

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**26 JUNE 2017**

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION**

**ITEM:** 16/012212/FUL  
**OFFICER:** Lucy Hoad  
**WARD:** East Berwickshire  
**PROPOSAL:** Installation of biomass boiler and associated cabinet (retrospective)  
**SITE:** Ravelaw Farm Whitsome Duns Scottish Borders  
**APPLICANT:** Robert Gaston  
**AGENT:**

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Ravelaw Farm is located to the north west of Whitsome along a minor C class road which links between the B6437 and the B6460. Open fields surround the farm and residential housing to the south which lie adjacent to a small watercourse The Leet, tributary to River Tweed (SAC). The C Listed Farmhouse sits over 200m to the south of the site. An archaeological trace of a medieval feature known as Reavelaw Farmstead lies over 300m to the north east of the farm.

**DEVELOPMENT**

This application seeks detailed planning permission for the erection of an external boiler house within the farm complex south of the Bungalow. The works are largely complete. The boiler house is constructed of a shipping container sited on the concrete base. The metal container has been painted dark green and the overall structure measures 12.2m x2.5m to height 3.65m. The installed boiler Passat Ho 510 595kw requires a flue (silver) that projects to 7.9m from ground level. The wood pellet storage hopper attached to the east side of the container is metal and coloured silver /green. No new access is proposed in relation to the development. The wood chip to fuel the boiler is sourced from logs delivered to site for chipping by the applicant within the farm complex. Underground trenches located to the north and south of container carries the necessary pipework to allow connection to the heating system. The pipework is connected to heating equipment housed within a rebuilt store (attached to main barn) to the south of the shipping container for the purpose of air drying of grain. The pipework also connects to the Bungalow.

The aim of the development is to provide renewable energy from biomass, a sustainable heat source for heating and drying of stored grain and woodchip.

**PLANNING HISTORY**

There is a history of development at Ravelaw Farm including the erection of modern sheds and new build housing.

01/00991/FUL	Erection of general purpose agricultural building	21.08.2001
05/00833/OUT	Erection of dwellinghouse Plot 1	21.07.2005
05/00834/OUT	Erection of dwellinghouse Plot 2	21.07.2005
05/00835/OUT	Erection of dwellinghouse Plot 3	21.07.2005
05/00836/OUT	Erection of dwellinghouse Plot 4	21.07.2005
06/01148/REM	Erection of dwellinghouse, carport, workshop	11.08.2006
06/02455/REM	Erection of dwellinghouse	08.02.2007
06/01979/OUT	Erection of four dwellinghouses Refused	27.02.2007
07/01184/REM	Erection of dwellinghouse with integral garage	8.08.2007
07/00251/REM	Erection dwellinghouse/ integral garage withdrawn	14.06.2007
09/00893/FUL	Erection of dwellinghouse/detached double garage	20.11.2009
11/00453/FUL	Erection of replacement agricultural building	06.06.2011
12/00549/FUL	Erection of agricultural building	14.06.2012
14/00763/FUL	Installation of AD sustainable energy plant Refused	08.12.2014
14/00296/FUL	Installation of AD sustainable energy plant Withdrawn	03.07.2014
15/00792/FUL	Installation of 125 KW AD plant and associated work Approved	05.10.2015

## REPRESENTATION SUMMARY

Members are reminded that all comments are available for Members to view in full on the Public Access website.

2 letters of support have been received, main points:

- Savings in greenhouse gas emissions compare to fossil fuel
- Savings in fuel cost for drying purposes
- Safeguards against water pollution threats
- Carbon neutral technology
- Reduces carbon footprint in line with policy
- Farmer requires to dry grain every season
- Supplying wood fuel to local market is diversification

12 letters of objection have been received. The principal grounds of objection are as follows:

- Commercial sized unit in rural environment
- Adverse impact on local amenity
- Poor quality of plans
- Lack of data on operation of plant
- Diversification away from agricultural operation
- Expansion/intensification of operations
- Noise/vibration
- Hours of operation
- Road safety
- Increase in heavy traffic
- Export of wood chip to supply fuel
- Import of grain for drying (commercial)
- Fire Hazard

## **APPLICANTS' SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The applicant has submitted detailed plans and elevations, and a statement in support of their retrospective application

### **CONSULTATION RESPONSES:**

#### **Scottish Borders Council Consultees**

**Roads Planning:** No objection. Given the low level of traffic generated by this proposal the officer will not be objecting to the application.

