

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0674
Valid 04/11/2021

83 LILAC GROVE FARM
FOLLY LANE
CHEDDLETON

**REDEVELOPMENT OF THE
SITE TO PROVIDE 8
DWELLINGS IN THE FORM OF
4NO SEMI-DETACHED TWO-
STOREY DWELLINGHOUSES,
2NO DETACHED CHALET
BUNGALOWS AND 2NO
SINGLE-STOREY DETACHED
BUNGALOWS.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development in this location.
Community contributions
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity.
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within the development boundary of Cheddleton and lies to the south of the main part of the village, between rows of dwellings/ribbon development on the east side of Folly Lane, a country lane attached to A520 to the north-west. It comprises a redundant farm with single-storey brick and grey render/pebble-dash clad farm buildings and a single-storey farm dwelling in the north part of the site with similar materials and a tiled pitched roof. There is an access off Folly Lane. As well as there being housing to the north and south sides which faces Folly Lane, there are also dwellings which face the lane on the opposite side of the road from the site. To the rear of the site (east) lies open fields within the Green Belt. The site has been largely cleared of trees which were mainly in front of the dwelling, obscuring it from the road but there are some front boundary trees remaining. The farmhouse is vacant and boarded up. The site and surrounding land rises slightly towards the north also away from the road slightly towards the east before flattening on the fields to the rear.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the redevelopment of the whole site to provide eight new dwellings including the removal of all the current farm buildings and dwelling. The development would comprise four semi-detached cottage-style two-storey 2-bed dwellings facing Folly Lane and a short private cul-de-sac would run

between the two sets of cottages leading to four detached dwellings to the rear comprising two 3-bed chalet-style dwellings and two 2-bed single-storey bungalows, next to the rear boundary. The bungalows would have a detached shared garage block at the end of the cul-de-sac. The chalet bungalows and the two end frontage cottages would have a drive down the side. This would be directly off Folly Lane for the cottages. The other two cottages, next to the access cul-de-sac would have a parking area off the cul-de-sac to the rear of those dwellings. Each dwelling would have a front and back garden. Part of the site juts out to the rear of nos 79 and 81 Folly Lane. This area would be an orchard with fruit trees and other planting in order to achieve ecological enhancements to the site and would be bordered by native hedging which would also be provided on all the other boundaries of the site (where there is no existing hedging), between the cottages and rear dwellings and also part way along each side of the access road. New tree planting would be provided, mostly on the site boundaries. The orchard area was previously to be part of a large garden to the rear of the one of the proposed bungalows and an area of ecological enhancements was to be placed in the field to the rear, adjacent to the rear boundary of the site and some of the neighbouring properties to the south and north, but this part of the scheme has been removed.

A new field access for the fields to the rear would be placed along the southern boundary of the site, off Folly Lane and would run between the existing hedge on the boundary with the dwelling at No.93 and also one of the new boundary native hedgerows marking the boundaries of four of the new plots.

The application was accompanied by a Planning, Design and Access Statement, Bat Activity Survey Report and Energy and Sustainability Statement.

A further Ecology Report (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) and calculations was later submitted to demonstrate the proposal would result in a Net Biological Gain.

The original submission was for seven dwellings, all of which would have faced the new access cul-de-sac and with the bungalows closest to the road and two-storey houses at the rear.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS8 – Large Villages Strategy
SS12 – Planning Obligations and CIL
H1 – New Housing
DC1 – Design Considerations
DC3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE1 – Biodiversity
NE2 – Trees, Hedgerows, Woodland
T1 – Transport

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 8.12.21

Neighbour consultation period ends: 8.12.21 (original plans), 21.3.21 (consultation on the amended plans showing new layout and increase in the number of houses to 8) and 19.5.22 (amended plans showing change of part of rear garden to orchard and other ecological enhancements, removal of ecology zone outside of site and change of parking access location for Plot 8).

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

In response to the original plans, one letter was received which raised a concern about the extended rear garden at the north boundary of the site (this has been removed from the scheme).

In response to the amended plans to show the layout and number changes, one letter of objection was received from a resident on the other side of Folly Lane and the points raised are as follows:

- Plots 7 and 8 dwellings will lead to a loss of privacy to front bedroom windows and a loss of light
- Harm to highway safety, particularly as there would be no visibility for cars using the proposed field access to get to parking spaces
- The houses at the front are too close to the road and not in keeping with Folly Lane

In response to the amended plans received in May 2022, the same objector wrote in to continue to object on the same grounds as before and there was an additional objection letter from another local resident who considers the frontage houses are too close to the road and out of keeping with the lane.

Another letter was received from a local resident who did not object to the original plans but objects to the amended plans due to harm to the visual amenities of the area, overdevelopment, loss of privacy/overlooking, loss of light and harm to highway safety.

