

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0311
Valid 05/05/2021

FOREST FARM
ASHBOURNE ROAD
CALTON MOOR
ASHBOURNE

PROPOSED SILAGE CLAMP

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Impact on the character and appearance of the area and the amenity of neighbours.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Existing established farm surrounded by open undulating farm land with small scale irregular field parcels. The farm grouping consists of a dwelling with a linear run of adjacent sheds. The farm is to the south of Ashbourne Road and a straight 200m access track is at right angles to the road.

The farm occupies a dip or shallow valley in the landscape. The open farmland is broken up by clusters of mature trees and traditional hedgerow boundary.

PROPOSAL

To construct and provide a new replacement concrete walled silage clamp for the storage of conserved grass and forage for feeding cattle during the winter months. The development would be provided to what would be the side of two additional building sections, as phase I & II development, that were recently granted planning permission (SMD/2021/0273 & SMD/2021/0298) and would be built on the site of the existing silage clamp. The clamp would be 21m by 30m constructed with an enclosing 3m high concrete panelled walls supported between steel post stanchions enclosing a bound concrete surface.

The land slopes down steadily from north to south, the plans detail the housing to be built into a cutting into the land slope. It is necessary therefore to excavate and cut a slope into the ground level and a cross section plan details the extent of these alterations and a 'soil disposal statement' details how the excavated material would be spread evenly on adjacent farm land, filling some natural undulation and depression.

The applicant's agent submits the following statement, describing existing enterprise and ability to expand:

Across three holdings, Birchwood Park Farms farmed a total land holding of 675 acres (273.258 hectares) with over 530 head of cattle. The farm partnership has grown over a number of years, initially started in 1991 on a 90 acres dairy farm near Burton on Trent with a herd of approximately 60 cows. In 2000, the family moved to Birchwood Park Farm, allowing the herd size to increase to 140 head. In 2011, the land at Moor Lane, Stockwell Heath was purchased and more recently Forest Farm in 2016. Over this period, the applicants have restructured their business to facilitate growth. By using Moor Lane Farm to house beef and finishing cattle and by housing all dairy

youngstock at Forest Farm, this has allowed the dairy herd at Birchwood Park Farm to increase from 140 to 270, almost double the initial herd size. Birchwood Park Farm can accommodate a dairy herd of 300 and therefore it is their intension to increase to that level over the next 12 months. Commencing on the 1st June 2019, Birchwood Park Farms has achieved organic status and has been in organic conversion for two years. Milk is sold to ARLA who supply McDonalds restaurants. The organic milk market is more stable than commercial milk prices. Organic dairy farms operate a lower stocking density than conventional units and therefore the applicants have built up a substantial landholding to meet the certification requirements. Furthermore, the environmental objectives achieved with the organic certification complement the applicant's business. All dairy youngstock are homebred, breeding their own herd replacements. Dairy youngstock and dry cows are kept at Forest Farm at Swinscoe. The applicants have insufficient livestock housing at Forest Farm and intend to erect purpose built livestock housing to increase capacity and allow the existing agricultural buildings to be reconfigured for fodder and straw storage, machinery and younger calves.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape Character
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2021/0311 Proposed Silage Clamp. Pending.
SMD/2021/0298 Proposed lean to livestock building. Approved.
SMD/2021/0273 Proposed livestock housing building. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 8th June 2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 8th June 2021
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Blore with Swinscoe Parish Council: No Objection

Severn Trent

No objection. Minimal impact on public sewerage system.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that the rural areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved by, amongst other measures, enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified.

In this particular case the applicant has a long established agricultural enterprise, across three sites, with a sizeable land holding and large head of cattle. The proposed building will provide essential animal housing for the 'organic' dairy farm. The proposed building is therefore in accordance with policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

Design and impact on the character and appearance of the area

The proposed silage clamp is to be located within proximity of existing farmyard to the side of two new buildings requiring the realignment of the field boundary and some 25m of encroachment into the adjacent field. However, with a low profile structure, amounting to a large means of enclosure, and its connection adjacent to the larger Phase I and II buildings, and a context and proximity to the adjacent original farm sheds to the east, the structure would have a typical agrarian appearance, common to existing onsite and nearby development. The structure would cut into the landscape and not stand any taller than any of the other adjacent structures.

In any views from Ashbourne Road to the north, the building would not be apparent as part of the line of low profile structures because it would be set down in a natural dip in the landscape and cut below the rising land level, where it would have limited interference with the views of the landscape beyond, in a similar manner to the existing earth bunded silage clamp which is not visible until immediate proximity. From the south there are no roads or footpaths that would provide views of the development from public vantage.

In these regards the local landscape would be protected, and the development would not lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape. The proposed development will consequently not derive any conflict with policies DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan.

Impacts on Amenity

The introduction or expansion of a silage clamp can create fermentation odours that are generally sweet smelling, not necessarily strong, unpleasant or offensive. The silage emits a sweet fermented odour that is common to large dairy farms and agricultural areas. The additional capacity should not increase this odour significantly above those already associated with a large working dairy farm. Local Plan Policies DC1 and SD4, seek to protect amenity from poor design or polluting developments. The development would occur on the site of an existing established dairy farm adjacent to a substantial range of existing sheds that provide animal housing. The additional facility would be provided adjacent to the existing farm, it would be relatively

isolated surrounded by open farm land in all directions, on existing farmland, where there are other farms nearby, odour or noise levels should not be raised significantly above existing or background level. There is one dwelling that would be within 400m of the development, it is Calton Moor Farm, 260m to the north west, on the other side of Ashbourne Road. It is far enough away, the other side of the busy main road, not to be affected by the development and in any event has historically operated as a neighbouring farm. The risks and potential for amenity harm or complaint is very low, the development would not conflict with policies DC1 or SD4 in these regards.

Impact on ground water and aquatic ecology

There are no obvious water courses or issues within proximity of the site. However, silage effluent is stronger than untreated sewage and can kill aquatic life if it contaminates water source. There are Environment Agency regulations that must be complied with requiring an impermeable hard surface, 1 metre skirt of hard surface beyond the perimeter walls, and a drainage tank to trap effluent.

The clamp would be constructed accordingly and there would be an underground connection to an existing effluent tank, currently serving the yard, for the new clamp to drain into to as a trap for the effluent. The applicant must notify the EA and engage in their permit regulations and follow any necessary guidance. It does not appear that additional development, not detailed on the plans, would be necessary to comply with these regulations. No conflict with SD4 of the Local Plan.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Acceptable development to support the diversification and expansion of an existing farm enterprise in the other rural areas. The development would be well designed and located with minimal impact on the character and appearance of the area or the amenity of neighbour's within the vicinity. The development would comply with the Local Plan policies listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 30th June 2021

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council