

# Planning Services

## COMMITTEE REPORT

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### APPLICATION DETAILS

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<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	<b>PL/5/2011/0219</b>
<b>FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>DEMOLITION OF 5 EXISTING FARM BUILDINGS AND THE ERECTION OF A GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BUILDING.</b>
<b>NAME OF APPLICANT</b>	<b>MR K SIMPSON</b>
<b>SITE ADDRESS</b>	<b>EAST HOUSE FARM, COLD HESLEDON SR7 8SP</b>
<b>ELECTORAL DIVISION</b>	<b>EASINGTON</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	<b>Laura Martin 0191 5274612 laura.martin@durham.gov.uk</b>

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSAL

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#### Site:

1. The application site relates to a farmstead located on the A182 Seaham to A19 Link road. The farm occupies some 133 acres and is operated as an arable farm. The farm has suffered greatly from the previous hard winter and a number of the existing buildings on site have collapsed due to snowfall. The farmstead is located within the open countryside and does not fall within any defined settlement boundaries for the area.

#### Proposal:

2. Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a new general purpose agricultural storage building at the site. The building would measure 60 metres by 18 metres, with a smaller workshop area attached to the building measuring 12 metres by 9 metres. The main building would measure 5 metres to the eaves and 7 metres in total height, with the workshop building being set slightly lower. It would be clad with plastisol coated box profile sheets to the top section and to the lower half would be fibre cement sheets in a natural shade. The building would be located on the site of 5 existing farm buildings, which as previously stated have suffered severe damage during the heavy snow of 2010/2011. The building would be located around a central farmyard arrangement, with access remaining the same as existing.

3. The application is reported to the committee as it has a floor area of over 1000 square metres and is classified as a major development.

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## PLANNING HISTORY

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None relevant to the application

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## PLANNING POLICY

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### 4. NATIONAL POLICY:

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development sets out the Governments overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning System.

Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development proposes a responsive and flexible approach to planning which provides sufficient employment land and makes better use of market information. The PPS is designed to establish a national planning policy framework for economic development at regional, sub-regional and local levels for both urban and rural areas.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant. The full text can be accessed at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements>*

### 5. REGIONAL POLICY:

The North East of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008, sets out the broad spatial development strategy for the North East region for the period of 2004 to 2021. The RSS sets out the region's housing provision and the priorities in economic development, retail growth, transport investment, the environment, minerals and waste treatment and disposal. Some policies have an end date of 2021 but the overall vision, strategy, and general policies will guide development over a longer timescale. Of particular relevance are the following policies:

Policy 4 - National advice and the first RSS for the North East advocated a sequential approach to the identification of sites for development, recognising the need to make the best use of land and optimize the development of previously developed land and buildings in sustainable locations.

Policy 6 - Plans, strategies and programmes should support and incorporate the locational strategy to maximise the major assets and opportunities available in the North East and to regenerate those areas affected by social, economic and environmental problems.

Policy 7 - Seeks to promote the need to reduce the impact of travel demand particularly by promoting public transport, travel plans, cycling and walking, as well as the need to reduce long distance travel, particularly by private car, by focusing development in urban areas with good access to public transport.

Policy 8 - Seeks to promote measures such as high quality design in all development and redevelopment and promoting development that is sympathetic to its surroundings.

In July 2010 the Local Government Secretary signalled his intention to revoke Regional Spatial Strategies with immediate effect, and that this was to be treated as a material consideration in subsequent planning decisions. This was successfully challenged in the High Court in November 2010, thus for the moment reinstating the RSS. However, it remains the Government's intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies when the forthcoming Local Government Bill becomes law, and it is a matter for each Planning Authority to decide how much weight can now be attached to this intention.

*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant. The full text can be accessed at: <http://www.gos.gov.uk/nextstore/docs/planning/rss/rss.pdf>*

## **6. LOCAL PLAN POLICY:** District of Easington Local Plan

Policy 1- Due regard will be had to the development plan when determining planning applications. Account will be taken as to whether the proposed development accords with sustainable development principles while benefiting the community and local economy. The location, design and layout will also need to accord with saved policies 3, 7, 14-18, 22 and 35-38.

Policy 3 - Development limits are defined on the proposal and the inset maps. Development outside 'settlement limits' will be regarded as development within the countryside. Such development will therefore not be approved unless allowed by other policies.

Policy 35 - The design and layout of development should consider energy conservation and efficient use of energy, reflect the scale and character of adjacent buildings, provide adequate open space and have no serious adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers.

