

6. FULL APPLICATION - PROPOSED OPEN GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO HOUSE LIVESTOCK AND STORE FODDER AND IMPLEMENTS AT MAYFIELD FARM, LITTON SLACK. (NP/DDD/0218/0139, P3923, 416175 / 373385, 21/02/2018)

APPLICANT: A & EM HOWE & SONS

1. Site and Surroundings

- 1.1 The site is located approximately 300m to the north of the main group of buildings associated with Mayfield Farm at Litton Slack. Litton Slack is a small hamlet lying in open countryside above and to the north of Litton Mill. It lies at the end of a culs-de-sac lane and comprises of, the farm and a terrace of 11 houses. The site is within the landscape character type of Limestone Village Farmlands in the Landscape Character Area of the White Peak.
- 1.2 The landscape here exhibits key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type including, a gently undulating plateau; pastoral farmland enclosed by drystone walls made of limestone and a repeating pattern of narrow strip fields.
- 1.3 The site area is an open and exposed location which has been used for agricultural purposes including storage of baled fodder, a slurry store and to store some machinery. The site stands out in the wider landscape as being isolated from the main group, and the existing storage/slurry/surfacing appears insensitive to the landscape setting, being sited in the limestone plateau, amongst the strip field system formed by drystone walls built of natural limestone.
- 1.4 Mayfield Farm is a holding comprising of 256 acres of land of which 180 are owned by the applicant. At the farmstead there is a modern farmhouse constructed from Davie blocks under a blue slate roof and a range of modern agricultural buildings. Adjacent to the farmstead there is a barn which has been converted into a holiday let in separate ownership. A row of terraced dwellings lie approximately 60m to the west of the farmstead and approximately 250m south of the site for the new building.
- 1.5 From the farmstead the land slopes away to the valley floor in a north to south direction, from the farmstead a footpath runs down into the valley to Litton Mill.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal is for a general purpose agricultural building to house livestock and store fodder and implements. It will not store the plastic wrapped bales already on the site, these will remain stored outside in their current location. It will store trailers, sprayers, rowing up machines, mowing machines, hay and retain an area free for ill or isolated livestock. Cattle would be housed in the building over winter months, sheep and lambs during lambing and general purposes storage when not required by livestock.
- 2.2 The building is 27.4m long and 15.2m wide. Its eaves height is 4.2m and its ridge height is 6.3m.
- 2.3 Its roof is clad with fibre cement sheets, finished in a dark slate blue colour (18B29). Amended plans show the walls are entirely clad with dark slate blue (18B29) polyester coated box profile steel sheets, leaving no pre stressed concrete panels exposed externally.
- 2.4 The north elevation is open, there are gated openings in the east and west gable ends. A concrete apron is proposed around the building, this is shown on the amended plans. The plans are not clear if the proposal will also require a hardstanding in the field to the north, there is an annotation saying so in the amended plans but it is not clear if this relates solely to the concrete apron.

