

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0412
Valid 22/07/2022

SHARPCLIFFE HALL
BRADSHAW LANE
IPSTONES

PROPOSED ERECTION OF
SINGLE STOREY PENT ROOF
AGRICULTURAL STORAGE
BARN.

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development in this rural location
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on the setting of listed buildings
The impact on the ecological value of the site
The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is in the countryside about a mile to the north-west of Ipstones and comprises part of the Sharpcliffe Estate, a large historic residence and former farm with traditional farm buildings (“Home Farm” – currently being converted into dwellings, an agricultural workers dwelling and holiday lets but there is also a modern portal framed farm storage building), a further small detached dwelling, fields, areas of woodland and a very long access drive (recently re-surfaced) with entrance gates off Bradshaw Lane to the east. The site itself comprises part of a large yard or hardstanding area next to a recently extracted land bank a short distance to the north-west of the residence buildings (Sharpcliffe Hall), which are Grade II listed and the site could be regarded as being within the listed residential curtilage. A Public Right of Way runs past the site which also runs past Sharpcliffe Hall and along the access drive to the gated entrance. To the north-west of the site this continues into open fields outside of the property. The site is not in the Green Belt but is in the Churnet Valley.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application and accompanying Listed Building Consent application for an “agricultural storage” building to be placed on the site. It is a resubmission of a previous application which was recommended for refusal at the December 2021 Planning Applications Committee but the application was withdrawn.

The building would have the same siting, depth (10.0m), max height (4.6m at the front) and mono-pitch roof form (sloping downwards towards the rear wall) as the previous. However, the width has been reduced 5.2 metres from 29.6 to 24.7 metres and as a result would be 5.2 metres further from the listed buildings to the south-east (approx. 10 metres from them). The materials would also change from green metal cladding (including the vehicle doors) to timber cladding (including the vehicle doors)

everywhere except the 1.0 metres concrete plinth at the back. The number of doors would be reduced from six metal roller shutter doors to one standard side-hung barn-type door. The roof materials would remain with dark green corrugated cladding.

The plans with this new application are also amended from those originally submitted with this current application with included three green metal roller-shutter doors, and a blockwork plinth the whole way around the building.

The new application includes a Revised Design, Access and Heritage Statement and “Rural Crime Report 2021”.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 6 (Economy), 12 (Design), 15 (Natural Environment) and 16 (Historic Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2021/0654: Previous application for agricultural storage building on the site. Withdrawn.

DET/2021/0020 Agricultural storage barn. Prior approval required 01/06/2021

SMD/2016/0322: Proposed mixed use development comprising of conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to form three open market dwellings, 1 agricultural dwelling and a holiday complex comprising of four letting units. Existing outbuildings to be used for car parking. Approved and being implemented.

SMD/2014/0023 Proposed agricultural buildings
Refused 04/04/2014

SMD/2014/0843 Erection of agricultural building (re-submission of
SMD/2014/0023)
Approved 24/02/2015

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13/9/22.

Neighbour consultation period ends: 13/9/22.

Press Advert: 17.8.22.

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Support.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions.

Conservation Officer

I have no objection to this application, there will be minimal impact imposed on Sharpcliffe Hall and therefore less than substantial harm will arise from this proposal.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

Ramblers Association

Footpath Ipstones 33 runs by the side where development will take place. This path must be kept safe for P.R.O.W to use during and after development.

Peak & Northern Footpaths

We note that the PROW Ipstones 33 is close to the proposed site. Use of the PROW, and the safety of users must not be affected by the development, nor during the work taking place.

OFFICER COMMENTS

This is a resubmission for the storage building following the previous application for it being withdrawn in December 2021. The strategy for the countryside, Policy SS10, allows agricultural buildings in principle in rural areas providing the impact on the landscape and appearance of the area is acceptable and does not lead to any significant traffic or other environmental harms e.g. to residential amenity or the ecological harms. To achieve this, it should be demonstrated that there is an agricultural need for the building or to demonstrate that a rural location is essentially required for such a development and that it cannot be provided within the built up

areas of the District. Furthermore, the scale should be limited to no more than is needed for the rural business or farm to operate.

The previous submission was to be recommended for refusal on the grounds of inadequate agricultural justification, the impact on listed buildings (including insufficient heritage statement) and due to the “industrial” appearance and design of the building, harm to the appearance of area and landscape particularly as it would have been easily visible from the adjacent public footpath which runs through the estate.

With this new application significant changes have been made to the scheme. It was previously considered that agricultural justification was lacking. It was apparent from the previous application that the specific use of the building was for the storage of vehicles and machinery connected with the land and also the storage of hay bales, as photo's of all the items to be stored were provided and included tractors, trailers, plough-like machinery, quad vehicles, diggers and dumpers and the case officer considered that much of the machinery was not purely “agricultural”. The case officer also commented that no details were given of existing buildings on the estate which could be used for this purpose instead. The new application was originally submitted with no further details or justification. The new Design, Access and Heritage Statement just replicated the previous document insofar as agricultural justification was concerned. When I visited the site in October 2022, I could not determine any agricultural operations on the land and no livestock were being kept, although the applicant does accept that whilst the previous owner did not farm the land it is his intention to start farming the land and that he needs a suitable storage building for this purpose.

