

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0710
Valid 05/11/2021

LAND FORMALLY OF
BURNT OAK FARM GUN
HILL ROAD
MEERBROOK

PROPOSED GENERAL
PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL
BUILDING TO HOUSE AND
FEED LIVESTOCK AND TO
STORE FODDER AND
IMPLEMENTS

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area and the landscape
- Impact on residential amenity
- The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is in the countryside to the west of Meerbrook village but is not within the Green Belt. It comprises part of the field on the south side of Gunhill Road a country lane and "C" classified road which runs between Meerbrook and Rushton Spencer to the north-west. The Peak District lies to the north of the lane with the boundary running along it. The field and adjoining field to the east are within the ownership of the applicant. It is surrounded by open land although there is a small cluster of stone farm buildings including farmhouse on the north side of the lane which are outside of the ownership. There are no farm buildings on the two-field plot that the applicant owns. The plot has ample trees and hedges running along all the boundaries including the road-side boundary. There is a field access off the road immediately to the north of the particular application site and some recent unbound gravel surfacing and fencing has been placed around the access to improve it for vehicles. The site and land around it slope downwards mainly towards the east but also towards the south from the southern boundary to a lesser extent. The plot has a size of 3 acres (1.2 hectares).

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for an agricultural livestock and storage building which would be placed in the south-west corner of the plot. It would be a typical modern portal-framed and green metal sheeted farm building with a rectangular footprint and low double-pitched metal sheeted roof with the narrower sides facing north (facing the road) and south. It would have a footprint of 18 x 9 metres, an eaves height of 3.6 metres and a total height from ground to ridge of 4.9 metres. There would be 167 sq.m of space inside the building. Amended plans show the metal sheets extended down to the ground on the more exposed north and east sides, covering the grey blockwork walls at the base which were exposed on those

elevations in the original plans submitted. There would be an opening on the east elevation to allow access to livestock.

A Design and Access Statement has been submitted which explains the following points most relevant to the case:

“This farmland is used to rear cattle and sheep and to produce fodder.

This holding is split over 2 sites, this site being owned and approximately 3 acres and a further 12 acres at a separate site, rented on a 364 rolling contract for grazing and fodder production only.

The applicant currently farms approximately 6 pedigree Hereford Heifers and 17 head of sheep including followers.

This parcel of land is a new purchase and currently the applicant has no buildings on the rented or owned land in which to house and feed cattle and to house and lamb sheep or store the fodder and implements required to manage the holding. These livestock will be loose housed on a solid floor. The building will also be used as a livestock handling area to ensure good welfare of the animals.

Defra regulations state that animals are not meant to poach the ground therefore housing for animals is essential.

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 (S.I. 2007 No. 2078) Schedule 1, paragraph 13, states that air circulation, dust levels, temperature, relative humidity and gas concentrations shall be kept within limits which are not harmful to the animal. All new buildings should be designed with the animals' comfort in mind, and with the aim of preventing respiratory diseases. The buildings should provide enough ventilation throughout the year for the type, size and number of stock to be housed in them.

FABBL requirements state that the space allowance for loose-housed cattle on a solid floor is a minimum of 3.0m² for 200kg cattle, 3.95m² for 300kg cattle, 4.9m² for 400kg cattle, 5.85m² for 500kg cattle, 6.8m² for 600kg cattle and 9.5m² for 700kg cattle.

FABBL requirements state that the space allowance for loose-housed sheep on a solid floor during pregnancy is a minimum of 1.2m² - 1.4m² and 2.0m² - 2.2m² after lambing with lambs at foot up to six weeks of age. Shelter should be provided for sheep especially in cold, wet, windy weather, at lambing and after shearing. Very young lambs are particularly susceptible to hypothermia in cold wet weather.

This building will also be used to store mini Heston bales of hay and straw. By enabling these bales to be stored in the building it will reduce the use of plastics therefore creating a more environmentally friendly holding.

In addition to the above this building will also be used to store implements in which are currently left outside exposed to the elements. This building will also enable the applicant to have shelter to mend any broken down implements. Implements to be

stored include a tractor, trailers, mower, sprayer and general agricultural equipment required to run the holding. This building will enable the equipment to be kept out of view and restricts the chances of the implements being stolen.”

Further information was provided by the applicant via an email dated 17.1.22. This includes a location plan of the 12 acre site that the applicant rents for his farming needs. It is located to the east of Morridge Edge in the Peak District, approximately 5 miles from the application site. It also includes a letter from a vet in support of the building and outlining the health and welfare needs for the livestock that the proposed building would provide.

