

Introduction

This statement is made by the applicant in support of a prior approval application for a general-purpose agricultural / horticultural, building measuring 10.9 x 15.9 meters with an eaves height of 5.4 meters and total internal floor area of 157 square meters.

I am a young farmer aged 36 years, I have lived and worked on my parents farm gaining considerable experience in both the agriculture and horticultural business since studying at Rodbaston agricultural college in my teenage years.

Prior to buying this extra parcel of 15.5 acres of land just over two years ago, I already own and farm 27 acres at Big Southlowe Farm Cellarhead this bringing a total to 42.5 acres.

I am at present converting a derelict barn on this 27 acres with the intention of making it my family home, there are no other buildings on that land and the barn being converted was not suitable for modern day farm vehicles, napplication number SMD/2022/0500

The farm business at that location is a family partnership between my brother and myself which is farmed jointly.

Business History

Before personally purchasing this further parcel of land I carried out a full in depth feasibility study along with a long term business plan which enabled me to borrow funds towards the purchase.

The purchase of this parcel of 15.5 acres gave me the perfect opportunity to break free from the shattles of the family farm and continue the works of the previous owner and to expand my own business into organic farming which forms the basis of much of my business plan.

At present the land at this location is mostly set to the growing of the organic clover lay mix crops which produce natural nitrate's which by carefully management allows the nitrate to be returned slowly into the soils, thus doing away with any need for artificial fertilisers and chemicals.

It is recognised that the crops that are presently being grown, along with the planned organically grown horticultural crops do generally achieve far greater yields and therefore greater financial rewards, but this is somewhat balanced by the substantial increase in working hours required.

Although I have achieved the first part of my business plan it has been incredibly difficult having to work and manage my farming business without any building of my own to operate from, unfortunately due to that fact I have only been able to fulfill the first part of my business plan which has been restricted to production of growing

mixed organically grown feeds for live stock and the farming of sheep at the tail end of the growing season.

A second and equally important part of my business plan is presently held up due to the lack of preparation area and secure covered storage for produce, this was for the growing of up to 3 acres of organically grown fruits and vegetables for human consumption, but have very recently negotiated a sale and sold approximately 2 acres of my land and within the same transaction purchased the same quantity of land from my families neighbouring farm, which will now allow the proposed horticultural side of my business to increase to a new total of 5 acres as the land that I have received in exchange doesn't have any stewardship ties attached which means it's far more straightforward changing over from its present crop to organically growing horticultural crops.

I have already established a local market waiting to be serviced which is more than capable of purchasing the extra produce from that expansion of horticultural area of land.

Planning History

The 15.5 acres of land has previously been granted full planning permission for the build and operation of the present wind turbine along with a material roadway leading from highway to turbine (planning reference number SMD/2013/0500)

When I purchased this original 15.5 acres of land, there was an approved prior approval application, granted for a building planning (reference DET/2019/0042) which had not been built. That consent has now lapsed.

The opportunity to build and then use the approved building was at that time very important to me as it gave me the security to build and operate my farming business from it, as I had already experienced very strong opposition from many of the neighbouring houses when it was suggested that I was wishing to apply for a building at my land at Cellarhead.

Change of Location

Having farmed this original 15.5 acres for over two years I have become convinced that the approved building position was totally disjointed from the natural areas of my farming activities being carried out, almost the furthest point possible from the highway entrance within my farmland requiring a substantial extension of the roadway to access it.

For that reason and others that are now no longer applicable due to my decision to allow that approval to lapse, I decided to apply for a second prior approval application for a building designed specifically for my farming business needs which is massively smaller in size than the previous approved building.

I therefore submitted a new application which became application number DET/2024/0056 which was duly considered by the planning department but was not able to be approved due to the previously approved application number DET/2019/0042 still being at that time capable of being developed.

Following the recommendation given in the planning officer decision for that application I decided to wait and allow for the application number DET/2019/0042 to expire before resubmitting my application.

It was during that waiting period that I was offered and took up the opportunity to exchange a two acre parcel of my land for an alternative two acre of land from the family's farm, that transaction has only just been completed and is presently being registered.