- 2.5 On the amended plans the existing field boundary to the north will be repositioned slightly and formed with a drystone wall made of limestone to match the existing field boundaries. This will replace the existing post and wire fence.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. **The isolated siting of the building is away from the existing group of agricultural buildings at Mayfield Farm and would be obtrusive and harmful to the valued characteristics of the area and the National Parks landscape. The proposal is therefore contrary to the policies of the development plan including Core Strategy Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, Local Plan Policies LC4, LC13 and the Authority's SPG 'Agricultural Developments in the Peak District National Park' and the NPPF.**
4. **Key Issues**
 - Design, siting, amenity, agricultural justification and landscape impact.
5. **Relevant Planning History**
 - 5.1. There has been no pre application advice in relation to the proposed siting for the building. Furthermore there is no relevant planning history in relation to the existing storage of bails, slurry store and machinery at the site for the proposed building.
 - 5.2 1988 – Planning approval No NP/WED/188/35 for the dwelling at 'Mayfield Farm'. Its occupation is restricted to agricultural or forestry workers.
 - 5.3 2008 – Planning Approval under ref NP/DDD/0308/0257 allowed the Barn Conversion adjacent to the existing group of buildings as a holiday let dwelling.
 - 5.4 2014 – Approval at Mayfield Farm for a cover over an existing livestock gathering area via a prior notification application done under agricultural permitted development rights (NP/GDO/0314/0247).
6. **Consultations**
 - 6.1 Derbyshire County Council (Highways) – No objection subject to use remaining ancillary to Mayfield Farm.
 - 6.2 Derbyshire Dales District Council – No response to date.
 - 6.3 Litton Parish Council – Mr Howe and his family are long established farmers in the Parish and they need to expand their business so that it is viable and sustainable for the future. The Council consider that farming is an essential part of the Peak Park, contributing to the local economy in many ways, and would wish to see farms like Mayfields have a secure future. The proposed site for the building does not lead to the loss of good pasture and the Council considers a much needed barn would fit into the landscape in this part of the Parish.
 - 6.4 PDNPA Landscape Architect – Full response is available on the electronic file - The application site is situated on a raised undulating pastoral plateau with open far reaching views to higher and lower ground. To the south and west of the site are the limestone dales of Miller's Dale and Tideswell Dale, both of which fall into the natural zone, both are SSSI's and SAC's. At its closest point the application site lies 280m north of the natural zone. These limestone dales form a backdrop to the application site when viewed from the east and north.
 - 6.5 The nearest settlement to the proposed development is Littonslack some 268m to the south from which the proposed development will be viewed. The other nearby settlements are Cressbrook some 1000m south east in Miller's Dale and Litton 1500m north, due to existing

landform the development will not be seen from either of these villages. However the site is clearly seen from the road linking the two villages which is used both by residents and visitors to the National Park. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is provided. This shows the extent that the proposed development will possibly be seen in the wider landscape in particular to the south and west. The ZTV is based on a building of 6.0m high, and is based on landform only, existing trees and buildings will reduce the area of potential visibility.

- 6.6 Currently the proposed site appears to have already been developed for ancillary agricultural use by levelling and hard surfacing, the construction of a slurry pit, storage of silage bags and agricultural machinery. And whilst forming part of a larger field from which it has been separated by a stock proof fence. I am not aware that these works have planning permission. In its current state the existing site is a negative feature within the landscape.
- 6.7 The proposal is to provide a new agricultural building in the north west corner of the existing developed field, with the aim to provide space for animals, feed and agricultural machinery. The building has been orientated to line up with the slurry pit not the adjacent walls. And as it has had to be positioned to the north of the slurry pit the building has not been visually anchored into the landscape, being kept away from walls. The building position, along with open fronted feed area which faces north, towards the adjacent open field is likely to need an additional area to be surfaced increasing the degraded area of the existing site. The applicant has not indicated that any of the existing agricultural machinery on this site will be placed permanently in the building, nor if the site will stop being used for the storage of bagged silage, which forms a large, negative feature within the landscape. The proposed building will not provide any improvements to the site and will only add to this negative feature. There is the potential that this will be the start of a new larger ancillary farm which visually would dominate Littonslack, the existing farm and the landscape character of the area.
- 6.8 Based on the landscape strategy advice above the building should be part of the existing farm complex. The ideal location for the proposed building is place it on the south side of the farm buildings and at existing ground levels, here it has the ability to improve the visual impact of the farm group. When viewed from the south the proposed building would be seen against the backdrop of existing buildings, not as an individual element and at a lower level, it would also screen existing concrete block walling on existing buildings.
- 6.9 The application site is in an open undulating landscape where the few trees are clustered around existing development, and the application site is looked down upon from higher ground, in this location tree planting would be inappropriate.

