

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0483
Valid 06/11/2024

GREENWAY BANK FARM
GREENWAY BANK
BIDDULPH

**PROPOSED ERECTION OF
SLURRY TOWER AT
GREENWAY BANK FARM TO
PROVIDE SUFFICIENT
STORAGE FOR SLURRY
PRODUCED AT THE FARM IN
A 6 MONTH PERIOD**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Visual landscape character and appearance
- Green Belt
- Heritage
- Neighbouring residents' living conditions

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Cultivated farm pasture alongside existing cattle housing and slurry lagoon. The site is on a more-or-less level area at the brow of rising ground above the woodland perimeter to Knypersley Reservoir. The existing main farm building is c.80m x 25m. The existing slurry lagoon is 35m x 17m. The site is about 75m from the woodland boundary and at a higher level on the slope by some 10m to 15m. The woodland is part of Greenway Bank Country Park and is designated as semi-natural ancient woodland. The woodland slopes down to The Serpentine Reservoir recorded in the Staffordshire Heritage Environment Record as "the earliest reservoir in the UK built c.1781".

The farm is accessed from Greenway Bank and three detached dwellings along the road as it falls away east from the farm are between 130m and 230m away.

The milking herd is stated as 140 with a further 110 replacement heifers being reared.

PROPOSAL

The structure is essentially circular with a radius of 10.7m (diameter 21.4m) and a wall rim height of 5m. The walls are sectional in concrete. The structure is capped with a conical fabric cover in green with a height (from ground level) of 8.3m at its apex. The slope angle is 17 degrees. The structure is to be installed on a cast-in-situ concrete base and fitted with a watertight seal using an internal and external ring

beam cast at the wall/base interface. The ground area of the structure would be 380m².

BNG

The application recognises that BNG will apply and to this end the following accompany the application:

- Biodiversity Small Sites Metric calculation
- Habitat condition assessment
- BNG report
- BNG feasibility study
- Illustrative biodiversity gain plan

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
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 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

There are numerous applications relating to the existing adjacent farm structures and buildings. The more recent and relevant include:

90/01336/OLD (SMD/1990/1401) – slurry store and cattle buildings – approved and built

11/00263/FUL (SMD/2011/0434) – building for housing livestock – approved

- This was a northerly extension (now built) to the existing main long building

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 06.02.2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: 28.11.2024

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council - It was noted that this was in a neighbouring parish. Recommended safety controls to prevent accidental spillage. There were queries about Biodiversity Net Gain implications, and the fact that this is in the green belt.

Brown Edge Parish Council - consulted but no response received.

Environmental Health

Received 13th March 2025 – no objection subject to conditions.

The store is required in order to increase slurry capacity at the farm and allow the farmer to comply with the requirements regarding the storage of manures and use of nitrogen fertilisers for farms situated in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones.

Although the actual current impacts of both odour / and or ammonia emissions from the site are not actually known, as no increase in manure production (cattle numbers) is proposed, the new store – as a result of being ‘covered’ – will inevitably have the positive benefit of reducing odour and ammonia emissions (associated with nutrient enrichment / deposition amongst other things) during the storage period and so should reduce the current environmental impact from the storing of the manure compared to the current set up (open lagoon). However, significant releases could still occur during the emptying and crucially the application of the manure / slurry to the land. Best practice should be employed to reduce these emissions as far as practicable in line with the codes of agricultural practice issued by DEFRA. A condition is therefore recommended: (2) Manure or effluent stored within the proposed development shall be managed in accordance with the recognised Best Practice outlined in the Protecting our Water, Soil and Air, A Code of Good Agricultural Practice for growers and land managers (DEFRA, 2009) and Code of Good Agricultural Practice for reducing ammonia emissions (DEFRA, 2024). Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbours and pollution of the environment.

Also condition construction noise and any importation of fill.