A further letter was received raising concern about overlooking from the frontage houses affecting an existing bungalow opposite, loss of light provision, glare from headlights of cars entering the dwelling when leaving the access and frontage houses out of keeping with the building line in Folly Lane.

Parish Council Comments

In response to final amended plans: No objection

Local Highways Authority

In response to final amended plans: No objection subject to conditions.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to conditions, one of which requires a Phase 1 contamination survey to be undertaken and details submitted for approval.

Severn Trent Water

No objection subject to a condition requiring a drainage scheme to be submitted for approval.

Waste Collection Service

No issues.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Original Consultation Response - Jan 2022: Holding Objection - The Activity Survey for Bats by Absolute Ecology dated September 2021 found no bats to be using the buildings, but potential for nesting birds. A Barn owl was observed hunting nearby. As part of overall biodiversity enhancements, some bird and bat features should be incorporated into new buildings, including a barn owl loft or a pole or tree-mounted box on the edge of the property. No other species or habitats were considered in the survey, therefore a habitat plan and checks for other species issues is required. The proposals are likely to result in a net loss of grassland habitat, although hedgerows would be increased. A metric is required to measure any deficit and ensure this is addressed within the site design or offset elsewhere.

Final consultation response in June 2022 following receipt of an Amended Preliminary Ecology Appraisal, Net Biodiversity Gain calculations and Final Amended Site Plan:

No objection subject to conditions being applied to secure the recommendations for Species mitigation in the ecology reports, and detailed landscaping plans and a drainage plan.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is inside the development boundary of Cheddleton and comprises a redundant farm and so the principle of housing in this location is acceptable. Services such as shops, a school and public transport can be reached a short distance away via lit footways along the roads. The site is in a sustainable location

and as there is a currently less than a five year housing land supply in the District, the NPPF affords significant weight to allowing new housing in this location.

As there is less than ten dwellings proposed, there is no requirement for any affordable units on the site. Due to the number of houses and their size (six are 2-bed units), there is no requirement for any community related contributions.

With regard to the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the two-storey cottages provide a frontage development, addressing the road and this is regarded as an improvement on the original plans where the front of the site, of course the most prominent part of the site from the public realm i.e.. the road, comprises modern bungalows/chalet bungalows with their flank walls facing the road and not providing an active frontage onto the lane, contrary to the Council's design guidance and also out of keeping with Folly Lane which is characterised by rows of mixed houses in a conventional arrangement facing and addressing the road. The original plans showed the two-storey cottages along the back boundary creating a hard edge on higher ground when viewed from the open land and fields to the rear. The new layout screens the modern bungalows from the road and it is appropriate in this location that the cottages, which have a traditional rural design (including chimneys, canopy porches and lintels) in keeping with the rural qualities of the area and also which respect an existing similar cottage style on the opposite side of the lane and site, are at the front. It is noted the cottages would be further forward than the adjacent rows of houses either side of the site. There is currently a faint front building line on the east side of Folly Lane but the houses are a mixture of styles and sizes and the building line is not as well defined as a row of identical terraced houses for example. There is no real consistency in the street scene and I consider the forward siting of the cottages would not look out of place on this stretch of road, especially given the houses directly opposite on the west side of Folly Lane would be just as close to the road than the proposed cottages.

With regard to landscaping, there has been much tree removal but some large mature trees remain on the front boundary and some smaller ones to the north side and these would be retained to contribute positively to the appearance of the development. Hedgerows would be retained and provided along the two side boundaries and also within the site and also along the back edge of the site which is currently open with broken timber post-and-rail fencing. I consider the scope of landscaping to be provided is acceptable and would amount to an improvement on the vegetation currently present.

The amended scheme would not harm the character and appearance of the area and would have a sufficient level of landscaping.

With regard to residential amenity, although the two-storey dwellings are placed forward of the "building line" on this side of Folly Lane, the 45 degree lines measured from the middle of the front windows of the dwelling to the south would not be broken by the new houses, in accordance with the Council's Space About Dwellings Design Guidance and this therefore demonstrates that the neighbouring dwelling would not experience any significant loss of light provision. There are also no primary windows on the side of that dwellings facing the site. With regard to the dwelling to the north of the site, the 45 degree line from the nearest front window may be clipped by the

nearest new house due to its forward siting, but the combination of the distance between the existing and proposed dwelling and the presence of trees close to the side boundary (which affect the amount of light entering that property) is such that the overall light provision to the neighbouring dwelling to the north would not be affected.