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*The above represents a summary of those policies considered most relevant in the Development Plan the full text, criteria, and justifications of each may be accessed at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/Pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=7534>*

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## **CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES**

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### **7. STATUTORY RESPONSES:**

Parish Council- No response.

Northumbria Water- raises no objections

### **8. INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:**

Ecology Section- raises no objections subject to an appropriate condition relating to Barn Owl mitigation.

Landscape Section- raises no objections following the submission of landscaping scheme for the site.

Highways Section- raises no objections

Planning Policy- raises no objections

Environmental Health Section- raises no objections

Heritage Coast Officer- No response.

## **9. PUBLIC RESPONSES:**

The proposal was advertised by means of a Press and Site notice. 3 letters of notification were sent to neighbouring properties within the area. No letters of representation have been received in respect of the above development.

## **10. APPLICANTS STATEMENT:**

Mr Simpson is applying for a single new agricultural building to replace five small buildings that were completely destroyed by snow in the winter of 2010/11. The damaged buildings can't be rebuilt due to the scale of the damage and Mr Simpson has seized the opportunity to replace them all with a single building suitable for modern farming practices.

Due to the location of the site theft is a significant problem with fuel and metal theft being the most common, this along with the high salt content of the sea air means that all machines and equipment need to be stored undercover and behind locked doors to reduce corrosion.

The proposed building will give Mr Simpson the flexibility to maintain his business, hopefully reduce his insurance premiums and start to modernise the equipment on the farm, as there will be somewhere to put it.

In doing this approx 15m of hedge that is in poor condition will need to be removed to allow for the safe removal of the asbestos on the damaged buildings and allow for new foundations to be put in. We have discussed this with a Council Landscape Architect onsite, and further to his comments we have put together a comprehensive tree-planting scheme that is under separate cover.

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*The above represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file which can be viewed at <http://planning.easington.gov.uk/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=114048>. Officer analysis of the issues raised and discussion as to their relevance to the proposal and recommendation made is contained below*

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## **PLANNING CONSIDERATION AND ASSESSMENT**

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The main considerations relevant to this application are;

- Accordance with national policy
- Acceptability and nature of the development
- Design, scale and siting of the agricultural building
- Protected species

## **11. Accordance with national policy**

Paragraph 27 of Planning Policy Statement 7 states that the government recognises the important and varied roles of agriculture therefore support should be given to development that will enable farming and farmers to be more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly.

One of the main reasons that the applicant is applying for the storage building is that the equipment is susceptible to the salty air at the site and the applicant has also experienced theft from the site on a number of occasions. The applicants have stated that by storing the

equipment in the building it would reduce costs and improve efficiency therefore would be in accordance with the principles of PPS7.

Planning Policy Statement 4 further advocates that support should be given to small scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option for locations remote from local service centres, recognising that a site may be an acceptable location for development even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport.

It is acknowledged that under normal circumstances the application site would be unlikely to be viewed as a sustainable location given it is located outside the settlement boundary. In the context of agriculture however it is considered that the location proposed for the storage building is the most sustainable option in this instance given it is adjacent to the existing farmstead and is required in connection with the existing farming operation. As a result the building is considered to be suitably located for its purpose and complies with the exceptions as laid out in PPS4. The proposal is therefore deemed to be acceptable in this respect.

## **12. Acceptability and nature of the development**

The applicant has stated that the farm is used in the production of arable crops and the building would be used in association with such works on site. From recent visits and meetings it is accepted that the farm is agricultural in nature therefore, in principle, the request to construct an agricultural building is not called into question.

## **13. Design, scale and siting of the agricultural building**

The site is located outside the settlement boundary of Seaham as identified in the former District of Easington Local Plan and so the application falls to be considered as development within the open countryside. Policy 3 of the Local Plan states that development in such areas will not normally be approved unless allowed by other policies. It is important to note at this stage that in the supporting text for Policy 3 it is recognised that some forms of development in the countryside are necessary, such as the development of buildings for agriculture, in order that the rural economy can be supported.

Policy 35 of the Local Plan relates to the design and layout of new development, stating that new development should reflect the character of adjacent buildings and the area generally. Agricultural development will normally be acceptable where it is adjacent to existing buildings and is adequately screened.