7 Representations

- 7.1 Two representations in support have been received.
- 7.2 The support is based on the following grounds:
1. Family business, a vital and valued part of the local community.
 2. Essential that local business such as this are supported.
 3. Least intrusive option for a building on the site as it has been situated to the rear of the site and within a natural dip in the ground, so its visual impact has been limited as far as is practicably possible.
 4. The site is already used for the storage of silage, so the proposed plan is not to the detriment of a green field site.
 5. The site would require much less excavation and therefore disturbance to natural run off and drainage.

8 **Policies**

8.1 National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:

- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
- Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public

When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

National Planning Policy Framework

8.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 and replaced the 2012 NPPF with immediate effect. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.

8.3 Para 172 of the NPPF states that '*great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.*'

Development Plan policies

8.4 Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.

8.5 Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.

8.6 Policy L1 identifies that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan and other valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted. Amongst other things the valued characteristics identified for the purposes of the Core Strategy include: Natural beauty, natural heritage, landscape character and diversity of landscapes; sense of wildness and remoteness; thousands of years of human influence which can be traced through the landscape; distinctive character of hamlets, villages and towns; trees, woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, field barns and other

landscape features.

- 8.7 Local Plan Policy LC4 requires that the detailed treatments of development is of a high standard that respects, conserves and where possible enhances the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area. Particular attention is paid to: scale, form, mass and orientation in relation to existing buildings, settlement form and character, landscape features and the wider landscape setting; the degree to which design detail, materials, and finishes reflect or compliment the style and traditions of local buildings; the use and maintenance of landscaping to enhance new development, and the degree to which this makes use of local features and an appropriate mix of species suited to both the landscape and wildlife interests of the locality; the amenity, privacy and security of the development and of nearby properties.
- 8.8 LC13 deals specifically with agricultural developments and it is permissive provided they are close to the main group of buildings wherever possible and it relates well to them; respects the design, scale, mass and colouring of existing buildings; It must avoid harm to the areas valued characteristics including local views, making use of the least obtrusive or otherwise damaging location and must not require obtrusive access tracks, roads or services. These need to be designed with particular respect for the landscape and its historic patterns of land use and movement, and any landscape change likely to result from agricultural or forestry practices.
- 8.9 The Authority has produced an SPG for agricultural buildings. Para 3.1 explains that because of the natural beauty of the National Park, new agricultural buildings can have a very damaging impact on their surroundings without careful thought to siting, design and appearance. Para 3.4.5 this explains that it is best to keep new agricultural buildings close to the existing ones, relate well to them and make the best use of trees, walls and other landscape features. Para 3.4.8 explains that Isolated buildings in the open landscape are the most difficult to accommodate and should, where practicable (i.e. not to the detriment of natural ventilation and animal welfare), take advantage of natural dips in the land or be set against a hillside to reduce the visual impact. Avoid skyline sites or sites prominent from public viewpoints. Isolated buildings will usually require some landscaping. Careful siting in relation to existing mature trees, or other features such as stonewalls will also help merge a new building into the landscape. Good design can mean that not all new farm buildings need significant landscaping. Farm buildings are after all a traditional aspect of the landscape and where they are done well they should be integral to the landscape rather than completely screened from view. Para 3.6.3 explains the use of dark tones will help to reduce a buildings impact.
- 8.10 The Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan explains the site is within the White Peak within the 'Limestone Village Farmlands' landscape character type. A small-scale settled agricultural landscape characterised by Limestone Villages, set within a repeating pattern of narrow strip fields bounded by drystone walls. In this landscape character type priorities include protecting the historic pattern of enclosure, the nucleated settlement pattern and the integrity and setting of traditional buildings, whilst restoring the biodiversity of the pastoral farmland within a sustainable farming system.
- 8.11 Key characteristics of this Landscape Type include amongst other things:
- 8.11.1.1 A gently undulating plateau.
 - 8.11.1.2 Pastoral farmland enclosed by drystone walls made from limestone.
 - 8.11.1.3 A repeating pattern of narrow strip fields originating from medieval open fields.