Canal and River Trust

They describe their “substantive response” as “no comment to make”.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

They recommend a ‘holding objection’ until the following information is supplied and our comments are resolved:

- An air assessment (including ammonia) such as SCAIL carried out to look at the impacts on nearby ancient woodlands and also Knypersley Reservoir
- Plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing on site habitat existing on the date of the application.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

As an agricultural building the proposed development is in principle acceptable in the Green Belt in accordance with NPPF 154(a) which defines buildings for agriculture [and forestry] as being ‘not inappropriate’.

The main issues to consider are the appearance at the location and any implications nearby un-connected neighbouring dwellings.

Design

Cylindrical above ground slurry storage tanks are a familiar farm structure. It is fair to say they can appear prominent and relatively ‘industrial’. Typically they are finished in sheet metal but this one would have concrete panel sides presenting a grey colour finish. The conical canopy above would be in a green colour finish.

As the structure would be close alongside the existing greyish farm buildings above which there are tree canopies (green in summer) the proposal would tend to match in with its immediate surroundings, at least when seen from distance. The scope for nearby public views is fairly limited. There would be partial glimpsed views from the road at some 180m to the south eg along the farm drive or between Bank Top House and Foxley but these would be of very limited visual impact in this site context already developed as a large working dairy farm.

For people enjoying recreational use of the nearby Greenway Bank Country Park woodlands there may be some sparing views from the top edge of the wooded bank where it rises steeply up from the reservoirs. There are unlikely to be noticeable views from with the majority of the park which is well wooded and at a generally lower level.

The farm building cluster can be seen prominently from across the valley to the east at Marshes Hill for example but at the distances involved of some 1,500m the additional structure would be absorbed into the greater backdrop of the existing farm buildings and surrounding trees.

Amenity

The main potential issue could be slurry odours when removal for field spreading is being undertaken. This however will already occur when the existing ground level 'lagoon' is emptied. It is understood that the additional capacity is being introduced in order to provide greater flexibility in the timing of manure removal rather than to support an overall increase in livestock numbers for example. The nearest three un-associated dwellings on Greenway Bank are at least some 130m plus from the site. It can reasonably be judged unlikely that the proposed store would add noticeably to the impacts of this long established farm as currently experienced.

Heritage

The site is within an area denoted as 'landscape park' in the Staffordshire Heritage Record and described as "A landscape park originally established in the late 18th century by Hugh Henshall (who was responsible for the completion of the Trent and Mersey Canal following the death of James Brindley)." Together with the reservoirs the location should be treated as a non-designated heritage asset. NPPF para 216 expects a 'balanced judgement' having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Relative to the existing 20th C farm buildings already established the proposal is a proportionately small scale further addition that can reasonably be judged as not adding an overbearing further impact on the wider asset.

Biodiversity

If permission is granted it will be subject to the statutory 'net gain' condition. The 10% gain is proposed to be met by the planting of 14 new small trees on site. This has been calculated using the smaller sites matrix. The LPA found the site to be somewhat waterlogged and heavily poached with much bare earth present and hard-core / rubble dressings added in the past to create firmer ground. As such the base line biodiversity is very obviously limited. (See fig. 1 below.)

The Wildlife Trust has requested a SCAIL assessment – 'Simple Calculation of Atmospheric Impact Limits'. This is not however mandatory and in discussion with SMDC EH it is concluded that it would not bring any particular additional knowledge to bear. This is a scheme about better managing existing outputs rather than adding to them and as such can be expected to have a net beneficial effect. Whilst SWT have requested a further plan the information is effectively contained in those already submitted eg. GBF 002.



Fig. 1

Other matters

Whilst SMDC EH have recommended a number of conditions these are not found strictly necessary here given the modest scale and nature of the proposal save that the timing of noisy activity control condition be included and that reference to agricultural good practice for manure management be attached as an informative.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

This is a significant local dairy farm contributing to food production from the land. Whilst there are a range of issues to consider these have been carefully looked at one-by-one in the above report and the impacts are judged not over bearing or unduly harmful either individually or taken together. It is concluded that as a beneficial scheme in terms of environmental management of farm manure any adverse impacts are balanced by the benefits which will result in improving the environmental sustainability of the farm's processes.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **Approve**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 16.07.2025

X *J. Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council