

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0216
Valid 27/04/2023

EASING FARM EASING
LANE
THORNCLIFFE
LEEK

PROPOSED PURPOSE BUILT
SLURRY TOWER

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of development
- The impact on the character and appearance of the rural area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within the open countryside (but not within the Green Belt) over a mile to the east of Leek and half a mile to the south of Thorncliffe village and comprises part of a field next to a farm and farm buildings immediately to the east. The farm is on the south side of Easing Lane, a country lane leading up to Morridge Edge and which provides the access to the farm which is on land which slopes upwards towards the Morridge Edge to the east. The grouping of farm buildings (which include a farmhouse and mostly modern farm buildings) is surrounded by open land and fields. A Public Right of Way runs immediately to the east of the site.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a large circular green metal slurry storage tank to replace a smaller existing slurry tank a short distance to the north-east and which would store slurry from two large recently extended modern farm buildings on the south and west edges of the farm and which are adjacent to the site. It would have diameter of 28.2 metres and a height of 5.6 metres.

A supporting statement was submitted which states the following:

The applicants have 140 dairy cows and 90 young stock replacements. The applicants also have a flock of 100 ewes lambing at 180%. The applicants farm 350 acres or thereabouts of grassland. The slurry store will be used to contain the slurry from adjacent cattle housing building. DEFRA require farms to have adequate slurry storage to mitigate the risk of pollution. The current slurry store is at the end of its lifespan.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Sections 12 (Design).

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted Sep 2020).

DC1 Design Considerations.

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

The most recent application relating to the site is as follows:

SMD/2019/0551: Extension to farm building. Approved and built.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 14.6.23

Neighbour consultation period ends: 14.6.23

Press Advert: 16.5.23 (due to the presence of a PROW).

Public Comments

None.

Parish Council

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to a standard condition applied to slurry tanks.

SCC Public Rights of Way Section

Public Footpath No. 6 Tittsworth Parish runs immediately east of the proposed application site. The granting of planning permission does not constitute authority for any interference with the public right of way and associated items - or its obstruction (temporary or permanent).

The Ramblers Association.

Regarding the proposed build of a slurry tank, P.R.O.W Tittsworth 6 runs very close to where the development will take place. This must not affect the rights of the public in using the path.

Severn Trent Water

No objection and no conditions need to be applied.

COMMENTS

The principle of the development which helps assist with the operation of a large farming business in this rural location is acceptable.

With regard to the impact on the character and appearance of the area, this is replacing an existing slurry tank which is at the “end of its life” and a larger replacement is needed as the farm has recently expanded and would collect slurry from large recently expanded livestock buildings which are the largest buildings at the farm and also it is claimed by the applicant a larger tank is needed in accordance with modern farm regulations aimed to reduce the impact on the environment.

The proposed structure, placed to the east of the farm buildings would be prominent in views a considerable distance to the west and when travelling along Easing Lane towards Morridge Edge although would be seen against the backdrop of modern farm buildings of a similar height but with a contrasting colour (the buildings are mostly light grey). The tank would also be visible from the north and south across the landscape.

A better screened location was explored in order to minimise the impact on the landscape. Three options were suggested to the applicant. The first, on the siting of the current tank to be replaced was discounted as there was not enough space for a larger tank in this location and the current tank would still need to be present and operational whilst the new tank was being constructed. The second, to the south of the farmhouse curtilage where it would be better contained within the group of buildings and screened by trees and buildings to the north and west and seen against the backdrop of buildings from the east and south, was discounted as this would be on higher ground than the new livestock buildings to the west and such structures have to be on lower ground in order to allow the flow of slurry into the tank. The third option was to locate it immediately to the south of the new farm buildings on existing yard areas but this is where cattle exit the buildings to access the fields and the current underground slurry system is directed towards the north and not the south. The current proposed siting is next to the northern part of the building.

The reasons for discounting the other suggested alternative locations are accepted. The siting put forward is also on lower ground than the building it serves in order for slurry to enter via gravity and not pumps which would be costly and also more harmful to the environment as an industrial sized pump is required and would also lead to noxious gases and there is also the risk of breakdowns and difficult maintenance. However, the applicant has offered to provide tree screen planting around the tank and I consider a condition should therefore be placed on any planning permission requiring this in order to minimise the impact on the landscape and appearance of the area.

It is also considered prudent to attach a condition requiring the redundant time expired slurry store to be removed from the site within 12 months of the new one becoming operational.

The siting of the building would not interfere with the nearby public footpath to the east. Although SCC comment that the path is being obstructed by a building approved in 2008 and therefore should be diverted via an application, this is a separate matter to this current planning application.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Despite the tank being very large and which would be prominent, further information provided shows it to be positioned in the best available place in terms of visual impact and the operation of the farm and tree planting required by a condition would also help to reduce the impact. It would still benefit from some screening from the buildings particularly from the higher ground to the east and it is less visually exposed on the lower ground where it would also not exceed the height of the adjacent large modern barns which it would be seen against. The proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 22.6.23

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council