This exchange is believed to be of mutual benefit, for myself it creates more compacture of the land I farm and hopefully an opportunity to have a more ideal location to site the building if approved within this application.

As for the other parties, It has secured greater control to protect against any detrimental impact from my farming activities on their established campsite business!

There is also, I'm hoping another very significant bonus that I have gained which is that there was a building development started in the late 1980s, it was then inspected and acknowledged as being lawful development by the planning authority, the building works were then continued over the years but due to the isolation of the build from the original farmstead and a lack of roadway to it, the build just hadn't been a priority.

To date the original steel structure still remains neatly stacked along the north western hedgerow.

The original building's concrete foundations along with the hard standing which would have surrounded that building, although now overgrown with years of vegetation are still in place and have never been disturbed, but can be cleared and made visible on request.

Whilst investigating this development remains I realised that this part build development had a footprint of only a few square metres more than the building within my earlier application DET/2024/0056 realising that I had my architect visit the site and asked them to change the design of my previous application in order to be able to utilise building steel structure that remains present from the earlier unfinished development along with the foundations that also remains undisturbed and perfectly suitable for the development within this application.

Added to the above is that both the original water and electricity supply's still remain installed and in place and able to be reconnected along with the full drainage system and septic tank.

Proposed Location

After a full appraisal of my land as it is now, given the advantages leftover from the earlier development mentioned above, along with the opportunitys to reuse existing materials and infrastructure I am proposing for the new building within this application to be sited on the original foundations which is shown on the location plan attached to this application.

This location still fulfils all of my farming business needs while still achieving the desired of of my previous application by having the lowest visual impact possible, whilst having to negotiate the following restraints:-

Suitability of ground conditions for any such building.

Avoidance of interruption to the present stream and other water courses

The minimum imposed distance between the wind turbine and any proposed building, in order not to cause disruption in wind flows which can impact on the operation of the turbine.

The avoidance of already present installed energy equipment above and below ground.

The ability to utilise and share the existing service road to the present wind turbine.

newly added is the desire to utilise existing Infrastructure and resources left available from the previous development.

And to fulfill the requirements of section 6 permitted development with regards to minimum distance from a public highway.

Justification for planning

I recognise and consider that it is vital for my businesses future success to be able to build and operate from a building of the size within my application, for the safe storage and maintenance of my farm machinery, along with storage of fuels and of equal importance the storage of the crops that are produced from this parcel of land, which would then allow the crop to be produced and processed in the most convenient and cost effective ways, then stored and supplied to the market over a more lengthy period or until market prices are at their highest.

At the present time I am still having to leave most of my machinery out in the open tucked away behind the hedges hoping that it doesn't get noticed by anyone wishing to steal it or anything from it.

I am presently still having to purchase all fuels via the pump as it is extremely risky storing fuels in tanks outside as theft of fuels is an enormous problem not only due to the loss of fuel but the perpetrators take no care of how they steal the fuel often allowing hundreds of litres to spill causing enormous pollution issues. This not only

adds extra expense due to the cost of purchasing small amounts of fuels but also adds many unnecessary road miles having to drive my tractors to and from the fuel stations.

Until now and including this season, the crops that have been produced have all had to be bailed in big round bails then individually wrapped using (single use plastics) then with the exception of the first seasons crop had to be sold direct from the fields at the discounted rate.

I desperately need to change from this present process of having to use big bailing and wrapping of my crops and start to follow my business plan which is to make the harvest in the traditional way and then bailing it into the small rectangle bales, which would then be stored inside the shed allowing for the crop to be safely stored and sold over a much longer period, to a far wider market.

Then allowing for an abundance of different types of purchaseses from, the guinea pig owner requiring a small bag of hay, the small local pet shops, the equestrian market, the hospitality and entertainment market for use as props, along with supplying hobby type farmer's and if need be then to the larger farmers, rather than the present system of large wrapped bails that I am forced to use solely due to the lack of under cover storage which has a very limited market and lifespan.

With the potential of so many more sale opportunities available, the ability to sell smaller quantities along with the being able to store unsold feeds well into the following seasons, all that allows for a much greater market price for my produce.

Commercial and enviromentl costs

Whilst it is recognised that my business has been successful to date this has not come without high risks along with many extra costs, both financially and also for the environment.

