

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0538
Valid 16/01/2025

GORSTY HILL FARM
GORSTY HILL ROAD
UPPER TEAN

**CONTINUED USE OF FARM
BUILDING FOR A MIX OF
LIVESTOCK HOUSING,
AGRICULTURAL STORAGE
AND IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE LOG BUSINESS.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Development in principle
- Landscape / Development in the open countryside

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside between Cheadle to the north-west and Upper Tean to the south-east and comprises part of a large cattle farm which is on the west side of Gorsty Hill Road, a narrow country lane, which provides access to the farm located on elevated ground above the lane. From the farm the land also slopes downwards towards both the north and south. There are also large areas of woodland to the north and west. The site itself comprises of two large connected modern portal-framed agricultural buildings, part-open at the sides with Yorkshire boarding at the eaves and with an eaves height of approx. 4.5 metres. It on the western edge of the group of farm buildings and is adjacent to both modern and traditional brick farm buildings to the east. The farmhouse is further to the east of the farm buildings across a yard where there is also another single-storey brick farm building.

From a site visit, it was evident that the building to the east was used predominantly for log storage and agricultural storage, while the building to the west was predominantly housing cattle, with only the north west corner being used to store logs. To the south and south west of the buildings is a concrete platform used for cattle handling as well as an area used for silage bales.

The site is not in the Green Belt or affected by any other particular designations. Overhead electricity lines run parallel to the western elevation of the current building on site, a short distance away to the west.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission for a change of use from agriculture, to a mixed use of agriculture and industry as part of the existing buildings is used for the processing and storage of logs for firewood.

Revised plans were agreed with the applicant, which reduces the extend of the red edge to limit the use to only the parts of the building where the storage use would take place, as opposed to the whole site and surrounding yard. It was also requested that the description of development be changed to “*Proposed change of use of part of an agricultural building for the storage of logs*”. However this was not agreed. The applicant would only agree to “*Continued use of part farm building for a mix of livestock housing, agricultural storage and in association with the log business*”.

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
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
E1 New Employment Development
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 -14, 47, 109, 131, 135.

Section(s) 4 – Decision making, 12 – Achieving well designed and beautiful places.

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

- Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands
- Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD
- Space About Dwellings SPD

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- SMD/2023/0180. DESCRIPTION: Replacement of existing cattle sheds with new modern cattle building. DECISION: APPROVED
- SMD/2023/0185. DESCRIPTION: Replacement of existing farm storage and cattle buildings with new farm storage barn and associated works. DECISION: APPROVED

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: Expired

Neighbour consultation period ends: Expired
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

One objection, with concerns regarding the use of agricultural buildings as industrial.

Town / Parish Comments

Cheadle Town Council has no objections to this development, and would support the Application in principle.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Acceptance.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment.

The site is located in the open countryside. Policy SS10 states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The proposed use is industrial in nature, and consists of the processing of logs which are delivered to the site, processed, stored and dried on the site, and then sent elsewhere to the customer. This use would not be considered to have an essential need to be located in the open countryside, as this could take place on, for example, an industrial estate.

It is acknowledged that policy SS10 (2) aims to sustain the rural economy by supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises. However it is set out in Policy SS10 that this is the case where the scheme supports rural diversification **and** sustainability of the rural areas. It is not considered that the proposed use is sustainable, and it is considered that this outweighs the benefits in terms of farm diversification. The proposal is therefore not supported by Policy SS10 and is unacceptable in principle.

Landscape / Open Countryside

Policy DC3 states that the Council will resist development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside. It is acknowledged that this is an application for the change of use of an existing building, with no physical development. However, the building itself was only granted planning permission in June 2023. It is a large and intrusive building but was approved on the basis that it was essential for

agricultural purposes. This was clearly not the case as, less than 2 years on from the approval it is now in use for industrial / storage and distribution uses. The permissions were subject to a condition stating "*The building hereby approved shall be used solely for the accommodation of livestock in connection with agricultural operations at Gorsty Hill Farm and for no other purpose including any non agricultural business or commercial storage uses.*" Had it been known 2 years ago that the intention was to use the building for commercial purposes permission would not have been granted due to the intrusive nature of this large building in the open countryside.

It is considered that the development therefore results in a prominent and unnecessary intrusion into the countryside, where industrial uses are not typically located.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF seeks to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants. Local Plan Policy DC1 requires development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and to not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on amenity. There would be no impact on residential amenity as the nearest dwelling outside of the farm property is 140m away, and the site is wholly surrounded by agricultural land. .

Highway Safety

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places. Policy T1 seeks to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development does not lead to an increase in on street parking. SCC Highways have raised no issues in regard to highway safety.

Other matters

The description of development is not considered to be adequate to describe the proposal. An Appeal Decision made by the Planning Inspectorate (Appeal Ref: 3285754) highlights the importance of ensuring that the description of development reflects the approved plans attached to a planning permission. It is not considered that either "Continued use of part farm building for a mix of livestock housing, agricultural storage and in association with the log business." or "Continued use of farm building for a mix of livestock housing, agricultural storage and in association with the log business" accurately match the plans, nor accurately describe the development. This is because "Continued use of part farm building" suggests that the use is limited to part of just one building, whereas the change of use applies to the entirety of the east building, as well as part of the west building.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development fails to justify an essential need to be located in the countryside and involves logs being brought onto site for processing and then

exported again. The logs are not produced on the farm. This is an unsustainable for of development and one which could take place in a non-open countryside location. Therefore the proposed development is not essential in the open countryside and is not acceptable in principle. It is contrary to policy SS10.

The building is a large modern agricultural building, which is intrusive within the countryside and landscape. It was granted permission, less than 2 years ago, however, because the harm in landscape terms was outweighed because there was an essential agricultural need. This was obviously not the case. The permission was only granted subject to conditions relating to prevent commercial use. Had it been known that there was not an agricultural need for a building of this size it would have been refused on the grounds that it was intrusive in the countryside

Whilst it is acknowledged that it is a form of farm diversification this does not outweigh the harm identified. In light of the above, the recommendation is to refuse.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Reuben Berriman
Recommendation Date: 28/03/2025

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council