DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2017/0227 **Valid 21/04/2017**	**THE CROFT MILL LANE WETLEY ROCKS**	**PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF A DOMESTIC POLYTUNNEL** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the Green Belt
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Design

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site comprises a small rectangular plot of land within an agricultural field immediately to the south of The Croft, Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks. The field is outside of the domestic curtilage within designated Green Belt land and is accessed via a gateway.

The field is bordered by hedgerows on all sides and is heavily screened from the Mill Lane by natural vegetation. The residential dwelling 'The Croft' and ancillary outbuilding lies to the north of the site. To the north west of the field lies Spring Cottage Farm, whilst Foxdale Bungalow lies west of the site. A public right of way passes the western boundary of the field in which the application site is situated. Crickets Farm is located to the south of site at 120m distant.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks consent for a polytunnel to be sited within the agricultural field as shown on the submitted Location and Block Plans. The application form states that the polytunnel would be used for domestic purposes for the growing of vegetables and fruit for the households.

Although the polytunnel could be defined as a temporary structure, the applicant was advised by the council that planning permission would be required for such a structure due to the degree of permanence – the application form states that the polytunnel would remain for between 5 and 7 years before being replaced and/or moved.

The submitted plan shows that the polytunnel would measure 15.24m in length x 4.27m in width and have an overall height of 2.48m. The polytunnel would be held up by aluminium struts within the arched walls. As shown on the Block Plan the length of the polytunnel is proposed to run parallel with the fields northern boundary.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape Character

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving Sustainable Development	Paragraphs 1-17
Requiring Good Design	Chapter 7
Protecting the Green Belt	Chapter 9

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Planning history does exist in relation to the main dwelling and its curtilage however there is no relevant planning history associated with the agricultural field in which the proposed development is situated.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 19th May 2017
Neighbour consultation period ends: 16th May 2017
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No comments received

Town / Parish Comments

Cheddleton Parish Council – No Objection

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or

- Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted

The application site is situated outside of the domestic curtilage within an agricultural field which is designated Green Belt land. As such any planning application is subject to restrictive NPPF policies within Chapter 12 of the NPPF as listed at footnote 9 to paragraph 14 of the NPPF. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is therefore not engaged.

Paragraph 87 of the NPPF highlights that as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF goes on to states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 89 and paragraph 90 of the NPPF lists the type of development which are exceptions to inappropriate development.

The proposed development does not fall within the list of exceptions set out within paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF. As such it is considered that the proposed development is inappropriate and is harmful to the Green Belt. Therefore the principle of development will only be acceptable if very special circumstances can be demonstrated which outweighs the harm to the Green Belt.

In addition, the proposal must also demonstrate compliance with relevant local and national planning policies relating to landscape character and design.

Impact upon the Green Belt

As stated above, the proposed development is not covered by the list of exceptions to inappropriate development set out within paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF and therefore the proposed development is inappropriate.

Policy SS6c of the adopted core strategy states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt as defined within Government Policy.

Having visited the site and reviewed the submitted plans and supporting information, I consider that the proposed polytunnel and associated change of use from agricultural land to domestic use comprises development which is inappropriate and will harm the openness of the Green Belt, given the fact that the site is currently an open agricultural field.

The applicant has not submitted any ‘very special circumstances’ that would outweigh the substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt set out above.

As such the proposed development directly conflicts with restrictive Green Belt policies set out within policy SS6c of the core strategy and Chapter 9 of the NPPF and as such is considered to be unsustainable, conflicting with policy SS1a of the adopted core strategy and paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Policy DC3 of the adopted core strategy aims to protect and where possible enhance the local landscape in the Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape.

The proposed polytunnel is shown on the submitted plans as being 15.24m in length by some 4.27m in width and 2.48m in height.

The application form hints at the fact that the polytunnel could take up various positions within the agricultural field after being in one place for a sustained amount of time. If this is to be the case, the red line boundary of the development site should cover the entire agricultural field and not just the proposed ‘first’ or ‘initial’ position as shown.

The polytunnel would stand isolated within an agricultural field without relating to any existing building or structure. It is considered that a single polytunnel of the scale proposed is intensive, and would add an alien element to an open agricultural field, thereby resulting in adverse impacts upon the open and rural landscape character.

In light of the above, it is considered that the nature and scale of the proposed structure will have an adverse impact upon the distinctive characteristics of the area and therefore has a direct conflict with policy DC3 of the adopted core strategy. The proposed development is therefore considered to be unsustainable with regards to the impacts upon landscape character.

Design

Policy SS1 of the adopted core strategy sets out a number of development principles which new development should adhere to in order to contribute positively to the social, economic, and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands Policy DC1 of the adopted core strategy sets out a list of design considerations that new development should incorporate into any new scheme. It states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area. In particular new development should be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

The proposed polytunnel would appear as an alien feature within the existing landscape and, would relate poorly to existing buildings or structures.

In summary, the proposed polytunnel is considered to represent poor design in direct conflict with the development principles set out within policy SS1, and design principles set out within policy DC1 of the core strategy, in addition to policies within Chapter 7 of the NPPF. The application is therefore considered to constitute unsustainable development with regards to poor design.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The application seeks consent to construct a polytunnel measuring some 15m in length, 4m in width and 2.5m in height for the purpose of growing fruit and vegetables on a domestic scale on an area of agricultural land outside of the residential curtilage immediately to the south of 'The Croft', Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks, and as such the application is in effect seeking permission for a change of use from agricultural land to domestic use.

The site is situated within Green Belt land and therefore the proposed development is inappropriate by definition. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is not engaged.

It has been considered that the proposed development will have a substantial impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, constitutes poor design which does not relate to existing development, and will result in adverse impacts to the existing landscape character of the field and wider area.

The proposed development does not fall within the list of exceptions set out within paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF, and the applicant has not put forward any very special circumstances that could potentially outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt.

In conclusion, the application is considered to be inappropriate in its location and will result in direct conflict with restrictive policies set out within policy SS6c of the adopter core strategy and Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

The proposed development is considered to comprise poor design in direct conflict with policies SS1 and DC1 of the adopted core strategy, and will have unacceptable adverse impacts upon the landscape and visual character of the area, in direct conflict with policy DC3 of the adopted core strategy.

In light of the above the application is considered to constitute unsustainable development and is recommended for refusal on grounds of inappropriate development within the Green Belt, adverse impacts upon Landscape Character, and poor design.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: Refusal

Case Officer: James Stannard
Recommendation Date: 5th June 2017

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Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council