The email also states the following:

“The applicant has also recently planted 200 Hawthorn plants and has a further 200 to plant. The applicant is happy to plant a row of trees in front of the building to shield it from these views should they be of such a concern. “

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (Adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 – Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE2 – Trees, hedgerows and woodland

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 6 (Economy including the rural economy), 12 (Design).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET/2020/0065: Prior Approval application under Part 6 of the GPDO for an agricultural building. Refused as it did not meet the tests under Part 6 Class B(1).

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 4/1/2022
Neighbour consultation period ends: 4/1/2022
Press Advert: N/A.

Public Comments

One letter of objection has been received from a local resident who considers the size of the building to be excessive in relation to the plot size and is concerned about the visual impact on the landscape and that the building might be used for other purposes in the future.

Parish Council Comments

None.

Local Highways Authority

No objection. There is decent visibility at the site access and the proposal would not lead to significant numbers of vehicle movements. A condition is recommended to apply surfacing 5m back from the road edge at the access.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions relating to livestock buildings.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The principle of agricultural development to support agricultural business or enterprises in the open countryside is acceptable under Policy SS10, the strategy for the rural areas. The applicants farm business could be described as small with 6 cows and 17 sheep and although the plot could also be deemed to be small at 1.2 hectares, he also farms at another larger plot of approx. 5 hectares in the Peak District and which is about 4 or 5 miles from the site. The larger holding is rented hence why the proposed building is to be located on the smaller of the two sites which he owns. He does not currently have any buildings needed for the purpose of livestock farming on either site. Based on the amount of livestock at the farm, in accordance with the DEFRA standards, a maximum of 100 sq.m would be needed within a well ventilated built-for-purpose building. This would leave 67 sq.m spare in the proposed building. However, the building is also required for fodder for the animals and to store farm machinery including a tractor and implements. Given the exact details given by the applicant's agent above and the list of items that need to be stored, I do not consider the scale of the building applied for to be excessive for the farming business and is reasonable and necessary. I consider that sufficient justification has been given for a building of this size and purpose.

With regard to visual impact, although the building would be located at the highest part of the two-field plot which is already quite elevated, the whole plot benefits from strong hedge and tree screening along all four boundaries, including that along the road. It's position within one of the corners is appropriate and it would not be harmfully prominent from short range views from the road or the nearest public footpaths around the plot. It would only be prominent from a short section of the road around the access where there is more of an absence of boundary trees and hedges. The plot itself would be visible from long-range views from the east but the scale and height of the building and the Juniper green cladding for the whole of the exposed north and east elevations would help it assimilate into the rural landscape and it would not appear harmfully prominent from long range views or out of keeping

with the landscape where sporadic farm buildings are dotted around, including more prominent stone buildings. I consider the position and orientation of the building to be the best option possible for the purposes of minimising visual prominence. The narrower side elevation would face the access, where it would be most visible from the road, rather than the larger longer elevations. To place the building on the lowest part of the plot, along the east boundary would increase its visibility from the road when heading westwards up the hill (and would also be too far from the access leading to more visible access works or the churning of the fields) and between west and east it would not relate as well to the perimeter screening (there is none along the boundary separating the two fields).

The applicant has offered to provide more tree/hedge screening and has according to the agent recently planted 200 hawthorn plants and plans to plant 200 more. I consider some further screen planting either side of the access gate would be appropriate to restrict views when travelling along the road (both ways) would be appropriate and a condition will be added requiring this planting. This would not affect visibility of the road at the access as the access gate is set back a few metres from the road. No objection has been raised by the highways authority.

The building is not considered to be close enough to the nearest dwellings (the farmhouse on the opposite side of the road from the eastern end of the plot) to be affected by the proposal in terms of noise, odours or other nuisances, in addition to what is expected on a working agricultural field. However, conditions are recommended by Environmental Health to restrict manure, external lighting and machinery and construction noise.

No details have been provided within the application showing any additional hardstanding or access road / track between the gate to the field and the proposed building. It is assumed therefore that no such hardstanding is required. If hardstanding is required this will be a separate engineering operation requiring planning permission. An informative will be added to the decision notice to highlight this to the applicant.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is acceptable in principle and the building has a scale which is not excessive for the exact agricultural purposes of the building. It would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area with the safeguard of conditions. The proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan and would be in line with the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 11.2.22

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council