From the information submitted, it appears the building would be used more for the purposes of storing items associated with the management of what is a large estate with areas of woodland and ecological interest rather than any agricultural storage purposes. But this is not unacceptable in a rural location. It is clear that on an estate this size, some form of safe and secure indoor plant and machinery storage would be required on the land to be managed and as this is in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and the rural landscape, I would still consider a storage building in connection with management of rural land, even if not agricultural, to be acceptable in principle.

The next test is whether or not there are any other existing buildings on the estate that are disused or surplus to requirements that would alleviate the need to provide a new building which would have an impact on the appearance of the area. Additional information from the agent reveals that all the items to be stored in the proposed buildings are currently being stored on the estate inside a modern agricultural storage building at Home Farm, a short distance to the south-east of Sharpcliffe Hall. So why is there a need for a completely new building for this purpose? The existing storage building happens to be very similar in scale, height and footprint to the one proposed. The agent has clarified that the owner wants to use this building for the storage of biomass fuels for an existing biomass boiler which would provide heating for the whole estate. As biomass is a clean and renewable energy source, the re-use of the building is acceptable as planning policies encourage renewable energy.

It needs to be further explored if there are any other buildings on the estate which could be used for either plant and machinery storage, or indeed biomass fuel storage to alleviate the need for a new building of equal size to the existing. The only other suitable buildings of similar size are the traditional red brick buildings of Home Farm. However, all of these are currently being converted into dwellings and holiday lets i.e. the 2016 conversion planning permission is being implemented.

I therefore consider that the justification for the new building of the size proposed has now been demonstrated, although a condition should be applied to restrict the use of the existing agricultural building to its intended acceptable purposes of biomass storage in order for the development of the estate to be controlled and prevent further pressure for new buildings at some stage in the future.

Turning to the visual impact of the building and the particular design and form of the building which was objected to last time, I consider the location within the estate to be the best part of the estate for a new building in terms of the level of screening within the landscape. It would be screened from the north by the embankment, from the east by the estate buildings and from the south by woodland although would still be visible when approaching Sharpcliffe Hall along the footpath from the west. The building would also not interrupt the line of sight of the listed buildings when approaching along the path as the visible part of the building from the west, the smaller flank elevation made of timber appears visually detached from the listed buildings and does not compete, due to partly to the relatively less solid recessive materials. It would achieve subservience with the buildings and it should also be noted that the closest parts of the listed buildings to the proposed building and those that would first be seen when approaching along the footpath would be the more modern curtilage structures which do not contribute positively to the grandeur of the main listed hall and this includes a bland flat roofed structure closest to the site and path. The reduction in width also moves the building twice as far from the listed building than previous.

The design changes along with the reduction in scale include replacing the metal with timber and just as crucially the industrial-type metal roller shutter doors have been replaced with one more traditional timber barn-type door. The result is a building which has a far more rural appearance and the use of timber also has a less intrusive visual impact than metal. A condition can be imposed to secure the planting of trees either side of the building to screen the remaining exposed parts of the embankment extraction.

The Conservation Officer does not object to the application and comments that "there will be minimal impact imposed on Sharpcliffe Hall and therefore less than substantial harm will arise from this proposal." In light of her lack of objection and conclusion that there would be minimal impact I consider that, in fact, there would be "no harm" rather than "less than substantial harm" to the heritage assets and on that basis, it is not necessary to consider the test of public benefits under the NPPF.

In terms of the particular impact on the wider landscape and in consideration of whether or not there are better parts of the estate in which to locate the building, the only other workable alternative would be to extend the current modern building at Home Farm, which is in a more central location within the estate and also much

further from the listed building. Sometimes the extension of an existing building can be preferable to a completely new building in visual impact terms, but the required doubling of the existing building would lead to encroachment into an open field to the east as expansion to the west would be closer to the traditional barns being converted into holiday lets which would not be desirable and lead to noise impacts. This part of the estate is also more exposed, particularly from the south where fields slope downwards towards the south and it would still be possible to view the building from the north despite the presence of trees. From the long driveway it would either be screened or seen against the backdrop of the existing building. An extension to this building would also be just as close to the public right of way than the proposed siting. Elsewhere, further away from the public right of way, the only other places available would be in more exposed fields. Overall, I consider the chosen location for the building to be best available in terms of landscape impact due to the level of screening on three sides.

With regard to highway safety, access would be via a long and wide private driveway recently surfaced and accommodates traffic from the estate including the proposed holiday lets and dwellings and can accommodate large agricultural and maintenance-type vehicles. As the proposed building is store existing plant, machinery and vehicles currently being kept on the estate, there would be no significant increase in traffic on the highway network and therefore no detriment to public highway safety.

With regard to ecological impacts, there may have been some impact from the extraction of the embankment although this took place over 20 years ago and it cannot be established if any ecological harms or tree loss occurred. The proposed building would not lead to any further works affecting the embankment and I consider the planting of new trees on the areas of hardstanding either side of the building to screen the remaining visually exposed parts of the extracted embankment would lead to net biodiversity gain.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

With this new resubmitted application, further information has come to light which would satisfactorily justify the need for a building in a rural location. It is not an agricultural building as such but would appear to be more in connection with the management of a rural and historic estate to the benefit of its character and appearance and wider rural landscape and there is also sufficient justification that a new building is needed given the existing and proposed uses of current buildings on the estate. The principle is acceptable and significant design improvements have been made to result in a proposal which would be in keeping with the rural area and not harm the visual amenities of the area including the Churnet Valley or the setting of listed buildings, due to its siting, materials, form, scale and design. The amended proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 19.12.22

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council