With regard to privacy, the front windows of the frontage houses would be at least 22 metres from the front windows of existing dwellings on the opposite side of the road and this is in accordance with the Space About Dwellings standards which aim to prevent significant overlooking and loss of privacy. The dwellings in the rear part of the site comprise either bungalows or chalet bungalows and there would not be any significant overlooking over the boundaries into neighbouring existing gardens. The only windows above ground floor level on the chalet bungalows facing the existing neighbouring gardens would comprise landing and bathroom rooflights and obscured glazing can be inserted into these to prevent any overlooking.

The upper floor rear windows of the existing dwelling to the north would be visible from the rear ground floor windows of the bungalow on Plot 3. However, it would be possible to overlook into those windows at such an obscure angle that I consider there would be no harmful level of overlooking or loss of privacy.

The eight new dwellings within the site have been positioned in relation to one another to comply with the Space About Dwellings guidance. For example, a distance of 11.0 metres would be maintained between the back windows of the two-storey dwellings and the flank walls of the bungalows. There would also be no breaches of the 45 degree line rule. A distance of at least 22 metres would be maintained between the opposing front windows of the bungalows and chalet bungalows. There would be no primary windows on the flank elevations of the houses which would cause close-range overlooking into other windows. The only flank primary windows would be on the bungalows and these would face the open land to the east and not other dwellings.

The new dwellings would exceed the floorspace standards set out in the government's Nationally Described Space Standards and the rear gardens, despite some of them not meeting the length standards, would all exceed the overall outdoor space around dwellings standard of 65 sq.m. I do not consider the shortfalls in the outdoor space length standards should lead to the refusal of the scheme because, overall, I consider that this shortfall would not lead to any significant harm to the overall living standards of the future occupants. The Space Standards is guidance rather than a policy requirement and it is not considered that this shortfall could justify the refusal of the application, particularly in the event of an appeal. Overall, the residential amenities and living conditions of both the existing residents of the area and the future occupants of the development would not be harmed.

With regard to ecological impact, the site is in a rural area with redundant farm buildings and therefore has significant potential for protected species (such as bats) and a high ecological value. Staffs Wildlife Trust concurred with the original survey which found no bats in the buildings and an amended PEA was submitted to cover other species (e.g. great crested newts, birds and badgers) and also propose mitigation and enhancement measures which includes Avoidance Measures for

newts during the construction works and also the installation of bat and bird boxes around the site. SWT has also accepted this. All the measures outlined in the revised PEA can be secured by planning conditions. Policy NE1 and NPPF also require new developments, where possible, to lead to a Net Biodiversity Gain. Calculations were provided to demonstrate this and were eventually accepted by SWT. Initially the applicant proposed an area of biodiversity enhancements, such as a wildflower meadow, in part of the field outside of the site which is in the applicants ownership. However, later on the applicant chose to move the zone to the back part of the enlarged back garden of Plot 4 which projects considerably along the back of the boundaries of the existing dwellings fronting Folly Lane to the north of the site. Here there is proposed to be an orchard with 12 fruit trees and mixed native hedge planting. SWT approved of this measure as acceptable Net Biodiversity Gain and considers the overall scheme is acceptable with the safeguard of more detailed landscaping schemes and a drainage plan to ensure the resultant ecological value of the development is not degraded/harmed. Overall, the amended scheme would not harm protected species and would result in an enhanced ecological value with the safeguard of conditions.

Finally with regard to highway safety, the access point is in a safe position and the required visibility splays either side, to allow good line of sight for drivers leaving the access, can be achieved. The plans were amended to remove the access for Plot 8 from the proposed field access running down the side of the site and onto Folly Lane. This is safer because the visibility at the field access is substandard. However, for farm vehicles only, it is acceptable as the driver on a tractor or truck is likely to be able to see over the obstacles to the south of the access when looking down that direction of the road when leaving the site. The access road and turning head meet the size and width standards that the local highways authority apply and has a safe design. The parking provision also meets the standards for 2 and 3-bed dwellings and would prevent the need for significant numbers of vehicles to be parked on the road which is less safe. Aside from the access road, there are two driveways connected to Folly Lane (plots 1 and 8) but there are on-site turning heads provided for these plots off the driveways to prevent vehicles needing to reverse onto the road which is also unsafe. Overall, the amended proposal would not lead to any harm to highway safety.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal provides much needed housing considering the recent reduction in the five year housing land supply figures and despite being a greenfield site is within the development boundary in a sustainable location within a safe walking distance of the centre of a large village. Despite the increase in the number of houses from 7 to 8, the design and layout of development and small 2-bed/3-bed house sizes would not result in an overdevelopment, the building design reflects local styles including more traditional local styles and there is sufficient space for green landscaping and ecological enhancement. There would be no significant harm to residential amenity or to highway safety. The amended proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 4.7.22

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council