

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0606
Valid 17/09/2021

MALTHOUSE FARM LEEK
ROAD
MOORVILLE
CELLARHEAD

ERECTION OF
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING
FOR STORAGE OF FODDER

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Impact on the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area, highway safety and ecology. Would any harm be outweighed by benefits to the enterprise and the local rural economy?

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site consists of a complex of recently constructed farm sheds that replaced partially demolished and dilapidated buildings to the rear of the traditional 19th Century farm house that fronts Cellarhead Road. The existing buildings are portal frame built profile sheet cladding.

There is open farmland countryside to the north, west and east – irregular field parcels enclosed by traditional hedgerow and mature trees. The land to the north provides football fields on open recreational land and immediately to the south the neighbouring Thornfield Farm is adjacent and also owned by the applicant.

PROPOSAL

Erection of a portal framed agricultural building at the above site to be used for the storage of fodder. The building proposed in this application will provide a weatherproof storage area for fodder grown on the farm, which will then be used as feed for the cattle. It will have a footprint of 360 square metres.

The building will have a simple portal framed construction, with concrete panels at its base, and vertical metal cladding atop, finished in green to match the adjacent buildings. The building will be open-ended on its southwest elevation in order to facilitate ease of access from the farmyard.

The supporting statement confirms that the applicant is an established farmer with a land holding of 170 acres (100 acres at Malt House Farm, 40 acres at Park Hall and Hulme and a further 30 rented acres at Rownall). The applicant is involved in beef rearing having 120 cattle.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

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/2019/0309 2 agricultural buildings for beef rearing and implement storage.
Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 11th Nov 2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 11th Nov 2021
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Parish Council: Awaited

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The development would be carried out in the Green Belt. If one of the exceptions listed at paragraph 145 of the NPPF provide for the development, it shall not be inappropriate and harm to the Green Belt would not occur. One of those exceptions is a building for agriculture. The applicant asserts that the building is for the storage of fodder in relation to his cattle rearing business and it is apparently designed accordingly. The development would not be inappropriate and there would be no harm to the Green Belt.

At the heart of the NPPF and the Local Plan there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has overarching objectives to both help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy; and protect and enhance the natural environment. In the rural areas this means that sustainable growth, expansion and development of rural business (specifically agricultural enterprise) should be enabled with the provision of well-designed new buildings. This is reflected in the 'Other Rural Area' strategy set out in the Local Plan Strategy at Policy SS10 which provides only for development that sustains the rural economy by enabling the limited expansion of an existing business

and supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprise; and enhances and conserves the quality and character of the countryside.

Cellarhead is traditionally a farming community and economy and support for this particular enterprise will contribute to the local economy. The main issue for consideration is whether the development's impact on the character and appearance of the area, in this case a farmland landscape with strong hedgerow field boundaries, result in a degree of harm that outweighs the economic benefit from development that supports agricultural business in the rural areas. The assessment therefore, essentially arrives at a balancing exercise between the needs of the enterprise and benefit to rural economy against the impact or harm that would occur to the character and appearance of the countryside.

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the area

Inevitably many of the structures and buildings that farming enterprises rely upon are of functional or utilitarian appearance and size. While there are certain ways of siting, grouping and designing this type of development to minimise its impact, sometimes the needs of an enterprise will mean that development must be absorbed by their surroundings. Consequently, it is common within a rural farming area, for sheds to be apparent and have some presence within the landscape.

The proposed building would not appear within a 'valued landscape' as referred to and protected by paragraph 170(a) of the NPPF because it has no statutory status and has not been identified in the development plan as having specific quality.

Nevertheless, policy DC3 of the Core Strategy says that more generally development should be resisted if it would harm the character of the local and wider landscape and paragraph 170(b) of the NPPF does still require decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

In this case the building would sit very much within the context of the existing grouping of sheds, buildings at Malthouse Farm, and Thornfields Farm adjacent, with the obvious appearance of purpose designed development for modern farming enterprise. The buildings by reason of their design and location would also have an obvious visual relationship and association with the existing portal sheds at Thornfield Farm adjacent. The development therefore, can only have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the countryside area.

It will not appear strident or incongruous within its surroundings, and is of a scale, massing and design that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development would not appear intrusive or prominent within the landscape or conceal or obscure any views of landscape quality or significance.

The submitted proposal is therefore in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan in this regard.

Amenity

The nearest dwellings that are not associated with agriculture are identified as Milbank, 250m to the south west, and Moorville Cottages, 350m to the north east. Neither resident has objected to the application. Both of these properties are either

side of two established livestock farms, Thornfields and Malthouse. Milbank to the south west is the other side of a range of farm sheds that stand between the resident and the development site. Moorville Cottages, the dwellings furthest away and just shy of the 400m 'cordon' used to control livestock buildings otherwise permitted by the GPDO, lie the other side of the local football fields. In any event, the proposed building is to store fodder and not house livestock. The storage requirement is existing and established, the building does not represent an increase to activity or its potential to increase odour or noise. With all of this in mind the development would not have impact on these residents or introduce additional harm over and above living in a farm land setting within the vicinity of working farms.

Highway Safety

The access to Malthouse Farm is pre-existing and has served an established agricultural enterprise for many years. The buildings would essentially reinstate pre-existing floor space and as such the development should not result in significantly intensified use of the highway access. It is noted that the Highway Authority raise no objection to the development proposals.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would not be inappropriate and not harm the Green Belt. There would be no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside and some benefit to the enterprise and economy supporting the expansion and diversification of a farm. Moreover, it is considered that there would be no additional harm to residential amenity or the safe operation of the highway network. Therefore, it is considered that the development complies with the above relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy and therefore should be supported.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 12/11/2021

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council