

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0299
Valid 25/06/2024

TEAN LEYS FARM TEAN LEYS
LOWER TEAN

INSTALLATION OF BIOMASS
BOILER 500KW AND ALL
ASSOCIATED WORKS
(RETROSPECTIVE)

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Environmental Health matters
- Design and visual impact

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is Tean Leys Farm, Leigh Lane, Lower Tean which is accessed via a lengthy farm track. The farmhouse is a large, attractive building which has benefitted from planning approval for extensions and alterations. Within the farmyard area there are a number of agricultural buildings. A search of the site's planning history reveals a number of approvals for cattle sheds, a milking parlour and poultry sheds. This is a well-established farming enterprise which sits within the open countryside (not Green Belt). The site is not within any Conservation Area and there are no protected trees within the vicinity of the proposed development site. To the north-east of the farmhouse is a large courtyard area bounded by a roughly 'L' shaped brick and tile (gable-ended barn), and a block and timber agricultural building. Further to the south-east, lies a range of poultry buildings and egg store(s). The building the subject of this application, is constructed using blockwork, metal cladding and fibre cement roof panels. The south-western facing gable end contains a set of large, outwards opening, double doors.

Whilst the farmhouse and brick barn certainly have some historical merit, they (including other buildings within the central farmyard area) are not listed. Public Right of Way 'Checkley 12' runs through the site in a north-east/south-west direction before linking with 'Checkley 42' to the north.

PROPOSAL

This is a retrospective application for the installation of a biomass boiler and associated works. The only alteration to the building appears to have been the addition of a chimney stack. The accompanying Planning Statement informs that '*biomass development is a long-established and trusted form of renewable energy development, which involves the burning of sustainable wood chip.*' The agent informs that this is a non-domestic biomass boiler which burns wood pellets in order to provide a renewable form of heating for the applicant's existing poultry unit installations, and to provide hot water for the dairy enterprise. The agent informs that the scheme reduces reliance upon the use of electricity and fossil fuels.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

SS1	Development Principles
SS10	Other Rural Areas Strategy
SD1	Sustainable Use of Resources
SD2	Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy
SD3	Sustainability Measures in Development
SD4	Pollution and Water Quality
DC1	Design Considerations
DC3	Landscape and Settlement Setting

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

1. Design Principles for Development

Supplementary Planning Document:

1. Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections:

2. Achieving sustainable development
6. Building a strong, competitive economy
12. Achieving well-designed places
14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.
16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET/2024/0009	Demolition of buildings. Prior approval required.
DET/2024/0008	Steel framed cattle shed. Prior notification required.
SMD/2023/0033	Proposed alterations to dwelling. Approved.
SMD/2021/0398	Demolition of existing single storey extension, modifications to the first floor roof, lowering of chimney and alternative windows to side elevation. Also internal changes to door positions on ground floor. Approved.
DET/2018/0013	Application for steel frame cattle shed. Approved.
SMD/2014/0381	Construction of a cattle shed. Approved.
SMD/2011/0177	Construction of a steel framed building to house a replacement milking parlour for the existing dairy herd. Approved.
10/00470/FUL	Construction of new poultry shed, linked to existing five sheds. Approved.

05/00687/FUL	Extension of existing farm building to form egg store, erection of two poultry sheds and realign farm drive. Approved.
04/01067/FUL	6 No. bays and 2 No. bays extensions to 2 No. farm buildings. Approved.
02/00186/NOT_TL	Erection of 15 metres mast, ancillary equipment cabinets and compound (prior notification).
10/00858/PNOT_1	Erection of Steel framed shed.
83/11907/OLDDC	Excavation of sub-soil in connection with motorway construction. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice. Expired.

Public Comments: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Checkley Parish Council:

The Applicant is applying for Retrospective Minor Planning Permission for a Biomass Boiler 500kw and all associated works already carried out on site and in use from 2 June 2023 without Prior Planning permission. Applicants have been discovering that Recent audits by OFGEM (Office of Gas & Electricity Markets) of Renewable Heat Installations (RHI) have requested copies of planning permission. If planning permission is not available at audit, RHI payments will be suspended until planning permission is available. Planning permission has always been a requirement for RHI accreditation, but until 22 May 2018 OFGEM had not required to see that permission. Checkley Parish Council are committed to biodiversity and green energy schemes such as Biomass. However there has to be careful consideration of the impact of such schemes on historic and rural character, so the location and design of such facilities needs careful consideration. Checkley Parish Council are concerned that the Application is lacking sufficient information to make a definitive decision and the Applicant should be requested to provide the following information required to accompany a planning application or environmental permit application for a Biomass Boiler installation.

