

Application No: 10/0696M
Location: GRANGE FARM, HOLMES CHAPEL ROAD, TOFT, KNUTSFORD, WA16 9RD
Proposal: REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING OUTMODED SEMI DERELICT AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS WITH A NEW PURPOSE DESIGNED AGRICULTURAL BUILDING

For MR IAN McGRATH, G.D. MCGRATH

Registered 25-Feb-2010
Policy Item No
Grid Reference 376382 373610

Date Report Prepared: 16th April 2010

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

MAIN ISSUES

- 1) Appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt
- 2) impact upon the visual amenity of the area
- 3) highway safety
- 4) impact on residential amenity

REASON FOR REPORT

The applicant is related to a Councillor and therefore, the application must be determined by committee under the terms of the Council's constitution.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

McGrath Partners is a family partnership consisting of Ian McGrath and his parents. The business farms a total of 126 ha, the land holding is split between the Tabley Estate and land owned by Cheshire East Council and various private landlords. A herd of 130 dairy cows are milked at Parkgate Farm Tabley and 150 dairy replacements are reared on the land at Tabley and Peover. Although Grange Farm (which is used for growing maize and grazing cattle) itself only extends to 11 ha the business farms a further 73 ha that adjoin the farm on various Farm Business Tenancies and contract farming agreements, as such the total area of land farmed on and around Grange Farm is 84ha.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The scheme would demolish two timber structures built in the 1960's which are in a poor state of repair and seeks consent for a new agricultural building with a floor space of 998 square metres (significantly larger than the buildings

which it would replace) which will partially be sited on the footprint of the existing buildings. The building would have an eaves height of 3.6m and a ridge line of 7.3m

The supporting information states that the structure would facilitate the redevelopment of Grange Farm to meet modern welfare standards and farming practices which have changed since the existing buildings were constructed.

RELEVANT HISTORY

65163P Installation underground of two 30 ft long x 9 ft dia steel tanks to collect existing discharge of farm effluent and prevent pollution of watercourse - approved 11.01.1991

66400P Excavate effluent lagoon 60'x 38'x 8' deep to collect existing farm drainage and prevent pollution of water course - approved 22.06.1992

09/3210M New agricultural building - refused 03.12.2009

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1, DP7 & EM1 (A)

Local Plan Policy

BE1, GC1, DC1, DC3, DC6 & DC28

Other considerations

PPG2: Green Belts

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No objections to previous submission

Landscape: did not object to previous submission

Jodrell Bank: no comments to make

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

None received to date

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None received to date

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A Supporting Planning Statement, Agricultural Appraisal, statement from Wright & Morten Veterinary Surgeons and a statement from Wisemans Dairies accompany the application. The full details of the supporting documents can be viewed on the application file/online.

The crux of the statements is that the herd which produces milk sold through Sainsbury's has to meet strict farm assurance requirements which is difficult with the existing buildings hence the application for a modern building to assist in meeting the requirements for animal health and welfare. The current buildings have deteriorated to the extent that animal health and welfare is now being comprised.

Grange Farm is used principally for grazing dairy heifers and dry cows. Both classes of stock require winter housing. The buildings at Parkgate Farm are fully utilised with milking cows and young calves and the landlord (the Crown Estate) will not permit any further buildings on the site.

The building will be for cattle/general purposes (storage of farm machinery, bedding etc). The appraisal states that a new building to provide 52 new cubicles with an undercover area (to replace facilities found in existing buildings) would normally have to be in excess of 582 square metres. The document explains that a building of 998 square metres is applied for, as the business rear surplus dairy heifers to provide a further income to supplement the milk cheque and young stock numbers are likely to increase in future years, it is entirely appropriate to build in an excess on top of current requirements in order to provide for future expansion.

A further 400 square metres is set aside for bedding, feed, fertilizer and secure storage of farm machinery.

It is concluded that the proposed building is fully justified by the current and likely future cattle housing requirements coupled with the need for secure machinery, feed/material storage.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Policy & Principle of Development

The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are the appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt and the impact upon the visual amenity of the area.

In terms of MBLP Policy GC1, the erection of buildings for agricultural purposes is appropriate in the Green Belt.

