

## DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

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**SMD/2024/0543**  
**Valid 16/01/2025**

**MOORVILLE HALL FARM**  
**LEEK ROAD**  
**MOORVILLE**  
**CELLARHEAD**

**PORTAL FRAMED**  
**AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.**  
  
**(FULL - MINOR)**

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### MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt  
The principle of development  
The impact on the character and appearance of the area  
The impact on residential amenity  
The impact on highway safety  
The impact on the ecological value of the site

### DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies within the open countryside about a mile to the south of Cellarhead and is also in the Green Belt. It comprises a farm on the east side of Leek Road, A520 main road and is reached via a short farm access off this road. The application site encloses all the main farm buildings comprising mostly of modern portal framed agricultural buildings in the west part of the site and a detached farmhouse, to the east, across a yard, facing the farm buildings. To the south and also to the west, is the grounds of Moorville Hall hotel. Open land lies to the north and east of the site.

### PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for an agricultural storage building which would be placed in a garden area occupying a gap to the south of the yard between the farmhouse and farm buildings to the west and which would be adjacent to the south boundary of the farm. It would have a standard rectangular footprint (with dimensions of 10 x 13m) but a rather oblique roof shape with a ridge off centre and half a roof slope stopping at the edge of the site and edge of the modern barn. The eaves height is 2.4m and the ridge height is 5.1m. It would have concrete blockwork walls up to the eaves and timber boarding above in the gables. The roof would comprise corrugated metal sheeting. An existing open sided smaller brick lean-to structure (21 sq.m) would be removed. A tree which is adjacent to the brick south boundary wall would also be removed and the wall repaired or rebuilt. The layout drawing also shows a workshop room and WC in the corner of the proposed building.

A Planning Statement has been submitted which explains that the building would provide a dry and secure space for the purpose of food and bedding storage and maintenance of farm equipment and that food, bedding, equipment storage and the isolation pen currently share space in the adjacent barn, so the proposed structure will improve farm management.

Regarding storage space needs, the agent also sent an email stating “the volume of covered storage area required has stayed the same, they've merely rearranged how it is employed”.

In April 2025, a Biodiversity Net Gain Report was submitted and additional site plans showing the extent of the farm ownership and the planting of 46 new trees in the fields to the north and east of the site.

## **RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES**

### **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)**

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- NE1 Biodiversity
- NE2 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland.

### **National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2025)**

Sections 6 (Economy), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

## **SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS**

DET/2024/0043: Livestock Building under Part 6 of the GPDO. Refused.  
This was to be placed in the same part of the site and had a similar size and footprint as the one now proposed.

DET/2025/0031: Notification under Part 3 Class R of the GPDO to change the use of an agricultural building to a Class E Commercial Use.

This was submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 and relates to the existing agricultural building adjacent to the proposed new agricultural building applied for under this current full planning application.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Publicity**

Site Notice expiry date: 04.03.25  
Neighbour consultation period ends: 04.03.25  
Press Advert: N/A

### **Public Comments**

An objection letter has been received from Moorville Hall Hotel claiming that the building would lead to an exacerbated rat infestation affecting the hotel and would also need to an increase in noise from machinery using the building. The letter also claims there appears to be less farming occurring and more commercial uses including tree chopping/storing and therefore questions the need for the building.

## **Parish Council Comments**

No objection.

## **Local Highways Authority**

No objection.

## **Environmental Health**

No objection subject to standard conditions normally applied to new agricultural buildings.

## **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust**

A Holding Objection was issued. SWT requested further BNG information and a Bat Survey report focussing on nearby trees.

## **Tree Officer**

No objection but recommends in the event of an approval, that there should be some landscape and ecology mitigation and enhancement to compensate for the proposed loss of the tree next to the boundary of the hotel. The more detailed comments provided are as follows:

*Tree-wise, the main issue is the mature Sycamore (either a multi-stemmed tree of 5 main stems, or up to 5 very closely grouped individual trees with a combined "common" canopy) within a small stone wall retained raised bed against the brick-built boundary wall. Clearly, and as indicated in the application's supporting information, this/these tree(s) would have to be removed in order to accommodate the proposal. Not currently protected.*

*The tree is not readily visible from the A520 Leek Road, and in fact probably not visible at all from here even in winter when frontage trees in the hotel grounds are out of leaf. Looking at air photos, and given the distance of the tree (>200m) from the nearest stretch of public footpath to the east with some intervening screening by buildings and other trees, I suspect the subject Sycamore would also not be of significant visual prominence from these footpath viewpoints. There's nothing I can see in your site photos to indicate that the Sycamore is itself in poor condition. As far as I am able without benefit of a detailed inspection and assessment from surrounding viewpoints, my amenity assessment of the Sycamore against our normal TPO-making criteria would suggest insufficient significance/quality/public amenity value to justify TPO protection.*

*The planning statement suggests this tree(s) is/are causing damage to adjacent/surrounding structures, and whilst this is not conclusively shown on the photos, its evident immediate proximity to the brick-built boundary wall, the lean-to, and potentially even the adjacent chalet buildings at the hotel, makes it a distinct*

*possibility that damage to any or all of these structures is already occurring and/or could be anticipated in the future.*