1. Particulars of the Boiler

- a) Describe the proposed biomass boiler including make, model, manufacturer, thermal capacity (kw/MW), efficiency, maximum rate of fuel consumption (kg/hr or m3/hr).
- b) Describe the boiler combustion system and how combustion will be optimised and controlled.
- c) Describe the fuel feed system.
- d) Provide details of the abatement equipment in place for controlling particulate matter (fly ash) emissions.
- e) How does the biomass boiler deal with variable heat loads is the boiler linked to an accumulation tank?
- f) Is the biomass boiler an exempt appliance in accordance with the Clean Air Act 1993? If yes, provide evidence to demonstrate the biomass boiler has been tested and certified as an exempt appliance (for example a link to the appliance on the UK Smoke Control Areas website <http://www.uksmokecontrolareas.co.uk/appliances.php>)

2. Boiler Operation and Maintenance

- a) Describe arrangements for cleaning and de-ashing the boiler.
- b) Provide details of the maintenance schedule associated with boiler, abatement equipment and stack. This should include frequency of boiler inspection and servicing by a trained boiler engineer.
- c) Describe how incidences of boiler or abatement system failure are identified and mitigated.

3. Boiler Stack Details

- a) Identify the height of the boiler exhaust stack above ground. Evidence shall be presented to demonstrate that predicted emission concentrations associated with the calculated stack height do not have a significant impact on the air quality objectives for NO₂ and PM₁₀. It will be necessary to obtain background concentrations of NO₂ and PM₁₀ for the proposed location of the biomass boiler. These are available at <http://www.airquality.co.uk/laqm/tools.php?tool=background06>. If the location already exceeds the air quality objectives the options for potential increases to pollution emissions need careful assessment. The boiler exhaust stack height should be calculated using dispersion modelling software such as ADMS 4 or Aermod.
- b) Identify stack internal diameter (m).
- c) Provide maximum particulate matter and nitrogen oxides emission rates (mg/m³ or g/hr) to standard reference conditions (6% oxygen, 273K, 101.3kPa).
- d) Identify the exhaust gas efflux velocity (m/s).
- e) Provide the grid reference of boiler exhaust stack.

4. Fuel Details

- a) Describe the fuel specification including origin, type of wood (chips, pellet, briquettes), nitrogen, moisture, ash content (%).
- b) Does the fuel comply with European or equivalent fuel quality standards such as CEN/TS 335 or ONORM?
- c) Describe what fuel quality control procedures will be adopted to guarantee constant fuel quality from your supplier.
- d) Provide evidence to demonstrate that the biomass boiler combustion system is applicable to the fuel specification.
- e) Identify where and how fuel will be stored on site (e.g. bunker or silo).
- f) Describe how fuel will be unloaded from the delivery vehicle into the storage facility and what control measures will be in place to reduce particulate matter emissions to atmosphere.
- g) Identify the type of fuel delivery vehicle and provide evidence to demonstrate that there is sufficient space for the fuel delivery vehicle to access the site. How frequent will the fuel deliveries be?
- h) Are there noise issues to note related to the fuel store re-filling procedures?
- i) How will any mould or other odours from the fuel store be managed?

5. Building Details

- a) Record the distance of adjacent buildings from boiler exhaust stack.
- b) Record the height of adjacent buildings from boiler exhaust stack.
- c) Record the dimensions of building to which the boiler exhaust stack is attached.
- d) Indicate the distance from the boiler exhaust stack to the nearest fan assisted intakes and openable windows.
- e) Has there been a noise assessment for any motor driven fuel feed mechanism, with both internal and external noise propagation in mind?

6. Plans

- a) A site plan showing the location of the boiler room, fuel storage area and the access and exit route for fuel delivery vehicles, and
- b) A site plan showing the position of the boiler exhaust stack, fan assisted intake air vents and nearest openable windows.

