

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0111
Valid 28/02/2023

LAND AT BIDDULPH ROAD
MOW COP

**APPLICATION FOR OUTLINE
PLANNING PERMISSION WITH
ACCESS AND LAYOUT (ALL
OTHER MATTERS
RESERVED). RE: PROPOSED
DEVELOPMENT OF THE LAND
WITH A DETACHED HOUSE
AND GARAGE**

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on ecology and biodiversity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is located in the Green Belt to the west of the Biddulph settlement, the east of Mow Cop village, and north east of Harriseahead. The property lies on the south-eastern side of Biddulph Road with a site area of some 1470 square metres. A line of mature trees to a section of the north-eastern and south-western boundaries of the site provide some limited screening and enclosure to the open part of the site closest to the road. The site occupies a location within open countryside landscape, designated as a landscape character type of 'ancient slope and valley farmlands'.

The existing property comprises of a detached single storey concrete block lock up shed (129 sq metres), a portacabin (28 sq metres), and two timber sheds (36 sq metres). Footprint coverage of the site is therefore around 193 sq metres. The bulk of the buildings are positioned to the rear (south eastern end) of the site where they are exposed to the north, south and west.

The site is fairly level in its topography from this element of Biddulph Road. Biddulph Road falls south westwards towards Harriseahead and rises in gradient towards the junction of Tower Hill Road and Akesmore Lane to the north-east. The land to the south west or rear of the site is open countryside and falls steeply toward the Biddulph valley making the top of the workshop/lock up building apparent from below and approach from Tower Hill Road.

Opposite the site to the north-west lies Tower Hill Farm. To the north-east there is a small development of 4 houses and additional development around the Tower Hill Road to Akesmore Lane cross roads.

50m to the south of the site stands the grade II listed Engine House. The building appears in a lone setting and has a grand industrial appearance associated with historic coal working.

PROPOSAL

The application is submitted for outline permission and provides details of access and layout. The details of proposed layout and position assist specifically with proximity to tree cover and areas of root protection relevant to a tree survey provided with the application. The layout plan also provides the footprint area proposed.

A schematic site plan shows a dwelling positioned toward the rear of the site to occupy the footprint of the concrete block lock up that would be replaced. The proposed footprint is shown on plan with an area of 100 square metres, and indicates an anticipation that the dwelling would be two storey development, thus providing a potential floor area of some 200 square metres.

Details of design, materials and content for energy conservation etc are reserved for later submission and approval following approval of an outline planning application. However, there is indication that the new development would comprise of traditional facing brickwork, natural stone façade detailing, and dual pitched tiled roofs.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Heritage Asset
DC3 Landscape Character
NE1 Ecology/Biodiversity
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Biddulph 2559 Use of site for rabbit farming, market gardening . APPROVED.

49/66 Complaint re use of site

SM1269 Erection of bungalow and use of land for vehicle disposal. REFUSED.

SM/2889 Proposed use of building for dismantling vehicles. REFUSED.

97/18 Enforcement file relating to use of premises for storage of coal and motor vehicles

SM/8080 Use of land for storage of coal and coal lorry and maintenance of vehicles and machinery. REFUSED

SM/8707 Use of land for storage of coal and coal lorry. APPROVED for temporary period expired on 31st July 1985.

85/14270/OLDDC Use of site for storage of coal and parking of coal lorry. APPROVED for temporary period expiring on 30th Sep 1990.

86/00825/OLD Site for Bungalow. REFUSED.

SM90/1127 Use of site for storage of coal and parking of coal lorry. APPROVED.

01/00968/OUT Outline application for dwelling. REFUSED

06/01203/FUL Change of use to storage and light industry. APPROVED.

On the adjacent site of The Old Engine House, which was approved for residential use in 2000 and granted permission for conversion to a dwelling under SMD/2012/0857 and more recently granted approval of new stables under SMD/2020/0490 dated 01/10/2021.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 17/04/2023

Neighbour consultation period ends: 17/04/2023

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No objection

Environmental Health

No objection. Recommend conditions to deal with impacts of construction and potential land contamination.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

No objection subject to conditions requiring:

1. Detailed landscaping scheme including ecology enhancements as recommended in the PEA report and the GCN eDNA report.
2. Biodiversity Net Gain assessment with appropriate metric
3. Method statements and further checks/ precautions for nesting birds, badger, hedgehog and amphibians/reptiles as set out in the PEA report.
4. Drainage scheme incorporating sustainable drainage principles
5. Lighting scheme

Great Crested Newt Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey Report, June 2023 by Elite Ecology submitted by the applicant.

