

PLANNING STATEMENT

Client: **Mr. L. Willis.**

Location: **CHERRY BARN, CHERRY LANE, CHEADLE ST10 4QS.**

Proposal: **Retrospective application for partial change of use of an agricultural building to data storage including a messroom/office; the construction of an extension; the installation of solar electric roof panels; the replacement of profiled metal and brick walls with brick; and other external alterations together with an application for the proposed change of use of the rest of the building, including the extension, to data storage involving the installation of new fenestration; the installation of solar panels on another part of the roof; the construction and installation of 8 ground-mounted solar electric panels; and other external alterations.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Please see the front page of this statement for the full description of the application which seeks permission for a mixture of retrospective and proposed development.
- 1.2 This statement is submitted in support of an application for retrospective permission and the proposed development for alterations and extensions to, and a change of use of a farm building to a use for digital data storage; a use which does not fit comfortably into a Use Class. The two alternatives are Use Class B8 or “Sui Generis” (‘of their own kind, in a class by itself’). It is considered that the latter is the correct Use Class in the case of this application.

2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND BUILDING

The site

- 2.1 Cherry Barn is a smallholding with a house and portal frame cattle shed/brick garage. The house is a converted former farm building situated to the north of a stoned track running east to west from Cherry Lane leading to Cherry Barn and another nearby house to the south of the track. A farm track continues westwards from the houses. A public footpath runs west from Cherry Lane along both the stoned track and the farm track from Cherry Lane to the north-eastern side of Cheadle.
- 2.2 The cattle shed and attached brick building are located north of the house and the application site comprises the cattle shed, the brick building and a proposed extension at the northern end of the cattle shed.
- 2.3 The application site lies in the south-east corner of a roughly triangular pasture field. There is a small stream on the northern field boundary along which are several occasional trees and a low hedge. The western field boundary consists of a low hedge with scattered trees in the hedge-line. The immediate eastern boundary consists of four hawthorn trees, relicts of a former hedge. These are to remain. No tree survey has been submitted because the trees will remain, and the development does not and would not affect them.

3. BACKGROUND

Planning History

- 3.1 The construction of the portal frame, 3-bay, agricultural building was approved in October 2010 (Application number SMD/2010/0572).
- 3.2 A planning application (No. SMD/2016/0547) for the construction of an enclosure containing 5 No. 0.4 MW bio-fuelled electricity generators a brick switch room building, the erection of a 3-metre-high acoustic fence, a fuel tank and a separate power switch, the construction of a turning head and the installation of an underground electricity cable was refused on the 8th of December 2016.
- 3.3 Photograph No. 1 below shows the agricultural building as built. The photograph was taken on the 9th of March 2016.

Photograph No. 1 - The south elevation of the agricultural building



- 3.4 A full planning application (No. SMD/2017/0243) for the extension to and change of use of the existing cattle shed from agriculture to a peaking plant to provide

electricity to the national grid at periods of peak demand and installation of an underground electricity cable was approved on the 29th of September 2017. This permission contained several pre-commencement conditions.

- 3.5 Changes in the legislation relating to fuel and energy production meant that it is no longer viable to change the use of the building to a peaking plant. However, before the permission expired the client began work on its construction including the removal of the caravan, the container, and the removal of the fence from the site as required by condition no. 8 on the approval.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This application is part retrospective and part proposed development.

Retrospective development

- 4.2 The retrospective part of the application seeks approval for the following works that have been carried out: -

- Change of use of the south-eastern part of the building to a mess room and water storage room.
- Extension at the north-western end of the building. This extension was approved as part of the permission for the peaking plant.
- Solar electric panels on the roof of the southwest elevation.
- Brick pillars around the steel portal frame uprights.
- New eaves-to-floor windows and door to the mess room.
- The replacement of the metal cladding on the northeast and northwest elevation walls with brick. The replacement of the metal cladding with brick was approved as part of the permission for the peaking plant.

- 4.3. Please see Drawing no. 6205/002 which shows the existing building layout and elevations.

Proposed development - change of use:

- 4.4 It is proposed to use the building for digital data storage powered by the existing and new solar panels on the roof and in the field to the north of the building. The mess room and office, and the heating and water storage room would remain. The central two bays would house the data storage equipment, battery storage, and the photovoltaic converter. The extended part of the building would house a standby

generator and be used as a workshop and for storage. Details of the change of use are shown on Drawing number 6205/003.