If the Applicant is unable to provide the required supporting information Checkley Parish Council would not fully support the Planning Officer in Refusing the application.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust:

Confirm they have no comments to make.

Environmental Health:

Initial consultation response requested more information. Following receipt of further details, Environmental Health have provided the following comments..

In relation to the above planning application, Environmental Health has considered the additional information and has no objection to the proposal.

The use of the SCAIL assessment is not accepted, however, the applicant has provided sufficient other information to allow the application to be considered.

The applicant is still required to submit a formal stack height request under the Clean Air Act 1993 to Environmental Health (biomass boiler information request form and air quality assessments). This is a separate requirement to planning due to the burn rate of the boiler. There is no fee and the information listed above should be sent to envhealth@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk. As the information has been considered as part of the planning application, as long as there are no changes, no further assessment will be required.

Environmental Health recommends the following conditions:

1. The chimneys serving the ETA Hack 500 furnace shall not be less than a minimum of 7.9 metres in height above ground level and at least 1 metre above the roof apex and shall not be fitted with any terminations (such as cap or cowl) that may impede the upward dispersion of pollutants.
2. The furnace and associated ducting and chimneys shall, as a minimum, be serviced and cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Only the fuel as described in your Biomass Boiler Information Request Form, dated 09.09.24, shall be burnt in the furnace.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application site is located within the open countryside (not Green Belt) and is a well-established farming and poultry enterprise. The biomass boiler is used in connection with the existing activities (non-domestic) on the farm. Google searches confirm that *'biomass boilers are considered a renewable energy source when the biomass fuel is sustainably sourced. This means the plant material used to produce the fuel is regularly replenished, and the CO2 released during burning is offset by the CO2 absorbed by new growth.'*

Local Plan policy SS10 lends support for development which has an essential need to be located within the countryside, supports rural diversification, sustainability, the economy, diversification of existing farm enterprises, and ensuring renewable energy schemes are of an appropriate scale, type and location. Policy SD1 supports the sustainable use of resources.

Local Plan policy SD2 states that the *'Council will strive to meet part of the District's future energy demand through renewable or low-carbon energy sources (which could be through a variety of technologies, for example solar energy, biomass etc).* Consideration must also be given to *'the degree to which the scale and nature of a proposal impacts on the landscape'* and, *'the impact on the amenity of residents.'*

Local Plan policy SD3 informs that *'the Council will support further carbon-saving or water-saving measures in both new and existing developments,'* and that support will be given to *'measures designed to improve the sustainability of existing buildings (such as improved thermal insulation, water conservation, or the installation of micro-renewables).'*

There are no 'in principle' objections to this application. The content of the above referenced policies clearly shows support for renewable energy developments, of which biomass technology is specifically referenced. This renewables scheme supports an existing business and is contained within an existing building, therefore reducing potential visual impact upon the surrounding countryside (further discussed later in the report).

Environmental Health matters

Local Plan policy SD4 concerns itself with pollution and water quality. Relevant to this application is the requirement to *'protect people and the environment from unsafe, unhealthy and polluted environments by ensuring proposals avoid potential adverse effects.'*

Throughout the course of considering the application, the Environmental Health officer has requested additional information including an Air Quality screening assessment and technical notes, and biomass boiler information. The Environmental Health officer has confirmed he has no objections to the application and recommends a number of conditions. The scheme is therefore considered to accord with Local Plan policy DC1 and SD4 in respect of the need to protect the amenity of the area including odour pollution.

Design and visual impact

Local Plan policies DC1 and DC3 concern themselves with good design and ensuring that developments respect their site and surroundings. In addition, development should be restricted if it would lead to any prominent intrusion into the countryside. This application concerns a biomass boiler sited within an existing farm building, the only apparent alteration having been the addition of a chimney. The farm building sits amongst many other farming outbuildings, and well within the application site, therefore any wider visual impact is very limited. Footpath Checkley 12 does cross through the application site, however it is further to the north-west and whilst the chimney may be visible to footpath users, it is not harmful in its appearance. It is a chimney of functional appearance attached to a functional farm building within a well-established agricultural site. There are no objections to the application in terms of design and/or visual impact.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined within this report, it is recommended that the application is approved subject to conditions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Conditional approval.

Case Officer: Lisa Jackson

Recommendation Date: 29.04.2025.

X *Jane Curley*

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council