

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0824
Valid 16/12/2021

ROCK COTTAGE FARM
THE GREEN
BAGNALL

PROPOSED BUILDING TO
PROVIDE STABLE, FODDER
STORE AND ALPACA
SHELTER.

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- The impact on the character, appearance and amenities of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside and comprises a small part of a field directly to the rear of a stone farmhouse with matching stone domestic outbuildings at the end of a farm track/private lane connected to The Green at Bagnall village a short distance to the north. The house and buildings lie to the west of the track and the site is immediately to the west of these and adjoining the residential curtilage. There is another field within the same ownership, further to the south-west. The property is surrounded by open land and fields and is within the Green Belt. There are trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order along the north-west and south-east boundaries of the field.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a single-storey timber stable building, with felt roof, for alpacas which would include a shelter and fodder store. It would be placed with the back edge alongside the field side-boundary facing north-west. Solar panels are shown on the roof slope facing the site to the south-east. It would have a footprint of 9.0 x 4.8 meters and would have a low dual-pitch roof. A Tree Report is included.

Further information has been received from the applicant's in support of the application and a justification of the need for the building, the most relevant points are as follows:

-“We are a “farm”. Previously stocked with cattle and a milk business and have DEFRA registration.

- We do not want cows as they damage the ground and are very high maintenance, and need specialist handling. We want Alpacas as they are more “delicate” with their impact of hooves on the ground, like sheep. The Alpacas will be kept for wool (to be sold) and to protect lambs. As it is our intention to also keep rare breed sheep (6),

but they are not mentioned as they only need shelter in extreme weather conditions / lambing.

-Alpacas are renowned for being good “guard” animals and would provide protection for sheep/lambs against foxes, if needed. There are numerous foxes that naturally roam the area, supplemented by ‘rehomed’ animals from the city. We have experienced attacks on our chickens previously.

-The Alpacas will be shorn for commercial wool

-Alpacas need protection from extreme weather when they have been shorn, plus a place is needed to carry out animal “husbandry” (injections/hoof care, etc), as we currently do not have anywhere to do this. The sheep need shelter for similar reasons, plus lambing care.

-Alpacas are classed as agricultural “livestock” the same as sheep and cows

-Our fields are registered / licensed as “agricultural” with DEFRA (documented history shows that there were piggeries and a cow shippon at the farm in the past)”

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 – Design Considerations
NE2 – Trees, Hedges and Woodland

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 10.2.21
Neighbour consultation period ends: 10.2.21
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Tree Officer

Did not provide comments.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the countryside and Policy S10, the strategy for the countryside in the District, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF in paras 149 and 150 lists the forms of development which are not considered to be inappropriate and therefore by definition not harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. New buildings for agricultural purposes are listed. The applicant is keeping alpacas mainly for wool production for sale and also to protect other livestock and like goats, also help to maintain fields. I consider the keeping of alpacas for those purposes constitutes agriculture and therefore the proposed building, required to stable and shelter the alpacas, particularly during the Winter months and to provide a secure store for their food, can be classed as an agricultural building and therefore the proposed development is not deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and therefore is not harmful to its openness. The placing in an agricultural field of the building for its intended purposes is acceptable in principle.

With regard to the character and appearance of the area, the building would be placed as close as possible to the complex of existing buildings at the property and this therefore minimises the impact on the open landscape. It would be well screened by the buildings from one direction and well screened by the field boundaries with hedges and large mature trees to the north-west and south-east and would be seen against the backdrop of larger more prominent stone buildings when viewed from the south-west. The building has a conventional timber stables appearance in keeping with the surrounding rural area. The building could be placed alongside and parallel with the outbuilding s to the east but this would mean the shelter would be exposed to the prevailing winds which would affect the alpacas and this is the justification for the particular orientation of the building, perpendicular to the boundary of the residential curtilage and its buildings.

The hedge behind it is rather gappy but the plans show the planting of a new hedgerow along this boundary and this can be secured by way of a condition. With regard to the large mature along the boundary, the foundations for such a small timber building would not be intrusive and would not harm tree roots. Some minor pruning of the dead/diseased lower branches of trees was advised by the Council's Tree Officer. Although no comments have been provided by the Tree Officer in relation to the application, I am satisfied that no harm would result to the trees with the safeguard of appropriate conditions.

There are no nearby dwellings outside of the property and therefore the proposal would not affect residential amenity.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not harm the visual and residential amenities of the area. The proposal would therefore comply with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 15.2.22

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council