

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0137
Valid 18/03/2025

SALTERS FORD FARM
NEWTOWN ROAD
NEWTOWN
BIDDULPH

CONSTRUCTION OF
AGRICULTURAL SHED FOR
STORAGE OF HAY,
AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY
& ASSOCIATED
AGRICULTURAL STORAGE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle
- Character and appearance

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Rural former farmstead comprising domestic dwelling, extended gardens with small ornamental lake, stables, horse exercise ring, manège and secondary living accommodation over detached garage. It is understood that no equine interests are currently pursued at the premises notwithstanding the extant facilities.

The total farm area (at date of application) is shown by blue edge on Dwg P375-203 LP01.B (see revised plans folder). By scaling from the drawing this comes to c.4.3 hectares. This ownership includes areas given over to ornamental recreation / amenity land enjoyed as curtilage to the dwelling; horse exercise ring; horse manège; stables, garage and ancillary accommodation to the dwelling; tarmac yard area, the dwelling itself and garden. In total these subsidiary and non-agricultural areas of land use come to c.0.8hectares.

The location is in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. A series of public footpath rights of way from north, south, east and west converge through the centre of the premises. Nb – whilst the premises are in Rushton parish, the field of the proposed development is in the Biddulph Town Parish. The property is remote from its nearest neighbours by some 200m to 400m. The existing developments are not readily seen if at all from the public road. They can be seen from the various public footpaths and from the open access land (CROW 2000) over Troughstones Hill which gives overlooking views from some 600m away to the south west.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is a fully enclosed steel portal frame detached shed 18.8m x 12m (226m²) with dual pitched roof to ridge height 5.3m and eaves height c.3.8metres.

Walls to height 2.0m would be of pre-cast concrete panels. A 3.5m high x 3.4m roller shutter style door is shown to the west gable and to one end of the north side elevation plus a personnel door at each end of this north side elevation. The walls are otherwise faced externally with box profile metal sheet cladding in green, with the roof also in green. Solar panels are proposed to the south roof slope and sky-lights to the north roof slope.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application is submitted with a biodiversity net gain farm plan including a series of habitat maps and a metric calculation including spreadsheet. The red edge on the location plan drawing has been drawn to include sites Within the ownership where biodiversity net gain is proposed to be carried out. These include two field boundary lengths.

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
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 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

DET/2024/0042 – Application to determine if prior approval is required for - a new agricultural storage building Length 18.7m, Height to eaves 3.6m, Breadth 12.1m. Height to ridge 5.4m – refused (Part 6)

There is an extended planning history for the previously developed parts of the ownership. Most are associated with extensions and alterations to the dwelling but SMD/2014/0701 granted a Certificate of existing lawful use for land which it was accepted was land forming part of the domestic curtilage. The certificate applied to an area of land totalling 5273m² within an overall holding of 44922m².

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 30.04.2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council – approve with conditions: subject to compliance with Green Belt regulations and that renewable energy should be incorporated within the site.

Public Rights of Way user groups

The use of any PROWs, and the safety of users must not be affected by the development, nor during the work taking place.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In the rural areas Local Plan policy SS10 provides only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside.

Firstly, it can readily be understood and accepted that farm developments will of necessity normally need to be located in the countryside. To this extent a countryside location can therefore be considered essential. However, it must also follow that in order to be considered essential the actual requirement for the building must itself be essential. It cannot in other words be 'essential' for a development to be located in the countryside if there is not an essential need for it. This goes beyond simply recognising that the proposed use is agricultural and involves understanding the actual need in any given case.

The question of need for this building has been subject to extended scrutiny. The initial application was accompanied by a general statement supplied by Graham Watkins and Co of Leek who in very general terms set out the anticipated basis for the need of this building. In response to the council's concerns on this point the applicant commissioned a further report from Wharfe Rural Planning Services. Again this is relatively general in its assessment but it does describe and quantify an arguable basis for the size of building proposed. This is based on a general

understanding that a farm will have requirements to house machinery and equipment as well as dry storage space for fodder and bedding. Some equipment lists have also been provided.

Although at present understood not to have any livestock the application sets out an intention on the part of the applicant to develop a significant flock of sheep. The stocking numbers proposed for this size of holding are likely to be over ambitious at this upland grassland location. Nevertheless, a flock of an appropriate size, even if lesser in number, may have need for winter fodder and can be expected to require temporary short duration undercover space during lambing.

Whilst opinions between the applicant and the council differ as to the exact requirements the report by Wharf Rural Planning goes so far as to claim that in fact additional space could potentially be justified. In the absence of any strong information to the contrary it can be accepted that in principle the proposal meets the council's expectations under policy SS10. Although located in the Green Belt, as an agricultural development the scheme benefits from the exception under paragraph 154 (a) whereby a building for agriculture is considered not inappropriate. In green belt terms the proposal is also therefore acceptable in principle.

The main issues with the scheme are therefore matters of appearance and siting and ability to meet biodiversity net gain requirements.

Design / Character and Appearance

The building has a somewhat industrial appearance due to sheet metal cladding and roller shutter doors but helpfully its lower sections reveal exposed concrete base panels which is a common design form for modern agricultural storage buildings. Dark green external colouring to the metal panel walls and roof also assists. The addition of solar roof panels to the south elevation is unlikely to interfere unduly with the general appearance as typically these will appear dark in colour.

Alternative locations were discussed with the applicant as this proposal involves projecting development out into a field adjacent to the current developed farmstead area. However, that said, the building would stand in alignment with the existing stables. In other words, the development would stand in association with the existing building arrangement to some degree and helpfully does not involve a wholly standalone new development in the countryside.

Amenity

In terms of living conditions for residents or occupiers of nearby buildings there are not found to be any likely adverse impacts to arise from the siting. The nearest un-associated neighbour appears to be at Bentley House 230m to the north east. Butterlands Farm is some 440m to the south east. Royal Cottages and Singing Brook to the south and south west respectively are a similar 450m or so away.

BNG

The agent for the applicant has taken a straight forward approach using a commercially available standard form. Existing habitats across the application red edge have been mapped and quantified with biodiversity values ascribed totalling 0.4366 units pre-development. Post development 0.671 units are identified. This is stated to be a gain of 0.2344 units or 53.68%. The basic implications of this scheme are a loss of semi-improved agricultural grassland over a relatively modest area and compensatory net gain delivered by hedgerow planting. The efforts in this case are judged adequate and the requirements of BNG are considered suitably met.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In consideration of all of the above the application is recommended for approval. The decision should spell out very clearly that approval of the scheme is only made acceptable on the basis of agricultural use and that alternative uses will not be permissible unless a further application is made. Non-agricultural use of the development would therefore be subject to potential enforcement action by the council.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **approve**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 06.03.2026

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council