

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0564
Valid 25/08/2021

FELTHOUSE FARM
CHEADLE ROAD
CHEDDLETON

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

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
The impact on the character and appearance of a the area including the setting of listed buildings.

The impact on residential amenity

The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies on the former 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 comprises a dark green metal sheeted L-shaped building, one part of which is used for vehicle maintenance purposes in connection with the wider commercial agricultural operations and the other part is an open fronted building to store plant in connection with the same business. There is woodland a short distance to the west. The large warehouse building to the north of the site is used for storing the agricultural products of the wider estate and was formerly a livestock building. One of the listed buildings to the south-east was converted into two dwellings. Approval was given under a 'Forestry' Notification of Prior Approval application earlier this year for a new warehouse building to the north-west to be used for the storage and processing of timber to be sold off for biomass fuel.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application to change the use of half of the plant storage part of the building into a biomass boiler room with two woodchip boilers, four calorifier tanks and a forklift vehicle space. There would also be two hoppers which feed the boilers with the woodchip. The purpose of this is to provide energy for heat and hot water to the Felthouse Farm estate which has a mix of residential and agricultural commercial uses. The only external alterations would be insertion of matching dark green metal sheeting over the parts of the building to be used for this purpose,

including steel roller shutter doors into the open bays and also the insertion of two flues (one for each boiler) into the roof (one per roofslope). A Planning, Design and Access Statement has been submitted.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
SD2 – Renewable Energy
DC1 – Design Considerations
DC2 – The Historic Environment

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 12 (Design), 13 (Green Belts), 16 (The Historic Environment) and 17 (Climate Change).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None for the application site but Approval was given for a forestry building for biomass fuel processing under DET/2021/0011 on the neighbouring site to the north-west.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 12/10/21.
Neighbour consultation period ends: 12/10/21.
Press Advert: 15.9

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the open countryside and in the Green Belt. The strategy for the countryside, Policy SS10, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt in order to protect its openness. Paras 149 and 150 of the NPPF list the forms of development which are exceptionally not deemed to be inappropriate development and which would not by definition be harmful to its openness. The change of use of buildings is listed providing the building is “permanent” and “substantial”. I consider the building which is of concrete construction with metal frames and metal sheet finishing would fit into this category and therefore the change of use of part of it would not amount to inappropriate development and would not harm its openness. There appears to be no post-1980 planning history and therefore it is assumed the building has been present for a considerable amount of time and therefore its change of use would not compromise the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The Local Plan and NPPF are both encouraging of development associated with creating renewable energy in the interests of reducing greenhouse gases and tackling global warming. Although the new use may lead to emissions (there would be boilers with flues) the creation of renewable electricity to be used on the premises reduces the pressure on electricity generation elsewhere via unsustainable means.

The difference between the current proposal and the recently approved proposal for biomass development is that the latter proposal is to create storage and processing of timber taken from the wider land within the applicant’s ownership, for sale off the premises to be used as biomass fuel. This new proposal involves the actual creation of renewable energy for use on the premises i.e. wider farmstead by using the same timber taken from the wider land ownership (and possibly processed in the previous approved building). A full application is required (rather than a Prior Approval application) because it involves the change of use of an existing building rather than a new structure.

Overall I consider the principle of the proposal to be acceptable.

Although there are nearby listed buildings, the only external alterations would be the provision of olive green metal sheeting and metal roller shutter doors on the elevations which would match the existing building and also the insertion of two flues although these are very small in relation to the overall size of the building and would not protrude significantly above the roof ridge. There are larger warehouses with larger flues a short distance away on the factories to the south. I therefore consider the proposal would not harm the setting of listed buildings or the wider landscape in general.

With regard to the impact on residential amenity, there are two nearby dwellings on the farmstead and the impact of emissions needs to be taken into consideration. A “Biomass Boiler Form” (amended) was received on 10.11.21, completed by the applicant as required at the request of the Council’s Environmental Health Section and on the basis of the information about emissions, including that they will be discharged out from the building from a flue of sufficient height at a temperature exceeding 100 degrees Celsius, to ensure satisfactory dispersal of pollutants, no

objection is raised. It is therefore considered the living conditions and residential amenities of nearby residents would not be affected by the proposed biomass boiler and that air quality in the area would not be significantly affected. This would also be on the basis that a Flue Gas Re-Circulator (FGR) would be fitted and this can be secured via a planning condition.

Finally, with regard to highway safety and traffic creation, all vehicle movements will be "internal" i.e. deliveries of timber sourced from the wider estate and the "end product" used entirely for the farmstead. It therefore would not lead to any significant increase of vehicle movements on the public highway network other than during the construction phase. There is therefore no impact on highway safety as a result of the proposal.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would be acceptable in principle. It would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area with the safeguard of conditions and would not lead to any detriment to highway safety. The proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan (adopted September 2020) and is in line with the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 24.1.22

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council