

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**PROPOSAL : ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING PLANT
STORAGE BUILDING TO FORM BIOMASS
BOILER HOUSING AND WOOD CHIP STORE**

**ADDRESS : FELTHOUSE FARM, CHEADLE ROAD,
CHEDDLETON, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST13 7BG**

APPLICANT : JCM GROUP HOLDINGS (UK) LTD

DATE : AUGUST 2021 JOB No.: 2020-2537

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INTRODUCTION

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application which seeks consent for alterations to an existing plant storage building to form biomass boiler housing and wood chip store at Felthouse Farm, Cheadle Road, Cheddleton. The application has been submitted by Sammons Architectural Ltd on behalf of JCM Group Holdings (UK) Ltd and is accompanied by drawing numbers 2020-2537-03, 2020-2537-04C, 2020-2537-05 and 2020-2537-06 which should be read in conjunction with this statement.

This statement analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter, it provides justification for approval of these proposals, primarily on the basis that the proposal would constitute an appropriate and sustainable re use of a rural building within the North Staffordshire Green Belt without harm to the visual amenities of the area, adversely impacting upon highway safety or prejudicing residential amenity.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Felthouse Farm is an existing operational farmstead which is part of the wider Pointons landholding. It comprises of Woodlands Hall, Woodlands Cottage, a number of traditional outbuildings and a range of more modern portal framed structures. The application building, which lies to the north west of the aforementioned complex comprises of a portal framed building constructed from concrete walls clad with steel sheeting and a steel profiled roof. The Pointons factory lies a short distance to the south west with a milling plant to the north east and the site of a recently approved yet unimplemented forestry building immediately to the north.

The site is accessed via the service road for the factory site off the main A523 Leek to Cheadle Road. For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks the partial change of use of an existing plant storage building to form biomass boiler housing and woodchip store. The existing open fronted storage shed will be enclosed with olive green profiled steel sheet cladding to match the existing and a roller shutter door and steel personnel door will be fitted to the south eastern elevation of the building. Concrete panels will be fitted internally to form the wood chip hoppers inside the building and an

internal blockwork wall will be formed to separate the boiler housing from the remainder of the shed. With the exception of 2 small stainless steel flues which will project through the roof of the building no alterations will be made to the size and scale of the existing building.

The existing farm business will supply and harvest the wood chip which will be delivered in a tractor and trailer via the existing internal road network and then blown into the hoppers in the building. The wood chip will then be screw fed into the boiler house where it will provide affordable and energy efficient heating and hot water to the Felthouse Farm complex.

PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 2020 which sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the District until 2033. It is a strategic District wide plan which influences how and where the Staffordshire Moorlands will develop in the future. It sets out what the Council would like to achieve in each of the main towns and the rural areas outside of the Peak District National Park. The most relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan are considered to be policies

- SS1 - Development Principles
- SS1a - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SS10 - Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
- SS11 - Churnet Valley Area Strategy
- SD1 - Sustainable Use of Resources
- SD2 - Renewable / low carbon energy
- SD3 - Sustainability Measures in Development
- DC1 - Design Considerations
- DC3 - Landscape
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- T1 - Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

The revised NPPF was published in July 2021 and replaces the previous NPPF published in March 2012 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. The NPPF is an important material consideration in determining planning applications. It introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development and paragraph 11 states that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Paragraph 11d states:-

"Where there are no relevant development plan policies , or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date granting permission unless:-

- (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole"

The following sections are also considered relevant in the determination of this application:

Section 2 Achieving Sustainable Development

Section 12 Achieving well designed places

Section 13 Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

For the sake of brevity local and national planning policies are not discussed in detail here but referred to in the main body of the statement as required.

ASSESSMENT

The key issues for consideration in assessment of this application are the principle of development, impact upon the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt, landscaping, highway safety and residential amenity.

Principle

For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt as indicated on the Proposals Map of the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. The recently adopted Local Plan does not contain a specific Green Belt policy and the national Green Belt policies as set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework therefore apply.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) includes a section on the management of development in the Green Belt. It confirms at paragraph 147 that, as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development, is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 149 the NPPF confirms that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. It then lists a number of exceptions of which (c) permits the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Further weight is given to the proposal in relation to subsection d of paragraph 150 of the NPPF which states that certain other forms of development, including the reuse of buildings provided that the building are of permanent and substantial construction are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it

In light of the guidance provided above, the key consideration with regards to the proposal is whether or not the building, which is proposed to be changed in use could be regarded as being of permanent and substantial construction. As is evidenced from the submitted plans and the description provided above the building is comprised of a steel portal frame clad in steel sheets and is therefore clearly a permanent and substantial structure. It is therefore considered that the re-use of the building is considered acceptable in principle.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Weight in favour of the proposal is also given to scheme by reference to the NPPF which sets out 12 core principles that identify the roles that the planning system ought to play. The fifth principle states that the green belt should be protected and that the character and appearance of the countryside is important. The guidance contained in the sixth principle outlines that the use of renewable resources should be encouraged.

Paragraph 151 of the NPPF provides further assistance stating that "when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated within increased production of energy from renewable sources."

National policy sets a context for a rapid transition towards a renewable and low carbon future. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF does on to state that the planning system should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability

and improve resilience, encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing building and support renewable and local carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 158 of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should not require applications to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

Policy SD2 of the Local Plan seeks to promote and encourage the development of renewable and low carbon energy resources given the significant wider environmental, social and economic benefits. Tackling climate change is a strategic priority for the council.