Proposed operational development

4.5 The proposed works are: -

- New solar electric panels on the north-eastern elevation. See Drawing no. 6205/003.
- Eight new ground-mounted solar panels situated to the north of the building. Details of these panels are shown on Drawings no. 6205/005 and 6205/006.
- New eaves-to-floor windows to the data storage room. See Drawing no. 6205/003.
- A small new window on the north-east elevation. See Drawing no. 6205/003.
- A metal garage-type door to the workshop. See Drawing no. 6205/003.
- Connection to the electricity supply.

4.6. The proposed data storage unit would be managed and run as required by the applicant and his partner, who live next door at Cherry Barn. The site would typically provide 25-30 hours of work each per week for each of them; roughly equivalent to 1.5 full-time workers.

4.7. *Scale:*

- Total site area 1,013 square metres.
- The Area devoted to the Ground Mount Solar within the red line is 967 m².
- The Area of the Cowshed and extension is 146 m²
- The Total Area within the red area is 1624 m². This includes the access and the connection to the electricity supply.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1. The Development Plan for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in respect of this application consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) supported by Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance. The latter can be material considerations when considering planning applications.

5.2. Whilst the Development Plan takes precedence when considering applications national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) can also be a material consideration.

5.3. The site lies in open countryside to the east of Cheadle on the subject to policy SS10 (Other Rural Areas Strategy). Other policies addressed in this statement are: -

- Policy SS 1 Development Principles.
- Policy E 1 New Employment Development.
- Policy DC 1 Design Considerations.
- Local Plan Policy SD 1(4) - Sustainable Use of Resources.
- Local Plan Policy SD2 - Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy.
- Local plan policy SD3 - Sustainability Measures in Development.

5.4. In the interest of brevity, relevant policies, Including NPPF policies, are not discussed here but as appropriate in the next section.

6. THE CASE IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION

6.1. The applicant's case is that: -

1. Many of the changes for which retrospective permission is sought are in accord with planning policy as evidenced by the fact they were approved in the planning permission for the peaking plant.

6..1.1 For instance, the brick walls. The proposed wall materials for the peaking plant (Application No. SMD/2017/0243) were brick to replace the agricultural building's metal cladding and brick.

6..1.2 The roof materials – dark green profiled metal sheeting – remain the same as on the former agricultural building.

2. The changes in appearance and layout of the existing building from the approved peaking plant design and layout improve the appearance of the building and with Local Plan Design Policy DC1.

6..2.1 These changes include the fenestration on the south west elevation, the metal garage style door on the northern extension, the removal of the louvres on the north western elevation, the removal of the louvre on the north east elevation, the solar panels on the south western facing roof; the deletion of two flues/chimneys.

3. The proposed works and change of use of the building to data storage would improve the appearance of the building and make effective and useful use off a building no longer required for agricultural purposes and as a peaking plant.

4. The proposal includes the provision of renewable sources of energy – photovoltaic panels - in line with the Council's desire in Local Plan Policy SD2 - to meet the District's future energy needs using renewable energy.

- 6..4.1 Policy SD2 states, amongst other things, that “For all other forms of renewable energy the Council will support small- and large-scale standalone renewable or low-carbon energy schemes subject to considerations including landscape impact.
- 6..4.2 Both the retrospective and the proposed solar panels together are small scale development. Nonetheless, the applicant would be happy to discuss with the Council appropriate landscaping to mitigate the landscape impact of the solar panels.

5. The solar panels would save carbon in line with Local Plan Policy SD3.

6. The demand for data storage space is likely to continue in the future.

7. The development would not attract extra traffic.

8. The combined development would bring environmental benefits in the form of reduced carbon and making use of redundant building and would be sustainable. The development would provide 2 part-time jobs equivalent to approximately 1.5 full time workers.

9. The development would have no adverse impact on the residential amenity of either Cherry Barn or the other nearby residential/ holiday premises.

The digital storage equipment produces no discernible noise and the emergency generator, if the Council consider it appropriate, could be further enclosed.

8. CONCLUSION.

- 8.1. The development is an appropriate and acceptable use in the countryside. It makes use of an existing redundant building, it brings environmental benefits, enables the applicant in his wife to work next door to home as required, and is a sustainable use creating no noise and attracting no material increase in traffic.