It is extremely difficult and at times very unsafe carrying out the general maintenance required on the machinery, as it is vital for many of these works to be carried out on a level solid floor for the safety of anyone maintaining the machinery, thus causing standard maintenance jobs that would have normally been carried out by myself having to be contracted out adding extra costs and Interruption to my business.

It has also proven to be a basic requirement that most insurance companies require tractors and machinery to be stored inside locked buildings, so that has meant that I am limited to a small number of insurers that would provide cover thus having to pay much higher premiums for my insurance cover.

Presently almost all the crops grown on this parcel of land have all been sold direct from the field, as in the first year the big bales were stored out in the open which created far too much wastage.

I accept that the big bailing system might work well for the larger farmers but many of the larger farms have been inherited from previous generations and so they are able to work with lower profit margins, but things have changed, we are and should be considering the environment far more!

The system of big bailing requires a totally separate and extra process to the harvest which includes the single use plastic wrapping of the bales. That not only adding substantial extra costs in both time and money, but it is also very wasteful with resources, along with the environmental issues regarding the production and then the disposal of the plastics that are then required, which as a keen environmentalist is extremely difficult for me to accept and is so very frustrating as I am myself presently forced to use this process which is totally avoidable if I was able to collect my crops in the traditional small hay bales and store inside.

The lack of close undercover processing and storage area has also meant that I have no possibility of starting the horticultural growing and production that is such an important part of my business plan.

The present form of production that I'm forced to use is the big bailing and wrapping process, that system is the only option available it then forces me into a very narrow market and short shelf life due solely to the lack of under cover storage.

Proposed Construction and Design

It is proposed that the building will consist of two equal bays with an internal wall constructed thus creating two separate bays.

It is proposed that the bay to the eastern side (bay 1) will have lockable sliding doors on the eastern end and a roller door to the north side.

Any remaining wall areas within this bay will be of masonry one meter in height with box profile metal sheeting thereafter to the eaves finished in slate grey colour.

It is proposed that the western bay (bay2) is designed in the same way as bay1 but with an open end similar to traditional hay barns. There will be roller doors to north and south sides of this bay which will match the door on north side of bay1

The corner posts to the western end of bay2 will be finished to match the design of the eastern end of bay1.

The purpose of these two doors on bay 2 is to protect any bailed crops within the barn against the elements whilst being able to be opened during harvest to assist storage and also to allow them to be opened when required to reduce the risk of build up of heat from the crop, which in extreme cases can become combustible.

The roof is proposed to be box profile metal sheeting finished in goose-wing grey colour. It is proposed that 10% sky lights will be included.

The colours have been chosen to allow for the roofline to better blend in with the skyline and the side cladding to best match in with the surroundings and existing nearby buildings.

The doors will be of the same colour as the side sheeting.

I am happy to use timber castle type boarding for the side sheeting if that is the planning department's preference along with any variation in colours of the roof or side sheeting if required.

The design allows for sufficient height for storage of bales, which has enabled for a reduction of the footprint of the proposed building, whilst also allowing for the requirement of tipping of my trailers internally.

There will be no need for any extra hard standing since the proposed location of the building would utilise the hard standing that had been previously laid during the build process of the earlier development.

Proposed Usage

Bay1 is to be used for the storage and maintenance of the necessary farm machinery along with a processing and storage area for the planned horticultural crops.

Bay2 is proposed primarily for the storage of bailed hay crops, along with any space becoming available to be used to store surplus machinery.

The list of farm machinery that is currently owned and required by my business which needs to be stored inside is as follows :-

1 x John Deere 6210 tractor/ 1 x JCB farm special 530/70 loadall/ 1x 6 ton 16ft tipping trailer/ 1x 18ft bail trailer/ 1x slurry tanker/ 1 x 2 drum hay mower/ 1 x tractor hay rake/ 1 x hay bailer/ 1 x 8ft pastor topper/ 1 x set of 12ft chain harrows/ 1 x Howard 5ft Rotavator/ John Deere farm buggy / 1 x Lister bail elevator/ General farm hand tools and supplies and fuel tank.

I am proposing to stack some of the smaller implements on top of the trailers when out of season and some of the more robust and less valuable equipment might still be left outside.

