DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0314 **Valid 28/06/2023**	**LAND SOUTH WEST OF UTTOXETER ROAD DRAYCOTT IN THE MOORS**	**PROPOSED GENERAL PURPOSE STORAGE BUILDING** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on residential amenity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies on the southern edge of the small village of Draycott in the Moors which is washed over by the Green Belt. It comprises part of a field next to a number of industrial warehouses on backland plots behind a row of houses which face Uttoxeter Road, the main road which runs through the village, to the north. There is a couple of small industrial premises reached by private access roads connected to the main road and the site belongs to one of the commercial businesses, a weedkiller firm which has one light grey warehouse to the south-east of the site at the end of the access road. The rest of the fields lies to the west and south where more open countryside lies. There are industrial buildings to the north and east. There is a yard area belonging to another industrial firm immediately to the north of the site. Within the site there is a small outbuilding. The access road is included within the red line application site up to the main road to the north.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a new light grey metal-sheeted storage warehouse building. This would have a dual-pitched but oblique and uneven roof form to allow solar panels to be placed on the south roof slope. The buildings footprint is 12.2 x 6.1 metres. It would have a max height of 6.1 metres. It would have two large roller vehicular entrance doors on the south elevation which would have an existing field track and a further similar door on the east side elevation adjacent to the access road.

A planning statement accompanies the application and explains the following:

Shires Weedfree has over 35 years of experience providing a high quality, professional weed control management service throughout the Midlands for the domestic, equestrian and industrial sectors. They also provide sterilisation services for the floors of poultry houses this is done by floor sterilizing, fogging with Formaldehyde/Killcox or disinfecting with an Orchard Sprayer.

As a result of the chemicals they are licenced to use, undercover storage is required for the machinery that is used to carry this kind of work out. South Staffordshire Water carry out regular visits to the business and have made recommendations that any machinery that is used with such chemicals should be securely stored undercover so as to avoid any chemicals leaking from the machinery into the environment and water table.

The applicants currently do not have enough secure indoor storage space at their premises to fulfil these recommendations.

This proposal will enable the undercover storage of equipment and enable the business to be more environmentally friendly.

The building will be used for general storage in association with the business carried out by Shires Weedfree. It will be used to store the sprayers used for cleaning and sterilising poultry sheds and the other equipment used for weed control management.

By enabling these items to be stored undercover will ensure minimal chemical exposure to the surround land. The building will also be secure so as to deter any attempted theft of machinery and equipment.

Access to the building will be from existing vehicular roadways to and around the premises. The applicant does not seek to increase the number of roadways.

Two separate emails were also submitted by the agent (on 23.8.23 and 13.9.23) giving further details and justification for a separate building (in addition to the existing buildings at the property):

The building footprint will not remove any of the grassland behind and will sit on an area that is has already been used for the storage of equipment and the applicant is also wanting to plant multiple trees in that grassed area to encourage the return of wildlife.

The building will be purpose built for the storage of the spraying equipment that South Staffs Water has concerns about being exposed due to the chemicals used by the applicant to carry out his business and them being exposed to the environment and possible ground contamination should any of them form leakages.

The building needs to be frost proof and separate from the existing building again at the request of South Staffs Water to ensure that other equipment and items are not contaminated.

The applicant has said it is not possible to extend the existing building as per your suggestion as this would not be enough space for his requirements, it would also restrict his access to the building and any turning area for the vehicles with trailers would be removed, making it nearly impossible to access the building as required and also manoeuvring on site without the need to use the neighbouring site (which is currently not possible due to other issues).

Please see below the items to be stored within the building:
Five spraying machines each the size of a small car and ancillary equipment will be housed and 300 litres of chemical and disinfectant will also be stored along with a bio filter.

The landscaping being proposed will see the majority of the open field behind planted with a copse of trees.

A letter was received from South Staffordshire Water (dated 14.9.23) in support of the application which states the following:

I am a Catchment Advisor for South Staffordshire Water, meaning I am responsible for the acceptance and jusfication of the funding going towards the construction of the aforementioned spray store. Part of the funding going towards the spray store is coming from the South Staffordshire Water SPRING grant scheme. This scheme provides funding for landowners, to enable them to make on-farm infrastructural improvements.

The purpose of the construction is to allow an integrated area where the entire process of filling cleaning, and storing material and machinery, which is used in the crop spraying process, can take place. This is deemed to be one of the highest risk actions taking place on a farm, both for the operator's safety, and environmentally. Even a small spillage in an inadequate store or washdown area can rapidly leach into groundwater or surface water and cause a substantial point source issue. The site in which the farm is based is a high-risk "focus catchment" for pesticides. It drains into the river Blithe which feeds the Blithfield reservoir which is used by South Staffordshire Water as a drinking water abstraction reservoir. The designation as a focus catchment is due to previous pesticide reduction drivers put in place by the Environment Agency.