The eDNA survey for the nearby pond returned a negative result, therefore no further action is required for GCN, other than the method statement for precautions. The report makes some suggestions for amphibian habitat features that could be added to the landscaping.

Tree Officer

No Objection. The application arboricultural report demonstrates that the proposed dwelling footprint position would be, just, outside the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of existing trees either side of the currently stoned/gravelled approach to the current industrial storage buildings. Resurfacing/improvement of the existing drive/parking area in keeping with the dwelling proposal is in practice unlikely to have significant additional adverse impact on the trees. On this basis, and given implementation of temporary tree protection measures set out in the arb report, and no subsequent encroachment within RPAs by associated peripheral features such as underground services, boundary walls etc, there would be no significant direct adverse impact on the trees.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection subject to access conditions

Coal Authority

No objection subject to condition requiring intrusive ground investigation and mitigation where required.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at paragraph 149 and 150 of the NPPF.

One such exception is the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

The planning history indicates that the original building was built in connection with rabbit breeding, an agricultural purpose. Throughout the 1980s the site became used to park a coal lorry and store coal with some vehicle repair storage, the authority raised an enforcement file, but granted a number of repeat permissions for a temporary period, until in 1990 a permission was granted to use the land for those purposes for an unlimited period.

The previously developed/non-agricultural status of the land and buildings was further settled with a planning permission granted in 2006 for the use of the site for storage and light industry. On the site now there is a row of timber sheds with mono pitch felt roofs, a concrete block lock up with a full pitch roof and lean to side additions forming an L shape footprint, a porta cabin and a number of stored cars in varying conditions and states of repair.

The applicant has calculated the combined footprint of these structures and suggests that a two storey dwelling could take that footprint area and use it across two floors provided as floor space.

However, all of the structures are currently single storey with a low profile within the site. The workshop building has an eaves height of little more than 2m while the cars and flat roof timber sheds are tight against the hedgerow boundary. The edges of the site, and the buildings, are apparent and have exposure within otherwise open land, but their low profile limit their impact on openness.

Replacing these simple buildings and structures with a two storey dwelling, or even a sizeable bungalow, would introduce increased height, mass and volume that would be more exposed and prominent and ultimately have greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

The development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. Substantial weight is attributed to that harm and there are no other considerations apparent or advanced by the applicant that would clearly outweigh that harm.

Impact on character and appearance of the area and the quality of the landscape

The site and its buildings appear within an extensive swathe of open farm land between the end dwelling to the north and the listed Engine House to the south. The buildings are set well back behind the building line of the existing dwellings to the north that front Biddulph Road. In those regards, they occupy a more exposed and intrusive location within the countryside and landscape. This is particularly apparent on approach along Tower Hill Road, climbing from Biddulph valley toward Mow Cop, where the top edge of the workshop/lockup building's gable end is apparent on the hilltop, in a cleft between rolling slopes and mature trees and bushes. So too, from Biddulph Road to the north, the northern side of the site and buildings are prominent and quite visible across the paddock within a range of some 50m.

Despite their location and relative exposure, the existing buildings have a low profile and are simple in form, with an essentially agrarian appearance and character. Within a farmland countryside setting that limits visual discord and intrusion. A replacement or new two storey dwelling, or even sizeable bungalow, of residential character and design with greater height, mass and volume would cause prominent intrusion into the countryside that would be apparent as a harmful introduction that would be at odds with the character and appearance of the area and the quality of the landscape. There would be conflict with policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.



Impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset

It is apparent that from certain positions and aspects that the development would appear adjacent to, and within, the setting of the Grade II listed Engine House, 50m to the south west. Originally associated with colliery workings its industrial character and lone setting contribute to the significance of the designated heritage asset. It is anticipated and assumed, particularly in the absence of a heritage statement, that the introduction of a prominent residential building would adversely affect the setting of the listed building causing 'less than substantial harm' to its significance. It is not considered that the limited public benefits of a single dwelling would outweigh this harm. There would be conflict with policy DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local



CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. There would also be harm to:

- the character and appearance of the area and the quality of the landscape;
and,
- the significance of a heritage asset.

There are no other considerations that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and those other harms that would result from the development. There would be conflict with those Local Plan policies listed above and the terms of the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 28th July 2023

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council