

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

DET/2025/0020
Valid 16/05/2025

WINDY MEADOWS
LAND SOUTH OF A523
ASHBOURNE ROAD
BOTTOMHOUSE
LEEK

APPLICATION TO DETERMINE
IF PRIOR APPROVAL IS
REQUIRED FOR A PROPOSED
STEEL FRAMED PORTAL
BUILDING AND POLY TUNNEL
GREENHOUSE

(AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY
DETERMINATION)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposed steel framed portal building and polytunnel can be built under a Notification of Prior Approval application under Part 6 of the GPDO rather than a full planning application. If so, whether or not the LPA wishes to approve the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed storage building.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application location plan identifies a unit of ownership with a blue outline that amounts to 3ha of pasture/grazing land. The land is located in the open countryside between Bradnop and Bottomhouses. It forms a wedge shape that has a wider northern boundary to the roadside of the A523 than it does at its southern boundary alongside the former railway embankment. The fields are enclosed with livestock fencing and traditional hedgerow. There is an un made farm track that runs the length of the unit's south east boundary and links the unit with an access that joins the main road. To the edge of the track there are two separate stable blocks with associated hardstanding. A small allotment style vegetable plot has been created to the side of the track.

PROPOSAL

To erect a polytunnel style greenhouse adjacent to the Vegetable plot with dimensions 4m by 9m (elevations not provided).

To erect a general purpose portal frame storage shed further toward the southern and narrower end of the site. The shed would be provided on an area of the land that, it appears, has previously provided, without planning permission, caravan pitch hard standings. The shed would be 14m x 6m. It would have a shallow full pitch roof with a maximum ridge height of 4.5m. The shed would be faced in vertical timber cladding with concrete panels below and a fibre cement sheet roof.

It is said that the shed would provide dry storage for fodder taken from the holding and implements and machinery required to manage the holding and forestry activities. The applicant does not currently have any livestock and they do not currently sell produce from the vegetable plot.

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

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

12/01061/FUL Erection of a field shelter for breeding ewes and small ponies.
REFUSED
SMD/2015/0573 Agricultural building for the purpose of storing farm machinery/tools, animal feed & fertilisers. REFUSED.
SMD/2016/0149 Retrospective application for the erection of a stable block.
APPROVED.
SMD/2017/0055 Proposed private livery stables. REFUSED.
SMD/2017/0550 Erection of stable building and extension to access track.
APPROVED.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The proposal does not meet the criteria of the provision made under Part 6 Class A Sched 2 of the GPDO and would not be permitted by that part of the GPDO.

The area of land identified as the unit of ownership with a blue edge provides an area of just 3ha. The works for the erection of a building are only permitted by Class A, Part 6 on agricultural units of 5 ha or more. The works proposed here would be carried out on a unit of less than 5ha.

Such development is only permitted on 'agricultural land' which means, for the purposes of Class A, 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 (defined at D.1 of Part 6).

The land in this case is occupied by two equestrian stable buildings and, what appear to be, caravan hard standings. The applicant purchased the land in 2022 and has planted over 2000 trees, further reducing the extent of workable pastureland. A small allotment style vegetable garden has been created which "they hope to start selling their produce to local businesses and people". The statement suggests that the land is mown and fodder is sold to local farmers and equestrian centres.

Moreover, there are pre-existing buildings on site in the form of the stables which could be used to store the small collection of tools that would be required to tend to a small vegetable plot. Haylage taken from this land can only be of a very small quantity. There is reference in the planning statement to other land 4 miles away near Onecote, but the location, area and purpose of this land is not disclosed. The presented evidence

does not demonstrate that the proposed development is reasonably necessary for the purpose of agriculture and/or that it would be carried out on agricultural land that is so used for a trade or business.

Overall, on the evidence presented it is not accepted that the proposed development would be provided on 'agricultural land' comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 ha or more; or that it is reasonably necessary for agriculture. The development, therefore, is not permitted by Class A, Part 6 of the GPDO.

Therefore, the "Notification of Prior Approval" process cannot be used to determine if the building can be permitted. It does not comply with the criteria and exceeds the limits at Class A.1, the building is not permitted development and can only be carried out with full planning permission.

For clarification, the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, and such approval would be refused. Development on this exposed and remote parcel of pastureland has thus far been limited to two modest stable buildings to support equestrian grazing. The addition of a portal frame shed and a polytunnel would appear centrally within the field and open landscape and, together with the stable buildings, result in visual clutter and an untidy apparently ad hoc arrangement of domestically scaled buildings, that have no association with an established farmstead. The development would, by reason of its siting and external appearance, be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The polytunnel in particular would appear particularly alien in the landscape, adjacent to a domestically scaled vegetable plot, located remotely from an established farmstead or residence from where it could be tended to.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development does not meet the criteria of the provision set out at Class A for Part 6 development at Sched 2 of the GPDO. There is enough information submitted with the application to determine that the design and external appearance of the development would result in buildings that would appear obtrusive and result in untidy visual clutter within an open and exposed landscape. The proposed building is therefore not considered to be permitted development and prior approval for the design and external appearance of the development would be refused.

The works to erect buildings on the land would result in development which, by reason of its siting, design and external appearance, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The development would result in what would appear to be an ad hoc grouping of domestically scaled buildings that would appear intrusive and result, particularly when combined with other developments already on the land, in untidy visual clutter within an open and exposed landscape. The development would therefore, be harmful to the character and appearance of the landscape and rural area, and contrary to policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED AND REFUSED

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 13th June 2025

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council