A vital aspect of the construction of sprayer washdown area is ease of access for the operator, and to any machinery, as well as suitability to the task at hand. This is where the proposed change by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is not suitable for what we are looking to achieve. The current proposal, whereby the spray store will be attached to an existing shed, will result in chemicals being transported across the yard and into the existing fill area to be used. This creates a spill risk in a non-bunded yard area. It will also leave the shed that the extension is to be added to redundant, as building across the north face of it will block off the doors and prevent reasonable access, which is purposely something the original proposal does not do. The original proposal increases the available yard area, as the old washdown area would be moved into an indoor area, while also meaning the used chemicals will never be taken out of the bunded area. Therefore, as per the original proposal, the movement of this entire system to an indoor, integrated area has additional benefits. It allows for adequate bunding, insulation and protection from the weather, both for the operator, and stored chemicals. The machinery stored there will also be protected from the weather. This protection can extend the lifespan of sensitive parts and reduce the risk of spills caused by weather damage.

The original plans submitted were for a higher mono-pitch building with a max height of 7.2 metres (the height of the back wall) and with black metal cladding materials. These plans were amended in favour of a lower light grey building with dual pitch roof.

The application forms confirm there will be no increase in staff as a result of the proposal.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy
E1 - New Employment Development
DC1 – Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 6 (Economy), 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 1.8.23
Neighbour consultation period ends: 1.8.23
Press Advert: N/A.

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None received.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions for new industrial buildings.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt and Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paras 149 and 150 of the NPPF list the forms of development which are exceptionally not

inappropriate in the Green Belt. It does not list new buildings for commercial/industrial purposes and the part of the site where the building is located is also not "previously developed land" (another exception which can allow a new building in the Green Belt). The proposed building is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt and by definition in the NPPF, is harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. The NPPF also states that such development shall not be allowed unless there are "very special circumstances" which are considered to outweigh the level of harm to the Green Belt.

I consider there are such "very special circumstances" with this proposal. Although the option of extending (northward) the current building instead was explored (non-disproportionate enlargements of existing buildings are not inappropriate in the Green Belt), South Staffordshire Water requires a separate building and not an extension to a building, to prevent possible contamination of other items being stored at the premises and the risk of spills resulting in ground contamination and subsequent pollution of watercourses.

The key points made by South Staffs Water in justifying the need for a separate building, are reproduced below:

The purpose of the construction is to allow an integrated area where the entire process of filling cleaning, and storing material and machinery, which is used in the crop spraying process, can take place. This is deemed to be one of the highest risk actions taking place on a farm, both for the operator's safety, and environmentally. Even a small spillage in an inadequate store or washdown area can rapidly leach into groundwater or surface water and cause a substantial point source issue.

The current proposal, whereby the spray store will be attached to an existing shed, will result in chemicals being transported across the yard and into the existing fill area to be used. This creates a spill risk in a non-bunded yard area. It will also leave the shed that the extension is to be added to redundant, as building across the north face of it will block off the doors and prevent reasonable access, which is purposely something the original proposal does not do. The original proposal increases the available yard area, as the old washdown area would be moved into an indoor area, while also meaning the used chemicals will never be taken out of the bunded area. Therefore, as per the original proposal, the movement of this entire system to an indoor, integrated area has additional benefits. It allows for adequate bunding, insulation and protection from the weather, both for the operator, and stored chemicals.

On the basis of the above information, I consider that the reasons for the separate building amount to significant environmental benefits i.e. in preventing ground and water pollution and this is also linked to economic benefits as the building is required in connection with the effective operation of a business and therefore help keep it viable. I consider these benefits outweigh the particular level of harm to Green Belt openness and other possible harms.

However, given the very special circumstance on which it is predicated it is necessary to limit the use of the building to that described in the application and also the first occupancy to the applicant's business. A condition should also be applied

requiring the building to be removed to restore the openness of the Green Belt should it ever become redundant.

The building is not excessive in size given the items listed by the applicant that are required to be stored (and where there is no current spare capacity). The new spraying machinery to help the firm operate are items which are not small (about the size of cars). The building would be smaller than the current building, an outbuilding would be replaced and the siting relates well to other larger industrial buildings.

The site is also very well screened by other buildings so that it is not visible from the road and to the more open south and west, there is robust tree screening along field boundaries. There is one public footpath a considerable distance to the south and the new building would not be easily visible from the path due to the field boundary screening. The building has been reduced in height and a 7.2m wall removed from the drawings. The building form is unconventional but from the path, if the building was visible the standard height wall, eaves height and larger roof slope would be seen and also viewed against the backdrop of larger buildings further to the north. The colour has also been changed to a more recessive light grey (changed from black) which would match the other building at the property and help the building blend in better with its surroundings. The applicant is also committed to additional tree planting and I consider that this can be achieved by way of a planning condition.

With regard to residential amenity, as the building is for the storage or items rather than any processing or manufacture, there does not appear to be any noise or disturbance issues. There nearest dwellings, fronting Uttoxter Road, would be a considerable distance away and the proposal would not lead to any light provision, privacy or noise/disturbance issues affecting the residential amenities of local residents, but with the safeguard of conditions recommended by Environmental Health, which does not object to the proposal. One such condition requires the submission of details of any plant or machinery that would be attached to the building e.g. air condition or extraction units for approval before installation.

As the proposal is not linked to any increase in staff, there are no traffic, parking or highway safety issues.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt but there are very special circumstances with the proposed building, linked to environmental protection and business operation requirements, that are considered to outweigh the level of harm to the openness of the Green Belt, which in any case is not deemed to be substantial due to the limited footprint of the building and its relationship with adjacent similar built development. The proposed building would also not harm the character and appearance of the area or the rural landscape and would also not harm residential amenity. The proposal is therefore in line 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: 22.9.23

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council