In this instance the application proposes a storage building to be constructed from materials typical of the ones used throughout the farmstead. Although under normal circumstances this may appear an overly large and dominant building, taking into account the context of the surroundings and the existing development on site this is not necessarily the case. The farmstead as previously stated already benefits from a number of buildings with the same footprint as is hereby proposed. These buildings due to their state of repair as previously mentioned would be removed in order to make way for the proposed building. Furthermore this is the type of structure that would be appropriate within this setting and therefore does not look out of character within the area.

To overcome the original concerns raised by the Landscape Section with reference to the loss of a small section of hedgerow, the applicant has agreed to a landscaping scheme at the site. This would see the introduction of a coppice of trees to the south of the application site, with the infilling of the existing hedgerow which is to be retained. Unfortunately due to health and safety in respect of the removal of asbestos at the site, the section of hedgerow

adjacent to the existing buildings may be damaged in the demolition. The applicant has advised that they will retain as much as possible of the hedging; however its full retention cannot be guaranteed and as such the additional planting would compensate for such a loss.

The development is considered to be better connected to the existing cluster of buildings than the existing structures, in accordance with Policy 35 and also Planning Policy Statement 7 that aims to ensure the quality of the wider countryside is protected. Furthermore a condition requiring details of the cladding to be used in the building's construction would be attached to any approval to ensure that it tied in with the existing buildings on site and its overall setting.

In addition the farmstead is substantially screened by existing earth mounding which was created with the building of the link road. This would ensure that only a small section of the building was visible from the main approach to the application site. In terms of wider views from the nearby public right of way which can see the site, the introduction of the coppice would also help to screen the building and it would be seen in the backdrop of the Business Park which is to the north of the application site.

Taking into account that the proposal will be more closely related to the existing farm buildings and given that attempts have been made to screen to building through the introduction of landscaping and the imposition of appropriate conditions it is considered that the building will result in an acceptable form of development that would not detract from the character of the area.

#### **14. Protected Species**

In respect of protected species at the site the Barn Owl Mitigation report has confirmed that whilst the barn is used for roosting there are not any breeding pairs present at this moment. Therefore in this respect the mitigation strategy contained within the submitted report would be conditioned as part of any approval. In addition a plan detailing the precise location and orientation of the roost boxes and access to them would also be conditioned before works commenced on site.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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15. Taking all relevant planning matters into account it is considered that the proposal is acceptable given that it accords with both national and local policy. It is therefore not considered that it would have a detrimental impact upon the amenities of the surrounding area or the wider setting more generally that would justify refusal of this application.
16. It is considered that the size of the building is appropriate to the character and scale of the existing buildings within the farmstead. Given that the building will be screened significant by the existing mounding at the site, and from wider public view points by the proposed landscaping measures it is considered that any impact upon the setting of the building would be minimal. As a result it should not be overly dominant or overbearing within the setting and would not prejudice highway safety.

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## RECOMMENDATION

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17. That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions;

### Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the following approved plans. Plan References; No. Design and access statement, wider location plan, site location plan, EN0919-F all received 1 June 2011, EN0919-SP Rev A received 18 August 2011 and Barn Owl Survey received 24 August 2011 completed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2011 by Durham Wildlife Services.
3. Notwithstanding any details of materials submitted with the application, the construction associated with the building hereby approved shall not commence until samples of its external walling materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
4. No development shall take place unless in accordance with the mitigation detailed within the protected species report:- Barn Owl Survey received 23 August 2011 completed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2011 by Durham Wildlife Services, including, but not restricted to adherence to timing and spatial restrictions; provision of mitigation in advance; undertaking confirming surveys as stated; adherence to precautionary working methods; provision of a barn owl roosts. Details of the proposed location, orientation and access arrangements of the roost boxes shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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## REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

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1. The development was considered acceptable having regard to the following development plan policies:

DISTRICT OF EASINGTON LOCAL PLAN	ENV03 - Protection of the Countryside
DISTRICT OF EASINGTON LOCAL PLAN	ENV35 - Environmental Design: Impact of Development
DISTRICT OF EASINGTON LOCAL PLAN	GEN01 - General Principles of Development
PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT/GUIDANCE	PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT/GUIDANCE	PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT/GUIDANCE	PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2. In particular the development was considered acceptable having regard to consideration of issues of visual amenity and impact upon the open countryside.

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## BACKGROUND PAPERS

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- Submitted Application Forms and Plans.
- Design and Access Statement
- North East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) July 2008
- District of Easington Local Plan 2001
- Planning Policy Statements / Guidance, PPS1, PPG2, PPS3, PPS7, PPS9, PPS13, PPG15, PPG16
- Consultation Responses

