are not particularly energy efficient, in particular the listed properties, whose status means that improvements to thermal efficiency (double glazing for example) cannot readily be undertaken as they would give rise to harm to the special architectural qualities of the buildings. These dwellings were, until recently, heated by non-renewable energy sources, but have since been provided with a renewable source of heat generation from the biomass building. These are very significant

environmental benefits, and ones which should be afforded very substantial weight in the determination of this application.

5.6 Paragraph 93 of the NPPF confirms that:

“Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development”.

5.7 These provisions are reflected within Core Planning Principle 6 and paragraph 98 of the NPPF which states that Local Planning Authorities should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also:

“recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions”

5.8 The biomass boiler installed within the building will be fuelled by wood pellets sourced from the woodland within the Basford Estate, and thus will derive a sustainable and renewable source of energy that will make a positive contribution towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions. As a consequence it is submitted that the proposed development will meet an identified, will support the sustainability of the rural areas, and safeguard its character. The principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Impact on Heritage Assets

5.9 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. The NPPF goes on to state in paragraph 131 that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

5.10 The application site does not lie within a Conservation Area, nor does it involve works to a listed building. The building does nevertheless lie within 35 metres of the Grade II Listed 1-3 Lodge Cottages, and approximately 50 metres from the Grade II Listed Lodge Farmhouse. The Grade II status of these properties means they should be afforded a high degree of significance as heritage assets.

5.11 The proposed biomass building does not have a strong visual relationship to these existing listed buildings. The strong vegetative screen alongside the western elevation of the building precludes views of the development from 1 – 3 Lodge Cottages, even in winter months, and thus does not give rise to harm to the setting of these Listed Buildings. The biomass building furthermore does not impinge on important vistas of the Grade II Listed Lodge Farmhouse, which has a somewhat poor quality blockwork agricultural building located to its southeast. The proposed biomass building is therefore not considered to give rise to harm to the setting of Lodge Farmhouse.

5.12 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF advises that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF goes on to state that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.13 There is no definition within the NPPF as to what constitutes substantial or less than substantial harm, but the Planning Practice Guidance provides some assistance in this regard, confirming that:

“In general terms substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest”. (Paragraph 017 refers).

5.14 The works to construct the biomass building have not necessitated any alterations to the fabric of the nearby Listed Buildings (nor the Grade II Listed Bath House), other than pipework connections taken underground, and having regard to the considerations above, I submit that the proposal will result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of these heritage assets.

5.15 Any impact arising has to be balanced against the benefits of the proposal, which in this particular case will be the supply of a renewable source of heat generation to five properties on the Basford Estate, thereby making a significant contribution towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable from a heritage perspective.

Impact on Residential Amenity

5.16 The biomass boiler installed does not generate significant amounts of noise, and given that the nearest residential properties lie some 35m+ to the west of the site, and lie at a higher level to the application site beyond a vegetative screen, it is not considered that their residential amenity will be adversely affected by the proposed development.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is considered that the biomass building constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan having regard to the following conclusions:

- The building is of a modest scale and utilises a palette of materials that assimilate well with its rural surroundings;

- The building does not impact on any important vistas in the area, in particular views to and from nearby Listed Buildings;
- The building benefits from good natural screening, with further landscaping undertaken alongside the building to soften its impact;
- The biomass boiler will provide a renewable source of heat generation to serve five existing dwellings on the Basford Estate, and thus deliver very significant environmental benefits;
- The proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the nearby heritage assets, and any impact would be outweighed by the significant environmental benefits of the proposal;
- The proposed development does not give rise to harm to neighbouring residential amenity;

6.2 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS6c, R1, DC1, DC2, DC3 and SD2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant retrospective planning permission for the proposed development.