The application holding is an established dairy unit, and the purpose of the building is for the housing of livestock, feed, machinery etc. The applicant states that the existing building does not meet relevant welfare standards, and secure storage for machinery etc. is required. This view is supported by the farms veterinary surgeons and Wiseman Dairies.

The supporting information states that the 998 square metre building would provide 582 square metres for 52 new cubicles for bulling/dairy heifers with an undercover feed area, leaving 416 square metres. A maximum of 400 square metres would be assigned for secure storage for machinery and other farm requisites (straw bedding, feed, fertiliser etc). Going off the figures supplied in the supporting documents, 16 square metres would appear to be undesignated.

Even in light of the supplemented agricultural justification, concern is raised especially in terms of adequate justification for a structure of this size and scale. The figures given in terms of floor space are very vague and no floor plans have been submitted to give a greater insight into how the building would actually be used, this raises concern as the replacement structure would be significantly larger than the building it replaces. It was noted during the officer's site visit that the traditional 'parlour' building appears to be redundant. Although noting its narrow 'L' shaped design, it could be utilised for the storage of feed/fertiliser and other smaller items outlined in the supporting information, which could as a result reduce the required size of the new building.

Furthermore, the appraisal states that the structure would be larger than the current requirement of the existing farm practices, to allow for future expansion. It is considered that insufficient justification for the agricultural building has been included with this application for a building of the size and scale proposed.

Although the need for a replacement structure is not disputed and the principle of agricultural development is acceptable in the Green Belt, given the concern in relation to the lack of information, additional documentation has been requested from the agent and any details received will be provided in an update report.

Highways

The existing access, parking and turning arrangements are considered to be acceptable and the Strategic Highways Manager raised no objections to the previous submission.

Design

Policy DC28 states that "the design, scale and materials of the proposal should harmonise with the existing landscape and any existing buildings and

should not significantly harm or detract from the visual character of the area and its surroundings”.

The design of the building is fairly typical for a modern agricultural building and will be sited within the farmyard amongst the existing buildings that are present on site. However, the scale of the proposal would ‘dwarf’ the existing buildings. No justification has been provided with regard to the 7.3m high ridge line. The eaves line would be similar to those of existing buildings in the farmyard.

Although a significant amount of the building would be used for storing machinery, no details (e.g. specific machinery requirements) have been submitted as to why the ridge height has to be a pitch roof of 7.3m. It is envisaged that the roof could be redesigned so that it improves the impact on the openness of the green belt by reducing its overall mass and bulk.

The existing brick built buildings on site have a traditional appearance. The proposal would be a clear contrast to those as existing. It is a very modern design with a large number of roof lights and it would immediately abut the existing structure increasing the contrast between the designs of the structures and adding to the overall perceived bulk. There are limited views of the building from outside of the site, though the roofline would be visible due to the fact that the building is higher than others on site.

The materials (Yorkshire boarding concrete panels and grey fibre cement sheets) could be controlled by condition given the expanse of the structure and the views from public vantage points if the committee resolve to approve the application.

Amenity

The proposal is not considered to raise significant further amenity issues than from the existing situation. ‘Langley’ is the nearest residential property to the site (other than the farmhouse), and having viewed the proposal from the front amenity area/driveway of Langley the existing screening (even at this time of year) is considered to be sufficient to screen the majority of the proposal to eaves level. Furthermore, when consulted on the previous application the Landscape Officer believed no additional landscaping was required.