**Environmental Health Officer:** No objection. The officer has recommended that all plant and machinery be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions so as to stay in compliance with his stipulated noise limits.

#### **Statutory Consultees**

##### **Edrom Allanton and Whitsome Community Council:**

The Community Council (CC) advises that areas of concern include:

Lack of details

Noise levels

Delivery times, route and number of trips

Increase in traffic

Road safety

Seeks traffic to utilise route with less residential dwellings

Seeks passing places

The CC has received an assurance from the applicant that chipping operation is not a diversification into supplying woodchip to others. If this was to happen the impact of traffic on the minor access road and the level of noise could be reasons for the CC to object.

Deliveries have not been confined to the time before 7am as we were assured they would be. Unless the deliveries are scheduled to arrive only from the north of Ravelaw and be confined to 1 a week, before 7am we object to this application.

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:**

#### **Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016**

PMD1 - Sustainability

PMD2 - Quality Standards

ED7 - Business, Tourism and Leisure Development in the Countryside

ED9 - Renewable Energy Development

HD3 - Protection of Residential Amenity

EP16 - Air Quality

## **KEY PLANNING ISSUES:**

The key planning issues related to this application are whether the development would have an adverse impact on:

1. the landscape
2. the amenity of residential properties
3. road safety

## **ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION:**

### Background

Biomass is an energy source comprising of biological material derived from living or recently living organisms such as virgin wood or other wood feedstock. The plant will use this fuel source to simultaneously generate electricity and heat to support the operation of the farm business. It would serve a grain/woodchip dryer which is also proposed as part of the application. The applicant has submitted detailed plans and elevations, and a statement in support of his retrospective application.

### Principle

Policy ED7 encourages proposals for business in the countryside provided that the development is to be used directly for agricultural or forestry operations and that the development respects the amenity and character of the surrounding area. The development must have no significant adverse impact on nearby uses, particularly housing. The use and scale of the development should be appropriate to the rural character of the area and should take into account accessibility considerations.

Policy ED9 states 'the Council will support renewable energy development such as biomass boilers where they can be accommodated without unacceptable significant adverse impacts or effects, giving due regard to relevant environmental, community and cumulative impact considerations.' Where renewable technologies are being located in the countryside locations, such as this proposed biomass system, the development will be assessed against the relevant environmental protection policies.

In line with the above policies, this development, using wood pellets as a fuel source, would be classed as renewable energy production - to be directly used to support agricultural operations undertaken at Ravelaw Farm, namely the drying of crops from surrounding fields.

Whilst the development fits the policy aims for energy efficiency and sustainability, the impact on neighbouring uses, amenity and environment will require to be assessed.

### Impact on Historic Environment

It is not considered that there would be an adverse impact on any historic assets, for example the C Listed Farmhouse (Ravelaw) or medieval Reavelaw Farmstead, both of which are set at a distance away from the development.

### Impact on Natural Environment

It is not considered that there would be an adverse impact on any protected sites in the vicinity, in this case, The Leet tributary to River Tweed (SAC).

### Loss of Prime Agricultural Land

This is a farm scale sized development siting within the existing complex. There would be no impact on prime agricultural land.

### Impact on the Landscape

Concerns were raised by neighbours as to the visual impact on the rural landscape.

The introduction of any building on site has the potential to create landscape impacts. In long views into the site, consideration has to be given to the topography and level of containment, along with the screening function provided by existing vegetation.

The development is sited within the existing working farm complex and there are limited views into the site from residential receptors given the screening provided by the existing farm sheds, which also would form the backdrop from other locations. The hedge-lined roads in the vicinity are the main visual receptors however there is mature vegetation present on the boundaries that provide a sufficient element of screen cover from these viewpoints.

