

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0315
Valid 09/06/2022

BANKTOP FARM
DILHORNE ROAD
BLAKELEY

THE PROPOSED BUILDING IS A PURPOSE BUILT AGRICULTURAL LIVESTOCK BUILDING, WHICH WILL BE UTILISED TO HOUSE THE CATTLE IN THE HOLDING AT BANK TOP FARM. THE BUILDING WILL BE OF PORTAL FRAME CONSTRUCTION, MEASURING SOME 75FT X 40FT, WITH A 12FT EAVES HEIGHT. THE BUILDING WILL BE FINISHED WITH CONCRETE PANELS TO 2 METERS IN HEIGHT WITH METAL CLAD THEREAFTER.

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Local Plan strategy approach to the provision of development in the other rural areas of countryside.

Impact on the Green Belt, the setting of the heritage assets, and the character and appearance of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Location on agricultural land to the north of a historic farmstead that includes two Grade II listed buildings – the farm house and an L shape barn.

The total unit of ownership forms a kind of pear shape covering around 6.4 ha. Running through the core of the unit, in a curve, there is a track with a highway access to the north and south of the farmstead.

From the south the main farm house sits opposite an open yard area and a sizeable farm shed that is ventilated with Yorkshire boarding. Immediately to the north of the main farm dwelling there are three barn conversion holiday cottages, each with their own curtilages, surrounding a courtyard.

The highway access to the south is signed for Bank Top Farm while the access to the north is signed for the three cottages.

The main farmstead buildings are surrounded by small irregular field parcels that make up the unit.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes the erection of a building stated to be for the housing of cattle livestock. It would be a portal frame building with 2m high concrete base panels with metal cladding above and to the roof. There would be double shuttered doors to each gable opening, facing north west toward open countryside and south east toward the historic farmstead. a new concrete yard area would be provided to the front of each gable. The building would be 23m by 12m and have a ridge height of 5m. The roof will be constructed from cement fibre board and 20 % sky lights. It is proposed that the corrugated roof sheets will be finished in a natural colour.

The building would be built in an area of sloping scrub land between the existing track and hawthorne hedge on the low side, to the north east, and the stone wall that forms the field boundary to the south west on the ridge line. The building and its yard area would require excavation and shelving of the sloping land to create a flat level.

The applicant states that he wishes to establish a livestock holding at Bank Top Farm across the 15.86 acres or thereabouts of grassland. The client plans to have a beef herd consisting of 25 beef cattle. The cattle will be purchased as young stores at between 8-10 months and grown to around 24 months on a grass-based system, with supplementary feeding provided where necessary.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape Character

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET/2020/0035 Erection of Agricultural Bldg. Approval refused, not permitted.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 29/07/2022
Neighbour consultation period ends: 29/07/2022
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Dilhorne Parish Council: Objection. Excessive size, location will be visible from highway in Green Belt area, if approved it should only be used for cattle housing to prevent any future commercial or domestic use.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection

OFFICER COMMENTS**Impact on the Green Belt**

The site is in a 'other rural' area of countryside outside of the towns and villages, in this location the area coincides with and includes the Green Belt. In the Green Belt, the Local Plan strategy for the other rural areas SS10 essentially defers to the tests set out in national policy, it does not in any way make provisions that would override the NPPF approach to development in the Green Belt.

In the Green Belt development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at paragraphs 149 or 150 of the NPPF. One such exception is the provision of a 'building for agriculture'.

The applicant states that in this case the building is required to provide cattle housing for a planned venture to introduce livestock to the unit. However, the building has not been obviously designed for this purpose, it would be closed metal clad shed, without Yorkshire board ventilation or wide openings. In these respects the building provides a generic lockable shed, and this casts some doubt on whether the building is genuinely for agriculture. A building not for agriculture is inappropriate and harmful by definition.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance of Area

The site is in the countryside and an area of local landscape identified in the 2008 Character Assessment as having the qualities and characteristics of an 'Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands' landscape type. Within this landscape, key characteristics can be identified as strongly undulating or sloping landscape, small scale irregular fields bounded by trees and hedgerows, extensive views from higher ground, intimate wooded valleys, and stone buildings and drystone walls.

Under the terms of local plan policy DC3 local landscape will be protected and, where possible, enhanced by resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character.

The building would occupy high ground on a ridge line location with land falling away steeply toward the low ground of the valley to the north east. From the open low ground below the building would appear as a prominent intrusion – obtrusive and exposed without context. Although the building would be cut into the sloping ground below the ridge the roof and top of the building would appear above the brow of the high ground to the south west.

The development, with the necessary excavation to introduce the yard areas and level gradient, would open up and be disruptive to the buffer of sloping scrub land, dry stone wall and hedge line that rounds the southwestern edge of the access track to the north of the farmstead and provide a sense of separation and enclosure between the grouping of buildings and the field parcel to the west and north.

In these regards, the development would be contrary to policies DC1 and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020.



Impact on the setting of the Heritage Assets

The development would be detrimental to the setting and significance of the designated heritage assets (Grade II listed farm house and barn) within the historic 18th Century farmstead to the south. It would dominate the high ground above the farmstead to the north. It would appear overly obtrusive and prominent on approach, along the access track from the north, and disrupt views of the listed barn as it is revealed.

The enclosed and intimate character of the approach track, characterized by stone wall, hedgerow and a bank of scrub to its high side on the south western edge, would be opened up and given over to excavations that would make way for new areas of yard and the proposed building. The harm that would occur to the setting and significance of the designated heritage assets, would not be outweighed by any public benefit, in addition to any benefits to the rural economy or community that might be otherwise supported by 'other rural area' strategy at SS10 of the adopted SMDC Local Plan 2020.



Other Considerations

When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Planning permission should not be granted unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In this case there is harm to the Greenbelt, the character and appearance of local landscape, and the significance and setting of designated heritage assets.

Planning permission can only be granted if there are identifiable benefits or other considerations that clearly outweigh the totality of that harm.

Where the 'other rural area' coincides with the Green Belt, the Local Plan strategy SS10 essentially defers to the tests set out in national policy, it does not in any way make provisions that would override the NPPF approach to development in the Green Belt. Otherwise, it does however, provide for development that has an essential need to be located in the countryside and some support for rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas that would help sustain the rural economy. Sometimes, where development is provided for agriculture, benefits in those regards might outweigh some harm in respect of local landscape, after all functional buildings provided in the countryside seems to be an inevitable necessity of agriculture.

In this case however, the applicant's agricultural interest is proposed and yet to be established, it would be small scale and limited by the land holding. Any agricultural activity and economic benefit would be limited. Overall any benefit to the rural economy through agricultural activity would be limited and would not clearly outweigh any of the harms, either considered individually or in totality, that are identified above.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

On balance of probability the development would be inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It would be harmful to the landscape and the character and appearance of the area; and there would be detriment to the setting and significance of the designated heritage assets (Grade II listed buildings within an 18th Century Farmstead). Contrary to SMDC Local Plan Policies SS10, DC1, DC2, and DC3 and the terms of the NPPF.

These harms would not be outweighed by any benefit to the rural economy or community that might be otherwise supported by 'other rural area' strategy at SS10 of the adopted SMDC Local Plan 2020, or indeed by any other apparent consideration.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 4/8/2022

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council