

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0655
Valid 21/12/2023

AGRICULTURAL BUILDING
BOUNDARY ROAD
BOUNDARY

PROPOSED ERECTION OF
TWO DWELLING HOUSES

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- The principle of the development/Sustainability
- Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- Impact on residential amenity.
- Impact on highway safety.
- Impact of former coal mining activity and contamination.
- Impact on a Public Right of Way (PRoW).
- Impact on ecology.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is on the southern edge of the small village of Boundary and comprises a triangular open plot, part of a field, with trees and hedges on the north and south boundaries. It is on the west side of Boundary Road, a country lane which is narrow in places. It lies at the end of ribbon development along the lane to the north. The first few dwellings to the north are bungalows. Opposite them on the east side of the lane are further dwellings, also bungalows. Open countryside lies to the south and also directly opposite the site access off the lane, to the east. The access is a typical field access with metal 5-bar gates. The site opens out into the rest of the field and open countryside to the west. The site is in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a pair of 2-bed two-storey semi-detached brick-and-tile dwellings which would face the lane. The access would remain in the same place and the area between it and the houses would become a hardstanding to provide parking spaces, two in front of the dwellings and two down the south side. A Planning Statement has been submitted which explains the dwellings would provide affordable housing in the village as "Starter Homes".

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

SS9 Small Villages Strategy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations

DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
H1 New Housing Development
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
NE2 Trees, hedges and woodland

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Full applications for an agricultural building were recently refused under refs SMD 2021 0646 and SMD 2023 0129.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13/2/2023
Neighbour consultation period ends: 13/2/2023
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments:

Letters of objection have been received from three nearby residential properties.
The points raised are as follows:

- Harm to Green Belt
- Out of keeping with Boundary
- Wildlife in the area
- The road is narrow and unsuitable

Forsbrook Parish Comments:

"No comment".

SCC Highways

No objection.

Severn Trent Water

No objection subject to a condition requiring details of drainage to be submitted for approval beforehand.

AES Waste

No issues regarding waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The application would be viewed against Policy SS9 of the Local Plan, the strategy for “small villages” in which Boundary is listed. However, as the site is also outside of the Development Boundaries shown in the Local Plan and could also be deemed to be outside of the “Built Up” part of the village, comprising a field which is part of the open countryside, the application would also need to be determined against Policy SS10 of the Local Plan which is the strategy for the countryside. This requires strict control over “inappropriate development” in the Green Belt.

Paras 154 and 155 of the NPPF lists the exceptional forms of development which are not deemed to be inappropriate in the Green Belt. New-build dwellings are not listed. It does list “limited infilling in villages” but this is not deemed to be an “infill” plot as whilst there may be building and dwellings immediately to the north, there are no buildings immediately to the south, with a considerable open green gap between the site and the nearest building. The NPPF also lists “limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan”. The application proposes “Starter Homes” but gives no information as to how it would deliver the housing to be affordable to local community. Furthermore, Policy H3, the Development Plan policy for Affordable Housing allows such housing on the edges of villages “on suitable rural exceptions sites which are well related to services and facilities and where a demonstrable need exists within the local area which cannot otherwise be met by means of provision in the plan.”

The site is not well related to services and facilities. Boundary is a very small village, with the only notable facilities being a public house and post-box 300m away and a bus stop 350m away. These are accessed along a narrow unlit road with no footway. Access to the bus stop would involve crossing the junction of an A class road with no evident speed restrictions. Accessing those services on foot does not appear desirable. Access to more important services such as schools and food shops and also workplaces further away in the next villages of town, although perhaps practical on a bike, would more likely lead to the use of the car and the lack of a footway along the A road towards Cheadle and Forsbrook/Blythe Bridge makes walking to those settlements appear hazardous and impractical.

Furthermore, no information has been given of evidence of need for affordable housing in the area.

