DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

DET/2019/0032 **Valid 30/09/2019**	**LAND OFF LOCKWOOD ROAD** **CHEADLE**	**PRIOR NOTIFICATION FOR A PROPOSED STEEL PORTAL FRAMED BUILDING FOR THE STORAGE OF FARM PRODUCE, WITH STONE TRACK AND AREA OF HARD STANDING** **(AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY DETERMINATION)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Qualification criteria under GPDO Schedule 2 Part 6 Class A
- Siting
- Design
- External appearance
- Siting and means of construction of the track
- Coal – low risk

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within a c.10ha (24 acre) field which has been formed by the amalgamation of four fields historically with at their centre Woodhouse Cottage which was accessed by a direct track from the field gate in the NW corner put forward now to serve the present proposal. There is no visual evidence now of these former features.

The field rises in a smoothly undulating upward slope tapering to the south east to Highshutt common. It is bordered by Hawksmoor Wood National Trust nature reserve on its easterly side. The well hedged and tree-lined sunken lane of Lockwood Road marks the SW boundary. There is a far-reaching expansive landscape viewed to the north from the field over the Churnet Valley and more distant upland beyond. The nearest built development seen in conjunction with the site is the cluster at Woodhouse Farm c.750m to the NW though this is moderated with associated trees and woodland. There is a c.3 acre copse between 150m and 350m to the immediate NW on the opposite side of Lockwood Road. A public footpath right of way runs more-or-less due south from the copse at its corner with Lockwood Road to meet with The Grange some 400m distant on Oakamoor Road. The Grange is a Grade II Listed Building considered of 17thC origin. The farm house at Parkfields Farm 725m to the west is also Grade II Listed.

Highshutt itself at the southern tip of the field is common land and there is a public footpath just is eth woodland edge along the easterly boundary of the field.

PROPOSAL

The proposal building would be 30m x 15m, 5.7m to the eaves and 7.8m to the ridge. It would be finished externally in concrete panel walls to 2m with metal cladding above proposed in blue along with the roof which would also have transparent sheet rooflights. Entry would be via a 5m x 5m door and a separate adjacent pedestrian door to one end of the north east facing long elevation.

The position in the field would be 25m east of the roadside field boundary on a shallow sloping shelf on the otherwise more steeply rising ground. Some cut and fill levelling would be required.

A track of 150m and curtilage area of c.720m2 are also proposed. The scheme is posited as being served by existing track in the first 50m from the road.



Looking SE from field gate to approximate location.

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
SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
R1 Rural Diversification

Local Plan Submission Version (February 2018)

SS1 Development Principles

SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
E1 New Employment Development

Local Plan process

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was "sound". Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. An examination in public was held in November 2018 to determine whether the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. Subject to the findings of the appointed inspector, the Local Plan is expected to be adopted later in 2019. At that point, it will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and become part of the statutory development plan for the District.

In this context, the Council's position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is as follows:

- The stage of preparation: the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the Council has submitted it to the SoS for examination;
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies: this varies depending on the policy in question. Where reference is made in this report to any emerging policies the level of outstanding objections to each policy will be noted and recommendation made as to the amount of weight to be given to the policies at this stage in the process;
- The degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF: given that the Council has submitted a Local Plan that it considers to be sound, all policies are deemed to be consistent with the NPPF.

National Planning Policy Framework July 2018

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;
Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None at the site. NB two recent past approved applications at the home farm.
00/01005/FUL – farm livestock building – built
12/00683/PNOT_1 – steel framed building – built

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity
Site Notice expiry date: 13th November 2019
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments
None

Town / Parish Comments
Cheadle Town Council – no objections

Staffordshire County Council Highways
No objection subject to condition to establish a hard surfaced entrance for 10m back from the road edge in accordance with details to be submitted. Comments: "The existing access does not appear to be regularly used. The verge appears soft. Surfacing will be required to prevent mud being deposited on the highway. Details of surfacing of the internal track are not submitted. However, it should be hard surfaced, in unbound material, to further prevent mud being deposited on the highway."

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development
The application is made under the Permitted Development procedure for agricultural buildings contained at GPDO (2015) Schedule 2, Part 6 Class A.

Class A of Schedule 2 Part 6 to the GPDO provides for an agricultural building to be erected as Permitted Development subject to a prior notification to the LPA, with subsequent assessment, and subject to the land being within an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more and within an individual land parcel not less than 1ha.

The prior notification requirement is an opportunity for the LPA to determine whether prior approval should be required as to the siting, design and external appearance.

To qualify for the Permitted Development route the proposed works must be "reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit". The agricultural use of the land must be "for the purposes of a trade or business" and the unit must be "occupied as a unit for the purposes of agriculture", all as set out in the Interpretation Section (D.1) for Part 6 Classes A to C.

The location is in the open rural countryside in the Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands Landscape Character Type (LCT). The landscape quality in this LCT is middle ranked as 'moderate' on the five point scale applied across the county. The ranking reflects that the LCT overall is found to have lost some character and landscape qualities and that there is therefore a need for intervention to reverse the trend.

In accordance with policies SS1 and SS1a, the Council expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. This means that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy shall be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether: (a) any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or (b) specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Policy SS6c for the rural areas supports only development which meets an essential local need and supports rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas (or supports sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside).

