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**From:** planningcomments@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk  
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**Categories:**

Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0220 Site Address: Gorsty Hill Farm Gorsty Hill Road Upper Tean  
Staffordshire ST10 4EL Stoke-On-Trent Comments by: Amy CooperChandler Watson Consultancy Ltd

From:

Bank Top Farm  
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Phone:

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Submission: Support

Comments: Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in support of the above application on behalf of my clients, Mr and Mrs of Gorsty Hill Farm. I act as their agricultural consultant and have supported them in the development and operation of their livestock enterprise for a number of years.

This application seeks consent for the continued use of part of an existing agricultural building for the processing and storage of firewood, in addition to its agricultural use. The arrangement reflects a practical and flexible use of the building that enables the farm to operate efficiently and remain economically viable.

Mr has been working the farm for over 15 years, rearing beef cattle and processing and selling logs and assumed full responsibility following the death of his uncle in August 2022. Since inheriting the holding, he and his wife have made substantial investment in the farm's infrastructure, including the new buildings and significant improvements to the yard areas. Working on behalf of them, I have been able to secure a grant for the bespoke livestock handling facilities. Additionally, they have successfully entered into a five-year Countryside Stewardship agreement, which supports hedgerow planting/management and habitat enhancement. These efforts reflect their strong commitment to securing the long-term viability as an agricultural holding

With only 65 acres, the farm is not large enough to sustain a full-time income through agriculture alone. Over the 15 years that Mr has worked the land, the modest diversification from the sale of logs from the holding has become essential, allowing him to continue working full-time on the holding while maintaining a sustainable cash flow. This aligns with DEFRA's encouragement for farmers to broaden their income streams beyond agriculture, particularly in response to the phased reduction of the Basic Payment Scheme.

The building is used flexibly throughout the year. At certain times it is needed for livestock housing and feed storage. At other times, a portion is used to store and season logs, which are dried naturally on site and sold within the local community. This ensures the building remains in active use all year round and avoids the need for unsightly external log stacks, whilst supporting the day-to-day running of the farm. Covered storage also preserves and enhances the quality of the logs, ensuring they are ready for local sale.

The firewood is sold directly to households in the surrounding area, many of which are off the gas grid and rely on logs as their primary source of heating. A large proportion of these customers are elderly and no longer eligible for Winter Fuel Payments. It is therefore essential that the products supplied are of the highest quality hardwoods, properly seasoned to maximise heat efficiency and value. This modest diversification not only supports the farm but makes a meaningful contribution to the wider rural economy and community wellbeing.

The previous refusal of the application cited a lack of essential need for the development to be located in the countryside and deemed it unsustainable. However, this fails to recognise the specific nature of agricultural diversification and the practical requirements of livestock farming. The firewood activity is not a separate or industrial use but a modest and appropriate diversification, directly linked to supporting the farm business and which has been in operation for a considerable amount of time from the holding. Many agricultural holdings diversify in a similar way and the use of part of a building for low-impact storage is entirely in keeping with rural surroundings and has no adverse effect on the landscape or sustainability of the site.

Moreover, if planning permission is not granted, Mr will be required to seek off-farm employment to sustain the household income. This would result in increased travel back and forth to manage livestock, attend to calving, TB testing or respond to emergencies, all of which require him to be present on site. The number of vehicle movements generated by such a situation would exceed those generated under the current arrangement. In contrast, permitting the proposal allows him to remain on site, supports animal welfare and aligns with the principles of sustainable development outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SS1, SS2, and SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

In addition, the second reason for refusal claims the building is large, visually intrusive and no longer justified on agricultural grounds. This is not supported by the facts. The building was granted permission based on agricultural need and continues to serve that purpose. The firewood use is limited in scale, seasonal and clearly secondary to its agricultural function. The building is of typical design, clad in timber boarding and forms part of the main yard. It is not isolated, nor does it appear out of character within the landscape. In fact, using the building for covered storage improves the appearance of the holding by reducing outdoor clutter.

It is also important to highlight that several neighbouring residents, those most likely to be affected, have submitted comments in support of the application. This clearly indicates that the local community does not regard the building as visually intrusive or inappropriate. Their support reflects a shared appreciation for the responsible and low-impact way the holding is managed and a desire to see remaining livestock farms in the area to retain their viability.

Policy E1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan supports rural employment, particularly small-scale businesses and aims to encourage flexible working practices via home-working where there is no adverse impact on residential amenity. The continued use of part of this building for log storage and processing is entirely consistent with that

policy. It enables on-site employment, supports agricultural operations and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure. Refusing the application would directly conflict with the objectives of Policies E1 and SS10, which seek to safeguard the rural economy and promote appropriate diversification.

There are no objections from statutory consultees and no harm has been identified in relation to landscape, amenity, or highways. The proposal is proportionate in scale and nature and should be regarded as a necessary and justified part of a modern mixed-use rural holding.

I therefore support the approval of this application in order to facilitate the continued viability of Gorsty Hill Farm.

Yours faithfully,

Amy Cooper BSc (Hons) MBIAC FACTS

Agricultural & Rural Business Consultant

W: [www.chandlerwatson.co.uk](http://www.chandlerwatson.co.uk)

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