Relevant Core Strategy (CS) policies: **GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, GSP4, L1.**

Relevant Local Plan (LP) policies: **LC3, LC4, LC13.**

9 Assessment

Principle

- 9.1 The Development Plan and other material considerations are generally supportive of agricultural development, where it is necessary, provided it would not harm the amenities or valued characteristics of the area or the National Parks Landscape. Appropriate design, siting and landscaping is also required.
- 9.2 The justification statement received in support of the building explains that the applicant has had to move in excess of 100 cattle back onto this holding as an alternative holding in Chesterfield has been lost.
- 9.3 In this case the agricultural need for the building is not disputed. The holding extends to approximately 265 acres. The farm is run to rear cattle and sheep and to produce the necessary fodder for the animals. The building would be for additional winter housing for cattle, to house and lamb sheep as well as to store fodder and implements.
- 9.4 However officers have significant concerns about the siting of the building because of the impact it will have on the valued characteristics of the area and the National Park's Landscape.

Design/ siting and impact on the National Parks Landscape

- 9.5 The general design of the building is of standard modern agricultural design, and this has been improved via amended plans since the application was deferred from May 2018 planning committee meeting.
- 9.6 The key concern is the siting for the building. It is proposed to be located standing alone in an isolated position away from the group of existing agricultural buildings which are some 300m to the south of the application site.
- 9.7 It is noted that on this parcel of land the farm currently stores wrapped baled fodder and implements and has created a slurry store. However this is not considered to justify siting a new building at this location. It does however serve to demonstrate how the existing impact of this site already detracts from the character and appearance, valued characteristics and natural beauty of the landscape. This is because it is so open and otherwise a visually attractive part of the limestone village farmlands landscape character type.
- 9.8 It should also be noted that the building will not house the wrapped bales on the existing site. These will remain stored as they are at present. So the proposed building won't serve to significantly tidy up or reduce the landscape impact of the existing agricultural operation on the site, it provides no conservation or enhancement of the site and will only serve to detract from its landscape setting adding the existing inappropriate agricultural intrusion into the open countryside.
- 9.9 The proposed site is far too open and isolated in the landscape to site a new building, as it would harm the valued characteristics of the area, is clearly open to public view and would be very obtrusive. Although the existing storage taking place at the site already detracts from the landscape setting, this provides no justification for the proposed building which would significantly exacerbate this harmful impact for the foreseeable future.
- 9.10 The Authority's Landscape Architects have provided a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which shows there would be far reaching views of the building.
- 9.11 In particular, the building would be open to view from the adjacent highway and from an elevated position from a long stretch of Bottomhill road to the east which is the main lane

down to Cressbrook from Litton. Viewed from Bottomhill Road the isolated location appears particularly harmful to the National Park's landscape. Its also likely to open to public view from more distant vantage points especially from the various public rights of way and access land in the wider landscape. In particular from the open access land to the south of Litton Mill, which is up the steep footpaths from the Monsal Trail, on and at the top of the steep hillside that rise southwards and over the open access land known as Burfoot from both the lower and higher paths. From much of these vantage points in this area there are clear and uninterrupted views of the site. Which is prominent at present even without the proposed building and is visually and geographically clearly separate to the main group of buildings at Mayfield Farm.

