

<b>Planning Reference No:</b>	09/3030N
<b>Application Address:</b>	Whitehall Farm, Alsager Road, Haslington, Crewe, Cheshire, CW11 4RQ
<b>Proposal:</b>	New Agricultural Building and Slurry Lagoon
<b>Applicant:</b>	C E and G S Whitter and Sons
<b>Application Type:</b>	Agricultural Buildings and Operations
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	375249 357911
<b>Ward:</b>	Doddington
<b>Earliest Determination Date:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
<b>Expiry Dated:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
<b>Date of Officer's Site Visit:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
<b>Date Report Prepared:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
<b>Constraints:</b>	Wind Turbine Development Consultation Area

**SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:** Approve subject to conditions

**MAIN ISSUES:**

- Principle of Development
- Design
- Amenity
- Impact on Listed Buildings
- Landscaping
- Highways and
- Ecology

## 1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application would normally be referred to the Southern Planning Committee by virtue of its scale. However, due to the timing for the end of public consultation and the expiry date for the determination of the application, the scheme has been brought to the Strategic Planning Board to enable a decision to be issued to the applicants within the prescribed time period.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

Whitehall Farm is a working dairy farm and is set back from the main road by a distance in excess of 10m. The farmhouse is a traditional 2 storey property constructed out of facing brick under a grey slate roof, which is located adjacent to a number of traditionally constructed barns. The farm has a number of more modern utilitarian buildings which are located towards the rear of the complex, which comprise of silage clamps, livestock and storage buildings. There are a few residential properties which are located along this stretch of Alsager Road. The applicants property is located wholly within the open countryside.

## 3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This is a full application for a new agricultural building and slurry lagoon. The proposed agricultural building will be located adjacent to existing farm buildings. The proposed

agricultural building will measure approximately 67.1m long by 22.8m wide which equates to a floor area of approximately 1530msq. Around the periphery of the building is a concrete apron, which measures approximately 5.5m wide. The stock building will measure 3.7m high to the eaves and 7.6m high to the ridge. The building will be erected wholly on grassland. The slurry lagoon will be sited immediately adjacent to the existing farm complex and will be located to the west of the proposed cattle shed and to the east of a track, which is bounded by post and wire fence. The slurry lagoon will measure 39.9m long by 21m wide and will have a depth of 2.5m.

#### **4. RELEVANT HISTORY**

P93/0530 – Sileage Clamp (GDO Determination). Details Not Required – 8<sup>th</sup> July 1993  
P01/0720 – Construction of Sileage Clamp. Approved 13<sup>th</sup> September 2001  
P05/0891 – Erection of Agricultural Building. Approved 19<sup>th</sup> August 2005

#### **5. POLICIES**

##### **National Policy**

The application should be determined in accordance with national guidance set out in:

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)  
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004)  
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment

##### **Local Plan Policy**

NE.2 (Open Countryside)  
NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats)  
NE.9 (Protected Species)  
NE.14 (Agricultural Buildings Requiring Planning Permission)  
BE.1 (Amenity)  
BE.2 (Design Standards)  
BE.3 (Access and Parking)  
BE.4 (Drainage and Infrastructure)  
BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions)

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

**Highways:** No objections

**Environmental Health:** No objections

**Ecologist:** No objections

**Conservation Officer:** No objections

## **7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council support the application to facilitate the investment in improved cattle facilities at Whitehall Farm, but request the removal of the existing "industrial style" slurry tower once the new slurry pit is commissioned.

## **8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

No representations received at the time of writing this report

## **9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Design and Access Statement**

- The proposed cubicle shed is to be sited adjacent to the existing farm buildings to lessen environmental impact and will not be seen over a short distance by neighbours or from public roads and footpaths. The squat design and traditional materials utilised will help in regard to this. The slurry lagoon is also sited away from neighbours and public areas;
- The proposal is for one building of 1533 square metres which is considered optimum for the economic benefits;
- For housing cattle (184+ cubicles provided);
- The building is positioned adjacent to the existing hardstanding area surrounding the existing farm buildings. this will allow suitable access to the building for cattle and servicing tractors/machinery;
- The size of the building 67.1m x 22.85m x 7.6m ridge height is required to provide an economical unit for housing cattle;
- The siting of the proposed building/slurry lagoon is provided with existing middle distance tree screening;
- The new unit walls will be clad in timber space boarding above 1600mm. high precast concrete walls. the roof will be clad in profile 6 anthracite (grey/brown) fibre cement roofing sheets with 12 no. lights per bay; and
- The existing vehicular access to the site from the public road will be retained, this has been a proven access to the farm and is considered adequate. Emergency services will be served by this arrangement and emergency evacuation should be effected easily.

## **10. OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

The site is an operational farm, characterised by traditional farm buildings within the open countryside. The principle of an agricultural building that is essential to the agricultural practice is acceptable in the open countryside and accords with Policy NE.2 (Open Countryside). There is general policy support for agricultural development within the open countryside and paragraph 16 of PPS.7 states that local planning authorities should '*support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises*'. The Replacement Local Plan outlines the need to strike a balance between development which will sustain the rural economy and the need to protect the countryside for its own sake. It is also necessary to recognise the changing needs of agriculture.

