

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

DET/2021/0011
Valid 30/03/2021

FELTHOUSE FARM
CHEADLE ROAD
STAFFORDSHIRE
MOORLANDS
CHEDDLETON

FORESTRY BUILDING

**(AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY
DETERMINATION)**

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposed forestry building can be built under a Notification of Prior Approval application under Part 6 of the GPDO rather than a full planning application.

If so, whether or not the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed building is acceptable.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies on the John Pointon's and Son's estate (specialising in agricultural businesses) in the countryside to the south of Cheddleton village in an area of open fields and woodland and a short distance to the north-east of the John Pointon's works buildings. It has a separate access to those works, off Cheadle Road (A520) to the west. The site is part of Felthouse Farm which comprises a number of farm buildings close to the site, to the east and also to the south where there are also a small number of listed buildings. The site itself is on open land and borders woodland to the west.

PROPOSAL

The application is a "Notification of Prior Approval" application for a forestry-related building. The supporting information states the estate has 540 hectares, 121 hectares of which is woodland. The document states, the applicant seeks to increase and improve the forestry operation of the estate to enable a biomass enterprise and that the biomass enterprise will allow them to take the raw woodland material, dry and process it and be sold to consumers to produce renewable energy. The proposed building is required to provide storage of 'wet' organic matter, an area to accommodate drying floors, and a store for the dry organic matter. The building's proposed layout provides space for the timber to be moved from each part of the building by large machinery such as telehandlers, tractors with front loaders and trailers.

The building would have a modern portal frame warehouse/farm storage building form and appearance and with a footprint of 85.3 x 26.3 metres, an eaves height of 7.6 metres and a ridge height of 11.1 metres. It would have walls of green profiled metal sheets above a concrete plinth and a green metal profiled sheet roof. It would be placed close to and parallel with an agricultural building of similar footprint.

Under Part 6 Class E of the GPDO, a full planning application is not required for new forestry buildings, subject to the proposal meeting all the other criteria set out in Class E. However, the same part of the GPDO requires the submission of a "Notification of Prior Approval" application and the Council must determine whether it wishes to approve the siting, design and external appearance of the building.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

N/A

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

No planning history directly relevant to the case.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: N/A

Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Part 6 Class E of the GPDO allows biomass type operations, where the material is sourced from the land connected to the development, as a forestry operation that can benefit from development under that part of the GPDO. For forestry related development to be provided under the Prior Approval process without needing a full planning application, the proposal would need to meet the criteria listed under Part 6 Class E.1 of the GPDO.

The level of detail includes scale elevational drawings and a site plan to show the exact location of the building, along with the details of the colours and types of finishing materials and is sufficient for the purposes of determining the actual visual impact of the building. The building can be described as very large. Class E allows "the carrying out on land used for the purposes of forestry, including afforestation, of development reasonably necessary for those purposes consisting of.....(a)works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building." Whilst sufficient information is provided for the appearance to be assessed, there is no information which supports or justifies the very large scale of the building and why it is required to be sited in the location shown. There is no information which demonstrates that the fuel/timber for the biomass operation comes from forestry land which the applicant has control over.

The estate is very large at 540 hectares and includes 121 hectares of woodland where it is presumed will provide the materials for the proposed forestry building operation. However, no location plan has been provided to show the land within the ownership or control of the applicant (the red line boundary is drawn tightly around the building footprint but there is no blue edged line to show the land ownership boundary) or where in the locality the materials for the biomass operation will come from. It therefore cannot be easily assessed if the scale of the building is appropriate for the operation described as Part 6 Class E clearly only allows forestry buildings on "land used for the purposes of forestry". The size may be appropriate for a forestry operation on 121 hectares of woodland but if only a much smaller area is actually available to the applicant for this purpose, then the scale of the building may be deemed excessive and larger buildings are more likely to harm the open and rural nature of the countryside. Similarly there is no information given to suggest the building is sited appropriately in relation to the source of the forestry timbers/materials. Furthermore, Part 6 Class E1.(d) does not allow "buildings.....for storing fuel not produced on land which is occupied together with that building for the purposes of forestry" to be provided under permitted development under that part.

CONCLUSION

Due to the scale of the building, it has been determined that prior approval will be required for the proposed forestry building and further details will therefore be required to justify the scale and siting of the building to allow further assessment of the siting, design and external appearance of the building under Part 6 of the GPDO.

It is also not possible to determine from the submitted information whether the proposal complies with Part 6 of the GPDO and can therefore be carried out as Permitted Development – an informative to advise the applicant of this should be included

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 27.4.21

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council