- 9.12 The harm that the building poses to the National Park's landscape is significant and the justification for the building does not outweigh this significant harm to the National Parks Landscape and valued characteristics.
- 9.13 Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Local Plan Policy LC13 and in this sensitive setting it will result in harm to the character and appearance and valued characteristics of the National Park's Landscape so is also contrary to Local Plan Policy LC4, Core Strategy Policy GSP1, GSP3, L1. It is also contrary to the Authority's SPG 'Agricultural Development in the Peak District' NPPF which explains that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection on relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
- 9.14 The current application should be determined on its merits. Therefore the possibility of alternative sites is only important insofar as to understand whether the site proposed is the least obtrusive or otherwise damaging. The possibility of alternative sites should not outweigh whether a proposal is acceptable or unacceptable on its own merits. Ultimately planning policies both nationally and locally in the Development Plan, and National Park Purposes themselves, would not permit or support a site which is harmful to the National Parks Landscape.
- 9.15 In planning terms there are four remaining clear alternatives, three which have been explored with the applicant. Each are adjoining or relatively close to the existing buildings.
- 9.16 There is a site to the south of the existing buildings that would need some excavation into the topography. Given the circumstance of land ownership on some of the other alternative sites both the Authority's Planning Officers and Landscape Architects now consider this to be the best alternative. It would also serve to enhance the site as there is opportunity to mask some of the exposed concrete panelling on the existing buildings. However the applicant has ruled this site out during discussions and later in writing because it is a sloping site and because of the excavation involved, also because they are concerned about control of nitrates in this area and because they consider it would require a new access track off and existing track approximately 250m to the east. However Officers do not accept this as given the topography of the National Park, digging into this type of topography are issues that are frequently encountered elsewhere on other farms and have rarely proved to be insurmountable. Officers do not accept that such a convoluted access route is the only way to access this site particularly as there is already an access track running along the south of the existing group of buildings and another access directly of the farmyard to this field. It is not considered that avoiding groundwork or access works is an acceptable reason to alternatively seek a building in a location with a significant landscape impact.
- 9.17 Just north of the main group of building, adjacent to the yard, there is a suitable site on land which the applicant rents but does not own. This is rented on a 12 monthly basis and the land owner will not let them build on the site. Land ownership cannot be taken into account in making planning decisions, so this alternative site should be given weight, even though the applicants currently do not own it. The land adjoining the group of building to the east also has potential, this is preferable to the proposed location but less desirable than the aforementioned site as it would extend the length of the group of building. Having asked the

applicant's agent about this site they have explained that this is also on rented land.

- 9.18 There remains an un explored alternative which would be to replace and better utilise the land in ownership at the east of the site. This is because there appears to be old fashioned and dilapidated part of the group of buildings at the east of the site and some outdoor space. There may be potential here for a replacement building and to extend off the existing buildings to incorporate the remaining outdoor space within the land in ownership.
- 9.19 A fifth site in the field to the west of the access has also been considered. This is better in terms of its relationship to the group of existing buildings as it would not appear so isolated. The applicant has concerns about improving the access and how siting a building there could raise objection with neighbouring properties. Its likely that it would find objection with neighbouring properties so can be ruled out.
- 9.20 Essentially where the applicant has ruled out the viable alternative sites it has not been on planning grounds, the first preference to the south of the existing group of building appears ideal in land use and landscape terms and is supported by both planning officers and Landscape Architects. The other sites, whilst not all ideal in every respect, are preferable to the application site.
- 9.21 However, even if all alternatives could be ruled out on planning grounds, as set out earlier in this report, this would not justify the proposed site because of the clearly harmful impacts discussed above.
- 9.22 Officers have also considered whether a landscaping scheme could make the scheme acceptable. In this open landscape setting, within this landscape character type it is not considered that a scheme of tree planting would be effective or appropriate, particularly in long range views.

Amenity

There are no amenity issues raised by the proposal as it would be a sufficient distance away from nearby properties.

10 **Conclusion**

The proposal would result in significant harm to the National Parks Landscape and valued characteristics. It is considered that there are no other material considerations that outweigh the conflict with policies identified above and it is not considered that the harm arising from the proposed building could be mitigated by a landscaping scheme including additional tree planting. Accordingly, the current application is recommended for refusal.

11 **Human Rights**

None

12 **List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

None

Report Author and Job Title

Steven Wigglesworth Planner,