The proposal is therefore deemed to be inappropriate development, which by definition in the NPPF, is harmful to its openness and in the words of the NPPF should not be allowed unless there are any “very special circumstances” which are considered to outweigh the level of harm to the Green Belt. I do not consider that any such circumstances exist. Therefore the application is contrary to Green Belt policy in the NPPF and also therefore Policy SS10 of the Local Plan and therefore should be refused.

Continuing with the principle of the development, the strategy for the small villages, Policy SS9, allows “limited” new housing in accordance with Policy H1, the Housing strategy of the Local Plan. However, for small villages new housing is not allowed where this creates or extends ribbon development and also where this leads to a

prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. I consider the proposal fails in this respect. The village has a very rural character and appearance characterised mainly by short lengths of ribbon development along a country lane, separated by notable green gaps and with ample hedgerows, trees and other vegetation. There is also some sporadic development along another country lane (Commonside) to the east of Boundary Road. The site being at the end of a row of dwellings would extend ribbon development and is not within a small gap between built development.

The site is clearly deemed to be in the countryside and the building of two-storey houses at the end of a row of bungalows would clearly lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside and would significantly harm the rural character and appearance of the area, not least because heading along the lane towards the more open countryside to the south, would lead to a visible height increase in development and a more abrupt built edge of the village which is also visible from a distance from the more open countryside to the south, along the lane, above the road-side hedges, heading north into the village. The height of the dwellings would be 7.8m which is significantly taller than bungalows to the north and also most of the dwellings along the lane to the south of the 'A' Road, many of which are bungalows or dormer bungalows. The proposed dwellings would out of character and not in keeping with the village.

Further harm is caused by the land to the front of the houses being completely hard-surfaced up to the road (but not including the embankment along the south side boundary) and to a great extent to the side, depriving the development of any real visible vegetation or new planting when viewed from the road, with only the existing grass embankment and trees and hedging on top. The new development would also be very close to a mature tree on the south side boundary which may result in its harm and eventual demise. No Tree Report accompanies the application. I consider the application should also therefore be refused for not taking account of positive features of the site which in this case comprise mature trees which are in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area.

With regard to residential amenity, there are a number of outbuildings at the property to the north which would screen the development from views from the dwelling to the north and the one opposite. The proposed development would not lead to a loss of light to other properties or appear overbearing. Privacy would also not be affected as the only first-floor side window facing the neighbours would be a small bathroom windows which could have obscured glazing inserted into it. Views from the proposed front windows into the south window of the dwelling opposite would only be achieved at a very obscure angle and the outbuildings to the north of the site would block views from the new houses into the west-facing windows of the bungalow opposite. With regard to the living conditions of the proposed houses, the floorspace would meet the thresholds for 2-bed dwellinghouses as set out in the governments Nationally Described Space Standards, if one of the bedrooms of each house was to be used as a single bedroom. There is no garden space shown on the plans but rear gardens of adequate size can be created in the remaining space onsite to the west of the proposed dwellings. Overall, the proposal would not result in any negative impacts affecting existing neighbours or lead to unsatisfactory living conditions of the proposed occupants of the development.

Finally with regard to highway safety, the two parking spaces per dwelling complies with the Council's parking standards for 2-bed houses. There does not appear to be sufficient space for the on-site turning of vehicles which could lead to cars reversing out onto the lane. However, the access is wide, and the lane, despite being narrow is not heavily trafficked, is straight for a considerable distance either side of the access and visibility along the lane in both directions appears to be good for drivers leaving the site. The local highways authority, SCC, does not object to the proposal. The development would not lead to any significant highway safety issues.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances that would outweigh the level of harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed houses are not in a sustainable location as there is not safe and sufficient access to shops and services via walking, cycling or public transport. The principle of the development in this edge of small rural village location is unacceptable. Furthermore, the development would also harm the rural setting of the village and the overall character and appearance and character of the area. There are no harms to residential amenity or highway safety but overall the proposal due to the impacts on Green Belt openness and the visual amenities of the area would not comply with the Council's Local Plan and would not be in line with the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore should be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 15.2.24

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council