DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2017/0145 **Valid 15/03/2017**	**LAND SOUTH EAST OF LODGE FARMHOUSE BASFORD HALL ROAD BASFORD LEEK**	**RETENTION OF BIOMASS BUILDING** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development in this location
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on the setting of historic listed buildings in the area
The impact on residential amenity by way of noise and disturbance
The impact on air quality

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site comprises part of a field and is in the open countryside within the Basford Hall estate a short distance to the south of Basford Green 'hamlet'. It lies off the road to the hall itself from Basford Green and is behind Lodge Farm to the east of the road which is a historic farmstead comprising Lodge farmhouse and attached Quaker Building, both of which are listed and also Lodge Cottage, also listed and which appears to have been subdivided into three dwellings. The site is to the rear (east) of the Lodge Cottage garden (which also contains a stone chapel), at the end of a track through the Lodge Farm yard and which lies to the east and south of the farmstead buildings. The field in which the site sits is to the south and east and there is more open land sloping downwards further towards the south. The land also slopes down towards the east is in mainly open land although there is one dwelling, Springfields about 80m from the site. The site comprises an existing biomass energy boiler building.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the retention of the biomass building which was built without planning permission and is hence unauthorised. This is therefore an application for retrospective planning permission for the boiler building. The boiler is in full operation and provides a renewable source of heating to five dwellings within the Basford Estate including the three adjacent Lodge Cottage dwellings and The Bath House (listed) and Rock Cottage which both lie about half a kilometre to the south. The Planning and Heritage Statement explains that the listed status to four of the dwellings prevent the installation of other renewable energy measures such as double glazing. The boiler runs on wood pellets sourced from woodland within the Basford Estate. The building itself is "split level" due to the sloping land with heights of 5.5 metres (on the south end elevation) and 3.1 metres (on the north end elevation facing the listed buildings). The floor dimensions are 6.2 x 12.3 metres. The walls are finished with dark green metal sheets and there is a low pitched roof

with similar materials. There is recently planted laurel screen hedging/trees to the south and east of the building but an amended plan has been submitted to provide further laurel planting to improve the screen.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
SS6c – Other Rural Areas Strategy
SS7 – Churnet Valley Strategy
SD2 – Renewable/Low Carbon Energy
SD4 – Pollution
DC2 – The Historic Environment
DC3 – Landscape

National Planning Policy Framework

Sections 7 (Design), 10 (Climate Change) and 12 (Historic Environment)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13.4.17
Neighbour consultation period ends: 29.6.17
Press Advert: 30.3.17

Public Comments

One letter of objection has been received from a local resident on the grounds of emissions from the boiler, water run-off down the slope from new access road towards his property and wood source pellets not sourced from the property.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions

Conservation Officer

No objection subject to improved planting around the building to protect the appearance of the area and also the restoration of the banking at the site entrance which is next to the curtilage of listed buildings.

Tree/Landscaping Officer

No objection to the amended planting scheme.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The principle of small renewable energy schemes in the open countryside is acceptable providing this does not harm the rural character and appearance of the area and landscape and does not lead to any other harms to the surrounding environment i.e. pollution including noise or any other residential amenity impacts.

The boiler is well screened from the north and west by the presence of banking up to buildings within the historic farmstead and also more modern farm buildings (such as the one nearest to the site). The building is visible from long distances to the south (where there are footpaths) and to the east (where there is a road) due to the lower ground levels in these directions but there is some screening in the form of vegetation (e.g. hedgerows and trees) and the general landform (some undulating land and hills). The dark green materials also help the building to blend in with the landscape and in particular the backdrop of trees on the land bank to the west. An amended plan has been received to intensify the current laurel tree/hedge screening which is not of good quality. Although there are better species than laurel for the purposes of screening in a rural and historic area (i.e. more native species), new laurel planting would still be effective in screening the development and overall with the safeguard of a planting condition, the landscape and rural character of the area would not be significantly harmed.

The building cannot be easily seen from the nearby listed dwellings and is in a location where it does not harm the settings of those buildings. Some damage to the banking next to the curtilage listed small stone chapel/library appears to have been caused by the construction of the access which is off the farmyard but the repair via grassing/turfing over of the land bank along with the supplementary screen planting for the building would ensure the historic farmstead character and listed building settings would not be harmed.

As the building is largely screened from the nearby farmstead dwellings, it does not appear overdominant or obtrusive from those dwellings and there is no impact on their light provision. The Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that the noise from the boiler is not significantly harmful to residential amenity with the safeguard of a condition setting limits on noise levels (in case these increase).

A biomass development of this scale is unlikely to lead to significant air quality issues in this location according to the Environmental Health Section of the Council.

The points raised by the objector are noted. The objector's dwelling is approx 80 metres from the site and is not considered to be affected by the development in terms of residential amenity or water run off from the new access road or the banking.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

To conclude, the existing biomass development would not be harmful to the landscape and setting of listed buildings with the safeguard of additional tree/hedge planting achieved by way of a condition and is not harming residential amenity. Retrospective planning permission should therefore be granted for the development.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 9.8.17

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council