The crop produced and taken from this parcel of land during the year 2023 totalled 232 big round bails, which following research would have been approximately 2552, conventional small bales. The crop produced and taken from this parcel of land during the year 2024, totalled 237 big round bails which using the same formula would have been 2607 conventional small, bales. I do not have the final figures for this year as I have only taken the first crop to date.

I have assessed the above average yield of crop produced and it will comfortably store within the western bay allowing for up to a 5% extra capacity for any previous seasons unused crop to be stored.

The inclusion of the proposed side doors to western bay is to protect the fodder from the elements which can be opened during harvest or when extra cooling is required.

The general design of the building represents the standard form of most farm building of today.

Environmental Savings

Any power required will be provided from the national grid but it is comforting to know that the turbine is helping to offset that.

This application benefits from the inclusion of high level skylights to reduce the need for artificial lighting during daylight hours.

Any lighting that is required will be of LED low energy lighting.

The ease of maintenance and along with the ability to store the equipment out of the elements massively prolongs machinery life span.

Further positive gains will be made due to the fact that the proposed location is the most central point of my farm land so reducing travel distances during the harvest and tractors usage.

The undercover storage of small unwrapped bails would allow substantial savings in two important ways, it cuts out the complete process of the current need of wrapping the bails along with eliminating the use of the single use plastic wrap that is currently having to be used.

Any extra building materials required where ever possible will be sourced from renewable sources.

The close proximity of the proposed building to the existing roadway eliminates the need for any additional roadway.

The opportunity to be able to utilise the existing steel frame with only minor amendments required along with the ability to reuse the foundations and infrastructure of the previous development will massively reduce the the energy and resources normally associated with any such development.

A water harvest system will be installed to capture rainfall and be used for washing off machinery etc thus reducing mains water usage.

Landscaping and Screening

New wooden entrance gates and posts off Dilhorne lane will be installed to replace existing unsightly metal ones along with extra hedge planting.

The historical hedge to the north of the proposed building will be fully retained and allowed to continue in its natural uncut growth.

There are two existing historical gateways at the far east and western end of that hedge line. It is proposed that the western gateway be retained as access from the existing roadway to the proposed building and any gaps within that hedge line include the far east gateway to be planted with native hedging.

I am happy to accept and to conform to any requirements set by the authority with regards to additional landscaping, as well as any changes in materials or colours if required by the planning department.

Conclusion

The proposed location within this application fills all of my current farming needs, along with providing the opportunity of utilising an already previously developed site which would then also enable the reuse of the present infrastructure and materials left over from the previous development.

I believe and considered that this application conforms to and meets all the requirements set out in the guidelines under section 6 of the general permitted development rights.

Despite the challenges I have faced due to the lack of a building, for even the most basic of farming needs I have still succeeded in creating a successful business, which is steadily building by so far growing high quality organically grown crops of high value for sale and consumption for organically produced local farm animals.

I consider myself as being extremely lucky to have recognised and so far been able to find the perfect customers for my organically grown crops but likewise I am under no illusions that this is a very narrow market, and for the security of my business, I need desperately to be able to branch out and start to produce the product in the quantities and forms which can satisfy the very much wider market that I have already recognised and found which is waiting patiently to be served which very much forms the basis of my original business plan.

Added to above is my need to be able to start the process of growing the organically grown horticultural produce for supply to the general public which after much research I am confident is waiting to also be serviced and again was fully researched before being included into my business plans.

Unfortunately the opportunity to have made any meaningful start in the production to the planned organically grown produce has been so far held up as I have been

unable to provide an inside area to process the crops once grown as an inside processing and packing area with sufficient storage for produce is essential which both processes need to be located within metres rather than miles of the area from which the produce is grown.

I consider myself placed in the perfect position to supply all the markets that I have recognised but believe it vital for me to be one of the first locally to satisfy those markets to establish a foothold for the future of my business and family.

In short I believe I have the ability, passion and energy, the qualifications and experience along with the backing of those who are also passionate about the environment.

I have sufficient farm land, most of the equipment required, the markets for both types of produce waiting to be supplied, sufficient finances to keep going forward but unfortunately no shed to carry out my farming business needs from!