Core Strategy Policy SS6c (2) is to sustain the rural economy by (inter alia) supporting “limited” business expansion and supporting “diversification” of existing farm enterprises. In strict terms neither of these points fully or expressly covers farm expansion to accommodate a growing farm business for agriculture per se. In the emerging local plan policy SS10 (limited weight due to objections) would support “limited expansion” adding the words “or development” “…of business for employment uses” and further adding the words, “where a rural location can be justified”. Again this is still not expressly relevant to agriculture and it may reasonably be considered that there is no express policy support. The determination will fall back to be considered as per the second paragraph above along with Policy R1 noted below.

Notably, Core Strategy Policy SS6c (3) is to “Enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by: giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.” Within the Churnet Valley Area which applies here SS7 raises an additional expectation to protect the rural qualities of the area in the interests of maintaining recreational and a tourist visitor enjoyment of the area as a key component of the rural economy.

Core Strategy policy R1 expects a balanced consideration of the extent to which a proposal protects and benefits rural qualities and supports rural economic and community needs stating that, “appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area”.

The purpose of this building is understood to be in support of the functional operation of an established farm enterprise. To this extent the development may be assumed to bring local economic benefits to the rural economy. The scale of the farm

enterprise here is very evident with a range of arable crops being grown on rotation across a 111ha holding. The operational base for the farm holding is at Parkfields Farm 660m to the west where there is a range of farm buildings. Originally the farm was dairy and latterly mixed beef and arable. Whilst there are at present no livestock it is understood that beef is likely to be re-introduced as a necessary component of the farm both for farm economic and soil fertility reasons.

Design
The building design is typical of its type assuming non livestock use. It is understood the building would serve as either a grain store or hay store subject to the cropping regime in place at the time. The adoption of a dark material finish would be to some extent recessive in the landscape and the overall massing would be helpfully 'disrupted' by use of a base wall line of lighter concrete panels.

Accompanying the proposal is the need for surfaced track through the field and significant associated curtilage hard standing. Details however are not given though it is understood the intention would be to use a rolled hard core construction.

No details of any additional landscape screening are given.

Amenity
No neighbour amenity implications are likely, being well clear of nearby residences. The cluster of dwellings at The Grange are 350m away and there is some landscape separation with intervening trees and hedge lines.

There are implications for wider public amenity arising from the landscape character changes discussed below.

Landscape
From discussions with the applicant it is clear that careful thought has been put into the proposal location and specific siting, evidently recognising the high qualities of the landscape at this point. The site would be at a mid point in the slope where it levels slightly and would be set against rising ground and partly screened by the roadside trees to the west. Certainly there are worse locations within this field but the positioning is still 'inefficient' in its impacts due to the length of access track necessary to make this position usable. In other words, whilst there are some arguments in its favour there are still dis-benefits of this site.

The nature and character of Lockwood Road from Kingsley Holt to Highshutt is very rural with few built interventions and none in the last c.1km after Woodhouse. The proposal is both physically large and would bring about (or pose the potential for) significant character changes not just as a result of its built form but also its use which would noticeably change a greater part of the field's relationship to its surroundings.

These impacts would be most seen from Lockwood Road in intermittent middle distant views approaching from the north and especially at closer range despite

some filtering from roadside trees and hedges. The point is that there is no development whatsoever at present at this location and the change even if partially filtered or screened would be still very marked.

The proposal would similarly introduce development into more wide ranging and distant views from the north and north east and again the impacts are judged the more significant because the location is very much undeveloped in a prominently open field overall, which is itself eye-catching, leading up to the crest of rising ground which forms the valley edge and horizon.

The development is judged unlikely to be seen from Highshutt Common but for visitors using the public footpath into Hawksmoor Wood National Trust land the potential visibility is less easy to assess with certainty but judged likely to be limited as the path tends to be set down slightly within the woodland edge.

Highway Safety
Acceptable subject to conditions but the consultation response underlines the absence of any existing entrance track.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE
Key to the assessment is Core Strategy policy R1 which expects a balance to be made between harms versus need and justification. It is evident from the discussion above that there would be landscape harm from this proposal. The applicant has chosen to set the building some way into the field because if positioned at the lower point by the gate way it would have the harshest impact on the immediate view from the road. The applicant is perhaps right that the proposal position is the more moderate one for near-to impacts. Unfortunately at the same time this chosen position is found likely to bring wider adverse impacts to views and landscape character over a wider – if more distant – area.

Turning to need the LPA informal assessment after visiting the farm is that a case of need can be presented. What is not established is that this need must be met at this location. The priority preference for the LPA would be to provide the building at the home farm. Alternatively, if accepting the argument for reduced travel distance for harvested produce, the LPA would see there being other locations within the farm estate perhaps midway between the site and the home farm for example which may be found significantly less harmful to landscape.

In conclusion therefore it cannot be accepted that the identified harms of the proposal are justified by the economic and farm business need.

It should further be noted that in order to comply with the Part 6 prior notice criteria the application has not included any track within 25m of the public road. This would leave the development disconnected and in all practical terms inaccessible.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Prior approval required and refused

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 25th November 2019

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council