Policy PMD2 aims to ensure that all new development is of high quality and respects the environment in which it is contained.

Consideration has been given to scale, mass and form, as well as design, materials and finishes. The buildings/plant are of a size appropriate to agricultural uses. The structures are of a smaller scale and height to the existing agricultural sheds. The boiler is housed within a metal shipping container (approximately 12m x 2.5m) coloured dark green, a typical colour found on buildings of this nature in the Borders countryside. This dark colour allows the building to visually recede in the rural setting. The feeder bin and flue are constructed of metal, coloured silver.

The character and appearance of the plant is similar to agricultural buildings evident in the local rural environment and only the top of the flue will be visible from roadside.

It is considered that the development would not be unduly prominent in the landscape and would not harm the visual amenities of the area or views into or out of the area in compliance with Policy PMD2.

### Impact on the amenity of residential properties

Policy HD3 aims to protect the amenity of both existing established residential areas and proposed new housing developments. The nearest residential properties to the development site are the farm cottages and new build properties to the south of the steading. They are separated from the application site by the existing range of farm buildings.

## Fire risk

Concern was raised by neighbours over the development representing a fire hazard. The Environmental Health Officer did not raise any adverse comments in relation to the issue of safety. The applicant is required to comply with regulations of relevant agencies in respect of health and safety on farms. This matter is not regulated by the Council.

## Noise/vibration

Concerns have been raised by the Community Council and neighbours with regard to noise/vibration nuisance stemming from the development and chipping operations on site. Residents consider the proposed development to be inappropriate in nature given the proximity of the development to residential houses.

Consideration has been given to the potential impact of the development on residential amenities to include disturbance.

In his statement, the applicant has explained that grain from the harvest is loaded into the farm building to remove moisture. The boiler system will aid drying out of the grain and woodchip will be dried between batches of grain.

In terms of hours of operation of the applicant has confirmed that an inverter has been fitted to automatically turn the heat exchange off at nights / weekends. The applicant has confirmed that the chipping operation takes place within the farm complex once or twice a month (on a week day). Timing of chipping is restricted to 0900 hours and lasts for 3 hours. In the longer term a new bunker for chipping operations is planned at the north of the site, further away from the dwellings.

The Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has reviewed the application, and taking account of boiler size and chipping operations, has no objections to the development subject to the following conditions in respect of noise emissions and operation of plant and machinery:

*Any noise emitted by plant and machinery used on the premises will not exceed Noise Rating Curve NR20 between the hours of 2300 – 0700 and NR 30 at all other times when measured within the nearest noise sensitive dwelling (windows can be open for ventilation). The noise emanating from any plant and machinery used on the premises should not contain any discernible tonal component. Tonality shall be determined with reference to BS 7445-2*

*All plant and machinery shall be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions so as to stay in compliance with the aforementioned noise limits.*

The EHO has raised no concerns over potential vibration disturbance. It would be prudent to apply the conditions in respect of noise levels to ensure control/regulation of the matter. The operation of the equipment would provide a source of noise. However the noise is not inconsistent with daily farm operations.

Given the officer's assessment with respect to noise/vibration nuisance and the use of conditions to control noise, it is considered that noise disturbance would not be an issue significant enough to warrant refusal of the application

## Air quality

Policy EP16 (Air Quality) sets out the council position in terms of development affecting air quality.

In relation to the emissions from the boiler/flue policy EP16 states that 'development proposals that could adversely affect the quality of the air in a locality to a level that could potentially harm human health and wellbeing must be accompanied by provisions that the Council is satisfied will minimise such impacts to an acceptable degree.'

The applicant has provided data which has been reviewed by the Environmental Health Officer who advises that in order to pass the screening test/target emission rates the height of the stack must be raised to a minimum of 7.9m. This is still lower than the ridge height of the main agricultural building at the site. The Environmental Health Officer was consulted on the revised plan to depict this new flue height and has no objections to the proposals.

