

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

DET/2024/0052 Valid 29/11/2024	LITTLE BLAKELEY LANE FARM BLAKELEY LANE DILHORNE	APPLICATION TO DETERMINE IF PRIOR APPROVAL IS REQUIRED FOR - A NEW GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING (AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY DETERMINATION)
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MAIN ISSUES

- Compliance with GPDO(2015) Schedule 2 Part 6 including whether reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the unit
- Siting, Design and external appearance

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The proposed building would be erected in a field-land position and would stand attached to a similar sized pre-existing building erected recently post April 2021 without planning permission. The application is described as a re-submission of proposal ref DET/2024/0021 refused by notice dated 30th August 2024. The LPA had found from a site visit on 16th August 2024 that the usage of the pre-existing recent building (building 3 on now submitted site plan drawing 002.1 dd 8th November 2024) was largely not agricultural with 554m2 of available space. Together with other buildings at the farm not in agricultural use or not fully in agricultural use the LPA estimated a total of 851m2 to be available. The current (and previous) Part 6 prior notice application is for a building of c.648m2 in floor area.

The site, including existing buildings is seen prominently from the closely adjacent Leek, Road (A522), Kinglsey Road (A52) and a minor road on higher ground overlooking from a short distance to the west.

The size of the holding is given as 41ha (c.101 acres). Notably, the farm house and some existing buildings at Little Blakley Farm are shown outside the applicant's ownership.

The location is in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

The application is accompanied by a planning statement dated 28th November 2024 in which a table at appendix 1 lists six land parcels which they say now make up the

holding. These comprise two parcels in the ownership and four described as 'rented' giving a total of 101 acres.

The statement says the farm is concerned with rearing water buffalo, reindeer, lambs, and camels grazed across its 101 acres. They say that the farm intends to increase its Water Buffalo herd to approximately 100 within the next year. They say that all site activities are now dedicated to agricultural use and that, with no under-utilised or vacant space on the site, the need for additional storage space remains pressing to support the farm's expansion and operational requirements.

In addition to grazing, they say the land is used for growing a winter fodder harvest. They say: "The farm's hay production underpins its operations but is constrained by limited storage capacity. Currently, surplus hay must often be sold at a lower value during peak harvest periods, while additional feed must be purchased at higher costs during times of scarcity. Expanding dry storage facilities would allow the farm to optimise its hay usage, reduce waste, and improve financial resilience".

As in the refused scheme, the building would stand 37m x 18m with eaves at 6.0m and ridge 8.6m high. The stated materials are timber cladding above concrete grey blocks with grey profile sheet roofing.

No information has been submitted to show or explain the extent of any livestock housing needs or the quantity of conserved fodder crop involved and the space needed. The requirements are presented in only a generalised or assumed form.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Specific to the site of the building proposed: DET/2024/0021 – prior approval required (decision 15th July 2024) and refused (30th August 2024)

As noted above the existing recent building to which the proposal would be attached is unauthorised and appears less than four years old.

A number of applications have been considered in relation to other land at Little Blakeley Farm most recently in 2017/18 and 2019.

CONSULTATIONS

None at this stage due to being a prior notification under Part 6.

OFFICER COMMENTS**Principle of Development**

The building proposed must comply with the definitions and limitations set out under GPDO(2015) Schedule 2 Part 6. Fundamentally, in order to be eligible under Part 6 the development must be 'reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture' within the unit.

'Agricultural unit' is also defined at Part 6 D.1 and "means agricultural land which is occupied as a unit for the purposes of agriculture, including—

- (a) any dwelling or other building on that land occupied for the purpose of farming the land by the person who occupies the unit, or
- (b) any dwelling on that land occupied by a farmworker."

Agricultural land is defined and "means land which, before development permitted by this Part is carried out, is land in use for agriculture and which is so used for the purposes of a trade or business, and excludes any dwellinghouse or garden."

Assessment of this application is made complicated by the presence of unauthorised development at the premises and a history of recent non-agricultural uses and activities. The application seeks to address the LPA's reasons for refusal of DET/2024/0021 which was for an equivalent proposal. A seven page letter which accompanied the previous application has been expanded to 13 pages along with, in addition, appendices including details of the range of sites now said to be included in the overall holding and their stated tenure. The holding size is now put at 40ha where previously it had been put at 30ha with limited or no details of location and tenure.

The purpose of the building is simply stated as being “a general-purpose agricultural building for the storage of hay/haylage and machinery”. Ultimately there is no clear explanation given as to why this building should be considered reasonably necessary. There is in particular no explanation as to why it should mirror an already existing building that it would be built next to. No calculations are provided to illustrate the quantities of stored fodder involved and space needed nor the space needed for the farm’s animals. Neither the existing building (unauthorised) nor the proposal building appear designed suitably to house livestock as they are fully enclosed and would be relatively unventilated. It appears from the application that buffalo require winter housing as there are photographs showing this in other buildings at the premises. Again however there is no discussion about their overall space requirements and any bearing that might have on this proposal.

Siting, design and external appearance

Matters of siting, design and external appearance are only strictly relevant if the proposal is a legitimate one for reasons of agriculture. It appears to the LPA that this case has not been made.

Due to the prominence of the proposed siting when seen from surrounding nearby public roads and the relationship of the proposal to an unauthorised building, the siting, design and external appearance is found un-acceptable.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Given that an equivalent application for the same development was recently refused in August this year (2024) and that the applicant aims to address the refusal reasons it would be appropriate to conclude at the very least that prior approval is necessary.

The additional information now provided has made reference to additional needs in a generalised way describing the proposal as “a general-purpose agricultural building for the storage of hay/haylage and machinery”. The quantitative information is very limited however with no clear or specific correlation between farming needs of the unit and the range of buildings available / proposed. The building has not been shown to be reasonably necessary and is found unacceptable in terms its siting and appearance due to the visual harm arising from its scale and prominence.

The recommended conclusion in this case is that prior approval should be required and refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **Prior approval required – refused**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 20th December 2024

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council