Using a biomass boiler provides an incentive to manage the local woodland responsibly and can result in a net improvement to biodiversity. The proposed development would be located within the same ownership as Felthouse Farm, allowing for complete stewardship of the operation. The proposed biomass boiler is considered to be a renewable low carbon energy resource which would displace the need for a typical coal/oil/gas boiler which is commonly used in most residential/domestic situations. It would therefore reduce reliance on fossil fuels and significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the existing Felthouse Farm complex. It would also provide a more affordable solution to high heat and power costs for future generations to come. The community benefit aspect of this development along with its sustainability credentials means that the significant wider environmental, social and economic benefits required by Local Plan policy SD2 are achieved.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

Local Plan Policy SS1 'Development Principles' states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvements of the Staffordshire Moorlands and 'development should be undertaken in such a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surroundings both now and for future generations ...'.

CS Policy SS10 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' comprises the other rural areas containing the countryside and the Green Belt outside of the development and infill boundaries of the towns and villages and therefore is directly relevant to the application site. It seeks 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...'.

The specific design and conservation policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets along with the District's landscape and the setting of its settlements. Policy DC1 sets out design criteria relating to new development to reinforce local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area. Policy DC3 sets out measures to protect and enhance the local landscape and setting of settlement. In detail, Policy DC3 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' states 'The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by: 1. Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment; 2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.

The biomass boiler and wood chip would be housed within the confines of an existing agricultural building . Whilst the proposed development would require the enclosure of the building this would be undertaken using matching facing materials to those on the existing building and as such there would be little visual change in terms of the external appearance of the building, which would still appear as a modern farm outbuilding. Although the introduction of two flues on the building would not be entirely in keeping with a rural building such as this their number is limited and their size and scale modest meaning that they will not appear unduly prominent or harmful to the character and appearance of the building , the application site or the wider surrounding area.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its design and layout and in this respect complies with policy DC1 of the Local Plan and the adopted design SPD.

Impact on residential amenity

National planning policy dictates that at the heart of its core principles, planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This is further re-iterated in CS Policy DC1, which seeks to protect residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping as informed by the Council's 'Space about Dwellings' SPG.

The criterion has consistency with the policies of the NPPF which requires planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely affects (including cumulative effects of pollution on health, living conditions and

the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. "

The application building is currently used as a plant store and vehicle maintenance building operations which themselves would have resulted in some noise in the local area. The greatest noise impact would be on Woodlands Cottage and Woodlands Far to the south west of the site both of which are owned by the applicant. The biomass boilers would be fueled by woodchip and are a very clean energy source with little waste or pollution. Whilst it is anticipated that some fumes and noise will be omitted by the power generated the building is located some distance from any of the neighbouring dwellings and any additional noise needs to be assessed against the background levels associated with the adjacent factory and established use of the building .

They would be linked to a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) which requires them to be tested and an emissions certificate which confirms that they have met the necessary air quality requirements for accreditation to be achieved. Furthermore it should be noted that should any problems with odour, smoke or noise arise with the operation of the boiler there are powers available under the Environmental Health Legislation, which is administered by the Council's Environmental Health Section, to deal with and remedy and statutory nuisance situation. On this basis it is considered that the proposal accords with such requirements in relation to CS Policy DC1 and the NPPF.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states: 'Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe' as is reflected within CS Policy T1 'Development and Sustainable Transport'.

The proposed development would generate little if any additional traffic movements as the wood chip would be harvested from the surrounding woodland provided via tractor and trailer along the existing internal road network which serves the application site and the wider Pointons estate. Given the frequency of deliveries and having regard to the existing use of the site and the relatively low level of traffic movements associated with the proposed use it is considered that the

proposal would be unlikely to have a material adverse impact on existing highway conditions and accordingly there is no conflict with CS policy T1 or with the guidance of the NPPF.

Conclusion

The principle of development is supported by Policy SD2 of the Local Plan and national planning policy guidance which seeks to promote and encourage the development of renewable low carbon energy resources. In addition the partial change of use of the building is considered to be an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and will not ham its openness or character. The proposed does not raise any highway safety issues nor will it harm neighbouring residential amenity and whilst considering the environmental benefits of the scheme, it is considered that the application should be recommended for approval without delay.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the partial change of use of an existing plant storage building to form biomass boiler housing with wood chip store. This form of development is considered to be appropriate having regard to the existing use of the building and the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

AMOUNT

The existing building has a floor area of 285sq metres. The proposed change of use to accommodate the boiler house and wood chip store would equate to 142 sq metres.

LAYOUT

The layout of the existing building and its relationship to other built development has already been determined and is as shown on the submitted block plan drawing number 2020-2537-05.

SCALE

The scale of the development is dictated by the dimensions of the existing building which will not be altered as part of this proposal.

LANDSCAPING

The application building lies within a depression in the landscape and is surrounded by trees and established planting in the wider landscape. No additional planting is proposed as part of this application.

APPEARANCE

The existing building is akin to a typical modern agricultural building constructed from a steel portal frame clad with steel profiled side sheeting. The alterations to enclose the building will be carried out with facing materials to match the existing.

ACCESS

The proposed development would be served by the existing access to Felthouse Farm, off the main A520 Leek to Cheadle road which is a principal highway and a major bus route. No changes to the existing access are proposed as part of this application. The application does not raise issues relating to inclusive access.