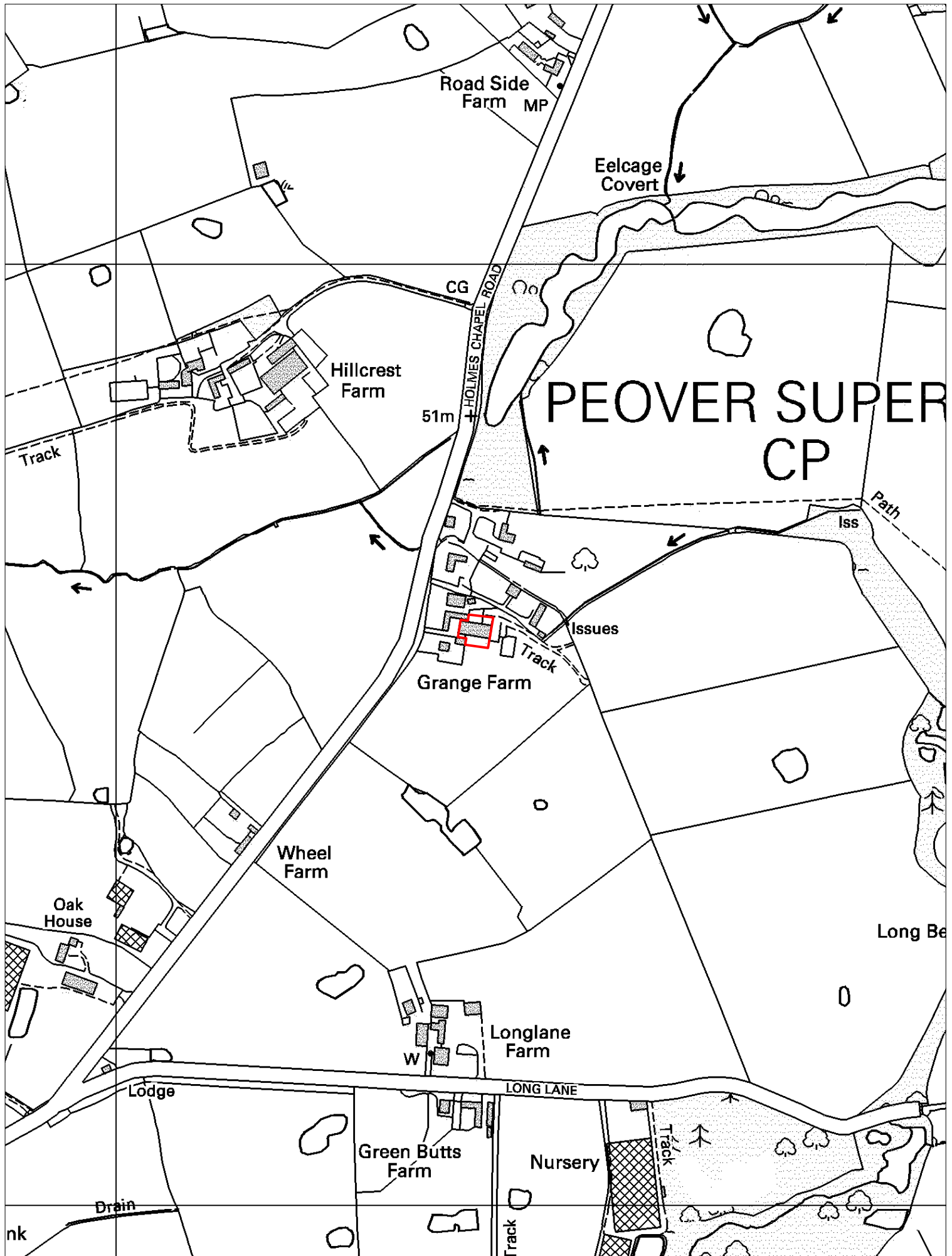
The closest edge of the proposal would be located around 13m from the shared boundary (which forms the access/drive) with ‘Langley’ and the rear of the structure would be located around 40 from the dwelling house.

Landscape

The Landscape Officer found the existing scenario satisfactory and it is considered that no further details/landscaping would be required.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

Whilst the principle of agricultural development is acceptable in the Green Belt, in this case, even in light of the additional information besides that submitted with the previous scheme, a building of the size proposed has not been justified and the development is therefore, inappropriate. Additionally, the scale and design of the building is unacceptable in relation to other buildings on site and would have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt.



GRANGE FARM, HOLMES CHAPEL ROAD, TOFT, KNUTSFORD, WA16 9RD
NGR: 376,380:373,610

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Application for **Full Planning**

RECOMMENDATION : Refuse for the following reasons

1. R06LP - Inadequate agricultural justification
2. R05LP - Harmful to appearance of the countryside