The key issues, therefore, are whether the proposed siting of the cubicle shed and slurry lagoon is appropriate in terms of safeguarding neighbouring amenities and safeguarding the appearance of the open countryside and impact on the local highway network.

## Design

### *Cubicle Stock Building*

The proposed building is appropriately scaled and designed for its purpose, and would be in keeping with the adjacent agricultural buildings and the rural setting. The building is of typical construction and comprises a steel portal frame clad on the roof with anthracite fibre cement roofing sheets. The gable and side elevations will be constructed out of concrete block work to a height of 1.6m and timber space boarding located directly above. In addition, there will be three large apertures (on either end of the building) in order to give access to feed and muck passages. According to the submitted plans the building is split up into a number of bays and each bay will have 12 no. roof lights (6 on each roof plane). The ridge height of the proposed building is similar in height to other buildings located within the immediate locality. The development is located at the rear of a silage clamp and other existing buildings, which will help to screen the proposal. There is a distance in excess of 85m separating Alsager Road from the application site. The boundary treatment comprises hedgerow and sporadic tree cover, a landscaping condition could be added to help to mitigate any negative externalities caused by the proposal.

Given the location and the surrounding nature and use of the land the proposal would not appear divorced from the existing complex of buildings nor would it appear as an alien feature. There is sufficient space within the site to accommodate this development, and the proposed building would relate well to its surroundings. There are, therefore, no objections to the proposal on design grounds.

### *Slurry Lagoon*

Policy NE.17 (Pollution Control) states that all development proposals should ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent, reduce or minimise pollution. Policy NE.2 (Open Countryside) states that within the open countryside only development which is essential for the purposes of agriculture is permitted. There is also a need to ensure that development in the open countryside does not detract from the amenity of the surroundings.

According to the submitted plans the slurry lagoon will measure 39.9m long by 21m wide and will have a depth of 2.5m. According to the plans the lagoon will be excavated and then concrete lined and will incorporate a loading ramp. This is an underground lagoon and therefore is an unobtrusive feature which would not have an adverse impact upon the character of the open countryside.

According to the submitted plans the applicant is proposing to install a 2m high wire mesh fence around the periphery of the lagoon for safety purposes. It is considered that the boundary treatment (which could be constructed under the applicants permitted development rights) will have a lower impact upon the character and appearance of the open countryside than other forms of fencing. Nevertheless, a condition will be attached to the decision notice stipulating that the fence shall be finished green, in order to help to assimilate the proposal into the environment.

Overall this underground lagoon is an unobtrusive feature which would have a minimal impact upon its surroundings. The wire mesh fencing would be visible, however, this would be against the backdrop of existing farm buildings.

## **Amenity**

The impact of the development upon the amenity of nearby residential properties is a key consideration with this application and the nearest residential property which may be affected by the proposals is Whitehall Cottage.

Whitehall Cottage is located to the south of the application site and there is a distance in excess of 85m separating this property from the application site. Located in between the application site and Whitehall Cottage are a number of outbuildings. It is considered the intervening buildings and the separation distances will help to mitigate any negative externalities caused by the proposal and the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of the occupiers of this property. Furthermore, the Councils Health Environment Department has been consulted and they have raised no objection to the proposal.

## **Impact on Listed Buildings**

Located to the south of the application site are Whitehall and Whitehall Cottage both of which are Grade II listed buildings. There is a distance in excess of 85m separating the listed buildings from the application site and located in between are a number of modern utilitarian farm buildings. It is considered, given the separation distances and intervening buildings, the proposed development will not have an impact on the setting of the listed building. The Conservation Officer has been consulted and she has no objections to the proposal.

## **Landscaping**

Located to the north of the proposed cattle shed is a large mature oak tree. The applicant has submitted a plan showing that the proposed extension will stop approximately 12m short of the tree. However, it is considered to be prudent to attach a condition relating to tree protection measures. Furthermore, the application site currently backs onto open fields and to help to assimilate the proposal into the natural environment and make it appear less stark, a condition relating to landscaping will be attached to the decision notice.

## **Highways**

The site will be accessed via the existing farm drive and the applicant has stated that there will be no increase in the amount of vehicle movements as a result of this application. It is also noted that the highway authority has raised no objection and therefore it is not considered that a refusal on highway grounds could be sustained.

## **Ecology**

The Cheshire East Ecologist has viewed the submitted plans and accompanying supporting information and concludes that he does not anticipate the proposal having any adverse ecological impacts associated with the proposed development. Consequently, the proposed development accords with policy NE.9 (Protected Species).

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed agricultural building and slurry lagoon are appropriate in terms of scale, form, character and appearance for the purpose they will serve. The impact on residential amenity will be marginal given the separation distances involved and the existing agricultural buildings on the site and the development will not have any adverse impact on protected species in the area. Furthermore, the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. Therefore the proposal is in accordance with policies NE.2 (Open Countryside), NE.9 (Protected Species), NE.14 (Agricultural Buildings Requiring Planning Permission), BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and Parking) and BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011.

## **12. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE subject to the following conditions**

- 1. Standard**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Landscaping submitted**
- 5. Landscaping implemented**
- 6. No external lights**
- 7. Drainage**
- 8. Colour of Fencing**
- 9. Tree Protection Measures**

# Location Plan: Cheshire East Council Licence No. 100018515