## Cumulative impact

Concerns have been raised by neighbours as to the cumulative impact of development approved at this site. In respect of the approved Anaerobic Digester (AD) plant granted permission in October 2015, this would be sited over 250m to the east of the farm complex, but it is noted that the permission has not been implemented but neither has it lapsed. Should that development go ahead, the plant would generate electricity for export to the grid and inert fertiliser from manure to be used on the farm. The Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that there would be no requirement to consider the AD plant in assessing the biomass boiler given the distance of the AD Plant from the farm complex.

It is not considered that the proposal will adversely affect the quality of air in the locality to a level that could potentially harm human health and wellbeing or the integrity of the natural environment. Therefore, the proposal is in compliance with Policy E16

## Impact on traffic and road safety

Concerns have been raised by the Community Council and neighbours as to an increase in traffic movements stemming from the development and road safety. In particular the restriction of wood chip being exported off site. The CC sought for delivery of logs to be confined to before 7am and to arrive only from the north of Ravelaw.

The applicant has confirmed that logs are delivered to site up to 2 times over a two week period for the purpose of chipping on site. The chips are primarily for use with the boiler; however the applicant has advised that some bags were provided to a neighbouring farmer. Members may wish to consider whether any controls on off-site deliveries are relevant in this instance, however in discussions with the applicant it was assured by the applicant that the provision to neighbour was minimal. Any attempt to restrict the direction from which deliveries are made is likely to be unreasonable given that the approach in either direction is by public road. It might however be possible to require the submission of a traffic management plan if that was considered necessary. However, the Roads Planning Officer has reviewed the

matter and raised no objections to the development taking into account the low level of traffic generated. The applicant has advised that use of wood for fuel has led to a reduction in oil deliveries to site.

Neighbours were concerned with regard to cumulative impact in relation to other development at the steading. Apart from initial construction traffic, journeys to supply inputs to the AD Plant digester would use internal farm tracks.

It is considered that there is no significant change to traffic volumes in this instance. The proposals are considered acceptable in road safety terms.

## **CONCLUSION**

The use of renewable technologies for farm business purposes has become more common in the Borders., with approvals for biomass and AD plants granted in the locality.

It is accepted that the proposed development will be consistent with the Council's policies on renewable energy production. It is an appropriate building in terms of design, scale and massing and it is considered that due to the topography and vegetation screening the visual impact will be negligible.

The development will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment, landscape or the setting of nearby buildings.

The key issues raised by the objectors relate to matters which are to be controlled by conditions. The EHO and Roads Officer have not objected to the principle of the development.

It is considered that subject to appropriate conditions the proposed development will not have any adverse impacts upon the wider residential amenities of the area, in compliance with Policy HD3.

On the basis of the resolution of these matters through listed conditions the application can be supported.

## **RECOMMENDATION BY CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER:**

I recommend the application is approved subject to the following conditions:

1 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the plans and specifications approved by the Planning Authority, in unless agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved details

2 All combustion plant and associated flues shall be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. The combustion plant should only use fuel of a type and grade as specified by the manufacturer and which has been used for the basis of the air quality assessment. If different fuel arrangements



are made the boiler shall be re commissioned to ensure that the assessed emissions are not exceeded.

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of nearby properties.

3 Any noise emitted by plant and machinery used on the premises shall not exceed Noise Rating Curve NR20 between the hours of 2300 – 0700 and NR 30 at all other times when measured within the nearest noise sensitive dwelling (windows can be open for ventilation). The noise emanating from any plant and machinery used on the premises should not contain any discernible tonal component. Tonality shall be determined with reference to BS 7445-2

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of nearby properties.

4 All plant and machinery will be maintained and service in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions so as to stay in compliance with the aforementioned noise limits.

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of nearby properties

#### DRAWING NUMBERS

L/01	Location/Site Plan	28.04.2017
100	Plan/Elevations	28.04.2017

#### **Approved by**

Name	Designation	Signature
Ian Aikman	Chief Planning Officer	

The original version of this report has been signed by the Chief Planning Officer and the signed copy has been retained by the Council.

#### **Author(s)**

Name	Designation
Lucy Hoad	Planning Officer



17/00463/MOD75

Land North Of Easter Softlaw Farm  
Kelso

