

Application No: 12/2276N  
Location: The Spinney, WIRSWALL ROAD, WIRSWALL, SY13 4LB  
Proposal: Replacment Agricultural Building  
Applicant: Mr Mike Merrill, Swanley Mowers  
Expiry Date: 26-Nov-2012

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approval**

**MAIN ISSUES: Agricultural justification.  
Impact on the character of the surrounding area.  
Impact on amenity.**

**REASON FOR REFERRAL**

The application is subject to Councillor call-in by the ward member as *“the building is too large for the paddock and can be seen from the A49”*

**1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

This application site comprises a 2.4ha field within the open countryside in an area identified as Special County Value by the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. The field is accessed by an un-surfaced single track lane from Wirswall Road which is class as a bridleway.

The site does not appear to have any existing agricultural purpose but contains a small set of wood stables and a steel clad building, which has recently been enlarged and is open on one side. There is no record of planning consent for these buildings or the extension. It is also noted that a large area of hard standing in the form of re-used concrete railway sleepers has been introduced without consent however, the agent has indicated that a separate application would be submitted in due course.

The Authority has been in negotiation with the Applicant for a number of months due to concerns relating to justification and the buildings relationship with the existing stables and the hard standing. In response the applicant has submitted a business case to support the proposal.

**2. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The proposal only involves replacement of the steel clad building with a modern steel frame building at the same position. The applicant intends to use 50% of the land as a nursery for the growing of conifer trees which would be harvested for use as decorative Christmas trees. The building which measures (approx) 14m x 8m x 5.3m high is required for the storage of equipment, machinery and pesticides in associated with the planting and general maintenance of the land.

### **3. RELEVANT HISTORY**

None recorded

### **4. POLICIES**

#### **Local Plan Policy**

NE.2 Open Countryside

NE.3 Areas of Special County Value.

NE.9 Protected Species.

NE.14 Agricultural Buildings Requiring Planning Permission.

BE.1 Amenity.

BE.2 Design Standards.

#### **Other Material Considerations**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

### **5. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Environmental Health:** No objection

**Public Rights of Way Unit:** No objection in principle

### **6. VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL:**

No comments

### **7. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:**

A number of comments have been received from the general public. The material planning issues raised are:-

Concerns relating to the scale of the building and its impact on the character of its surroundings;

Impact of increased vehicle movements along the access track;

Inconsistencies in the supporting planning statement.

The presented justification lacks credibility.

The Authority has also received two comments which support the proposal on the basis that increased activities on the site had resulted in improvements to the bridleway (access track)

## **8. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION:**

### **Planning Statement and Business Plan submitted by the Applicant's agent.**

The main points are:-

- The current dilapidated building is inadequate due to its condition and the Applicant's new requirement to store machinery and equipment securely.
- The new building will replace a building which has become an eyesore.
- The building will be agricultural in style and located over the footprint of the existing building.
- The development is compliant with Policies NE.2 and NE.3 of the Local Plan.
- The Applicant wishes to make a supplementary income from the underutilised parcel of land.
- Initially 2000 saplings will be planted covering 0.5 acre although it is anticipated that half of the site (1.2 ha) will be covered by year 6.
- Each 0.5 acre will generate a 10% return on the investment after six year cycle.

## **9. OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

A number of comments have been received relating to other activities on the site including a large area of hard standing however, this application only relates to the construction of a building for agricultural/horticultural purposes. Reference has been made to inconsistencies in the supporting planning statement however, the subsequently submitted business plan clarifies the intended use of the land and provides the business case for the building.

As the building would be considerably larger (112m<sup>2</sup>) than the existing building which had a floor area of approx. 35m<sup>2</sup>, additional information was requested in order to ascertain whether the building could be justified. The additional information together with the planning statement demonstrates that the existing steel clad building is not appropriate for storing equipment and material associated with the agricultural use of the land due to its design and current condition.

Policy NE.2 and Policy NE.14, amongst other things, supports the construction of new agricultural building when they are essential to the agricultural operation. The Applicant states that he wishes to intensify and change the way in which the land is currently utilised. It is clear that the original building is not fit for purpose, due to its condition. Whilst the new building is considerably larger than the original building it is relatively modest in scale when compared to other agricultural buildings.

It is considered that the applicant has demonstrated that the building is essential to the intensified agricultural activities and will facilitate for the storage of a tractor and other associated equipment and material however, a condition is recommended requiring the removal of the building should it cease to be required for the purposes of agriculture within the holding.

However, the proposal must be measured against other relevant policies, in particular Policy BE.1 & BE.2, to fully assess the impact.

### **Design**

Policy BE.2 & Policy NE.3 require development to achieve a high standard of design and to respect the pattern, character and form of the surroundings. The original scheme proposed a slate roof and wooden cladding however, following officer comment the finishes have been amended to provide steel profiling to both the roof and walls, Juniper Green in colour, because it was considered this design characteristic better reflected the utilitarian nature and purpose of the building. The design and finish of the building is typical of small agricultural buildings found within the open countryside and whilst it can be seen from both the adjacent bridleway and the A41 the visual intrusion will be mitigated by the existing hedgerows and the adjacent woodland.

The actual construction detail of the building has not been provided therefore, a condition requiring these details to be agreed is recommended to ensure that the form of the building is appropriate to its intended function.

### **Amenity**

The building is located well away from residential property therefore, there will be not direct amenity issues. Comments have been received which claim that the building will facilitate for an increase in vehicle movements along the access track and that this will have an adverse impact on amenity. The applicant has stated that he intends to intensify the use of the land therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that there will be an increase in associated vehicle movements. However, the activities referred to could take place without the building as agricultural activities fall outside the scope of planning control. Notwithstanding this comment, it could be claimed that the building will reduce the number of vehicle movements because machinery and material can be stored on site without the need to transport to and from.

### **Ecology**

The building is considered to be modest in scale and as such it is not considered that it would have a measurable impact on an ecological resource. Nevertheless, a survey of

the existing building to be demolished is required to ensure that there is no adverse impact on any protected species. This has been reported to the applicant's agent and an update will be provided accordingly.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

Section 3 of the NPPF imposes a duty on the Local Planning Authority to support a prosperous rural economy and to promote the development of agricultural businesses.

The proposed building is considered to represent a use that can be essential to the agricultural use of the land within the open countryside location. The modest scale and capacity of the building and its relationship to nearby dwellings will not result in an adverse impact on amenity over and above that which is normally experienced within rural areas.

The proposal, as conditioned, represents an appropriate form development within the open countryside without detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity or environmental resource and therefore complies with Policy NE.2 (Open Countryside); NE.14 (Agricultural Buildings Requiring Planning Permission); BE.1 (Amenity) and BE.2 (Design Standards) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and compliant with guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions

- 1. Standard**
- 2. Construction details to be submitted for agreement.**
- 3. Removal of the building should the land cease to be used for agriculture within 3 years.**
- 4. Drainage**
- 5. Approved plans**

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