

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0002
Valid 05/01/2026

LAND OFF TRACK AT
HEATON HOUSE FARM
MEERBROOK ROAD
RUSHTON SPENCER

ERECTION OF AN
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING
(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the character and appearance of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is at the edge of a plateau of flat land where, to the west, the land dips away. The site is reached from the north by a short c.160m hard surfaced track from Meerbrook Road (C 74). Heaton House Farm is c.500m west along Meerbrook Road. The holding is stated as being 68 hectares (168 acres).

At a minor cross roads 170m east along Meerbrook Road the turning to the south follows a level and straight unclassified metalled highway by the name of Rotten Hole. This runs parallel with the alignment of the application site and its access road. The application site and existing buildings are plain to see at about 150m distance across the level intervening field. Rotten Hole is partly hedged but also open in significant parts, including where there is a loose stretch of trees. There is a mix of gappy hedging and open (though fenced) gaps along the application site edge as seen from Rotten Hole.

The existing site comprises chiefly three buildings in the layout. The first building reached on entering the site from the north (top in the photos) is the barn which forms the subject of this application. As existing it now has four bays and stands 24m x 15m; is walled to all four sides; and has a roller shutter door in the east gable end. A 2022 DET submission which was allowed to proceed presented an open sided hay barn building to be walled only in the west end gable elevation.

On inspection, during the officer's site visit on the 30th January 2026, the subject building was put to general purpose within a broad agricultural scope. Some 30 to 40 ewe lambs (tagged in both ears) were present in a temporary pen occupying perhaps one third of the floor area. There was a stack of hay bales to the rear of the building and logs stack in racking to the side. A tractor-towed implement was parked back left of the Building. The large roller shutter door to the front gable was wide open providing ventilation to the open interior of the building.

Immediately alongside to the south of the subject barn is a more makeshift pole barn with metal sheet roof; metal sheet rear (south) elevation and metal sheet west end. This appears to correspond with a 2015 retrospective consent for 'Construction of a timber frame straw shelter'.

Finally, to the south again is a 2011 approved 'cattle shelter', the southernmost of the

existing buildings on the site (26m x 11m aligned north – south). This appears to correspond with a southerly two thirds part of the building approved which was in total 41.2m x c.11m with eaves 3.2m and ridge 4.2m. At the date of the LPA site visit there were some 20 or so mixed beef cattle including a bull divided into pens by age group. The farm must presumably have significant other means of hay and straw storage as the amounts at this location were limited to fairly immediate needs.

The location is highly rural. It is not in the Green Belt. The Council's Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2018) places the area in the Gritstone Highland Fringe landscape character type (LCT). It is considered a 'high' quality landscape in a Staffordshire county-wide context (level four on a five-point scale where 5 is highest) and one which has the 'highest sensitivity' to landscape change.

PROPOSAL

In 2022 the applicant applied for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority would be required to construct an open sided hay barn under Part 6 of the GPDO. The applicant was free to carry out that development when 28 days from the receipt of the application passed without determination. However, in doing so the applicant did not comply with the conditions attached to Part 6 Class A, by carrying out development that does not comply with the details of the application that had been submitted – details that were submitted show an open sided hay barn building 16m by 30m, the building that has been built is 15m by 24m, and is enclosed on all sides with sheet cladding and a roller shutter to the front gable.

Consequently, the building that now currently occupies the site, although it is smaller, now requires full planning permission. This application seeks full planning permission for the development already carried out and for further development that would extend the building by adding another 'bay'.

The resulting building would be 30m by 15m and 7.6m in height to the ridge of the full pitch roof. That would not represent any height increase over and above that of the existing building or the building that is shown in plans that were submitted with the application for prior approval.

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

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

07/01506/FUL [SMD/2007/1021] – Erection of cow shelter – REFUSED

08/00444/FUL [SMD/2008/0302 – Erection of cattle shelter – REFUSED

11/00634/PNOT_1 [SMD/2011/0580] – cattle shelter – no determination recorded

SMD/2015/0559 – Retrospective planning permission for construction of a timber frame straw shelter. APPROVED.

DET/2022/0031 Proposed portal-framed open shelter for the storage of hay and straw. CLOSED NO DETERMINATION WITHIN 28 DAYS.

DET/2025/0037 - Application to determine if prior approval is required for proposed extensions to two agricultural sheds and provision of a detached toilet block (agricultural/forestry determination) – prior approval required and details submitted – REFUSED.

DET/2026/0001 Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed hay shed. PRIOR APPROVAL GRANTED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 20th February 2026

Neighbour consultation period ends: 20th February 2026

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Heaton PC: No response within consultation period

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The site is in an other rural area of countryside, far from the boundary of any Local Plan defined settlement. The building is relatively remote and isolated in a distinctly rural setting surrounded by mature trees to the west, north and south and open farmland to the east.

In such an area, Local Plan area strategy policy SS10 applies. These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, or supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas. This to be achieved by sustaining the rural economy through enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified and supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises.

The site is not in the Green Belt and therefore, is not constrained by national Green Belt policy. The building has been provided on a large established farming enterprise that has diversified with the introduction of outdoor pursuits/activity, wedding and catering services. The building is in proximity to the original farmstead and the applicant's home. The building is put to agricultural use providing lambing shelter, hay

and implement storage and it lends itself to a range of adaptable uses. The building has need to be provided in the rural location and supports the applicant's enterprise.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance

Local Plan policy SS10 requires development to conserve the quality of the countryside and priority to be given to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape. Local Plan Design policy DC1 requires that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance. Local Plan Landscape policy DC3 requires the protection of local landscape and the resistance of development which would lead to a prominent intrusion in the countryside.

The existing building with its large gable opening and the use of dark green sheet cladding and roofing material, is of common or conventional agrarian character and appearance. From the lower ground of Meerbrook Road to the north and north west, the building is completely concealed by virtue of ground levels, the land terrain and a belt of mature woodland trees that screen the western and northern edge of the building from wider views.

From Rotten Hole, 150m to the east, across the relative plateau or plain of the adjacent field parcel, glimpses of the building are available through and above the boundary hedge line to the western edge of the field that runs to the front of the building. This is due to both the total height of the building's full pitch roof and some gapping in the hedge line where double gates provide access to the field from the buildings. Despite this, the building appears comfortably within the landscape with a strong sense of place. The building is set against a mature grouping of trees behind, to the west, that tower above the building with strong canopy cover and mature or bushy specimens in the hedge line, either side of the gate, hug and provide enclosure to each side of the building.

The building therefore is not unduly exposed, it does not form a prominent intrusion in the countryside, interfere with or obstruct views of valuable landscape beyond, or appear at odds with the farmland character of the surrounding landscape that provides its setting. The proposed extension that would add an additional bay to the western end of the building, would affect only the rear of the building that faces immediately onto the mature trees to the west. The addition would not increase the height, size or shape of the part of the building that can be seen from the east.



The proposed retention and alteration of the building would not cause conflict with policies SS10, DC1 or DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan.

Biodiversity

The application seeks permission retrospectively for development already carried out and to that extent the development is exempt from BNG legislative requirements. The proposal to add an additional bay to the rear would have a footprint in excess of 25 sqm but would extend onto an area of existing hardstanding.



CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

A general purpose agricultural building that supports a large and well established, diversified, farming enterprise. The building is appropriate to its rural location and

setting and does not harm the character and appearance of the area or landscape quality. No conflict with the Local Plan policies listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date:

X

J Curley

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council