*Distilling the above points, I'd conclude that it would not be appropriate to object to/refuse the application on the grounds of the unavoidable loss of this Sycamore nor to seek siting amendment to accommodate retention of the tree (such re-positioning would really need to achieve c.10 – 11m distance between new built development and tree stem positions to make tree retention properly viable, disregarding any unacceptable damaging impact the tree may already be having on existing structures).*

## **OFFICER COMMENTS**

The site is in the Green Belt and Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF in paras 154 and 155 sets out the exceptional forms of development which are not deemed to be inappropriate. Para 154 includes “buildings for agriculture and forestry”. However, although this is applied for, in order to fully protect the Green Belt, it needs to be established if there is any justification or need for a new agricultural building. The site is part of a farm where a number of large buildings already exist and so it must be explored if any of these could be re-used for the proposed agricultural storage purposes applied for to alleviate the need for a new building which would undoubtedly have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

The applicant states the reason for a new building is to provide a dry and secure space for the purpose of food and bedding storage and maintenance of farm equipment and that food, bedding, equipment storage and the isolation pen currently share space in the adjacent barn, so the proposed structure will improve farm management. The proposed site plan shows that the adjacent barn (which would lie to the north-west of the proposed barn and across the yard from the farm dwelling) would be used solely for isolation cattle pens and agricultural equipment storage, with further equipment storage, food and bedding, proposed for the new building.

However, on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025, a Notification was received by the Council for the change of use of the adjacent barn (shown for equipment storage and isolation pens) to a “Class E” commercial use i.e. not agricultural. This would appear to indicate , that the applicant deems the building to be surplus to the farm's agricultural requirements. However, it is clearly capable of a continued agricultural storage use (as this is what it has historically been used for and probably built for that purpose) and that the condition of the building, a modern typical portal framed building, is clearly adequate for this purpose. Therefore, this removes the justification of a need for a new agricultural building, as there is an existing “redundant” agricultural building which could be used. It has therefore not been demonstrated that the new building is reasonably required for the purpose of agriculture.

Furthermore, as a commercial new use is being introduced into the farm, It is not considered definite that the new building will be an “agricultural building”. This is therefore contrary to para 154 of the NPPF. There are no other forms of development under paras 154 or 155 that the proposed development could be

categorised under. Therefore, the proposed building would be deemed to amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, that is by definition in the NPPF, harmful to its openness. The NPPF also states that such development should not be approved unless there are any very special circumstances that are considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. I do not consider that any such very special circumstances exist.

The application should therefore be refused as inappropriate development in the Green Belt and contrary to NPPF Section 13 'Protecting Green Belt Land' and also therefore Policy SS10 of the Local Plan. It is unacceptable in principle.

With regard to other impacts, the proposed building would be in concealed location within the farm building group with other larger and higher structures largely surrounding it including hotel buildings to the south. Despite the oblique shape (presumably designed to fit into the space) and roller shutter doors, it would overall have the form and materials that are not untypical of a farm building and would in any be very well screened from the road and public footpaths and would not result in any significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Although a significant tree adjacent to the south boundary wall would be lost to make way for the building, the Tree Officer considers there are limits to its amenity value and has not raised an objection. The applicant proposed to plant a large number of new trees, which could be achieved by way of a planning condition, to mitigate and compensate for its loss.

It would not lead to any negative impacts on the adjacent hotel to the south by way of increased noise and disturbance as the hotel has always been adjacent to the working farm. No objection has been raised by the Council's Environmental Health Section.

For the above reasons, I do not consider the proposed development would lead to conflict with policies DC1 or NE2 of the Local Plan.

Finally, with regard to ecological impacts, SWT has issued a Holding Objection as it considers the surrounding trees have potential for bats and may be affected by the new building. The development would lead to the loss of one tree but nearby trees could also contain bats or roosts affected by "light spill". A Bat Survey was requested but has not been received. Therefore the impact on bats and the ecological value of the site cannot be assessed. The application therefore does not comply with policy NE1 of the Local Plan which aims to avoid harm to protected species and protect and enhance the ecological value of the site.

The proposed development also requires a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The SWT Holding Objection also requests further information relating to baseline biodiversity calculations and other details in support of achieving BNG. The application proposes a large number of new trees to be planted to achieve BNG and there is ample space around the site to achieve this within the farm property. However, this is outside of the red edge and therefore will need to be secured through a Section 106 agreement in order to secure the necessary monitoring. No such agreement is in place. Coupled with the information, such as that requested above and which has

not been received, is insufficient to demonstrate that BNG can be achieved, further contrary to Policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the intention to introduce commercial uses into the farm, it is therefore considered that it has not been demonstrated that a new agricultural building is required. The proposal is deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which should only be allowed under very special circumstances but it is considered that no such circumstances exist. As the principle of the proposal is deemed to be unacceptable, it does not comply with Policy SS10 of the Council's Local Plan or Section 13 of the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore should be refused. There is also insufficient information to properly assess the impact on protected species such as bats and the ecological value of the site or that BNG can be achieved, which leads to further reasons for refusal.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE**

**Case Officer: Chris Johnston**  
**Recommendation Date: 08.12.25**

X *B.J. Haywood*

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Signed by: Ben Haywood

**On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**