

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0092
Valid 26/02/2024

BUTTERLANDS FARM TOP
ROAD
BIDDULPH MOOR

NEW ACCESS AND PARKING
AREA

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area
- Impact on Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Butterlands Farm lies on the western side of Top Road, Biddulph Moor. It comprises of a dwellinghouse with attached two storey barn set at right angles on the front elevation, which has been converted into a separate self-contained dwelling. A range of single span portal framed buildings lie to the south set around a central courtyard area. The application site is used as a well-established and very successful equestrian centre. It is set within a very open and exposed ridge top location which is characterised by loose spattering of dwellings and farmsteads. For the purposes of the Development Plan the application site lies outside the village development boundary within the North Staffordshire Green Belt where more restrictive planning policies apply.

PROPOSAL

This application seeks consent to provide a dedicated access to the main dwellinghouse. In order to achieve this, a new access and parking area would be provided off Top Road, to the north of the existing access. The proposed access which would be approximately 3.1m wide would measure approximately 34m long and be formed in limestone chippings to match the existing. A short section of roadside boundary wall would need to be removed and the new access would be formed with a 2.0m x 2.0m 45 degree splayed entrance to the highway. A cobblestone demise would be provided to prevent the stone chippings from spreading onto to the highway. The proposed access would be severed from the agricultural field by black painted metal estate fencing to match the existing on both sides. The proposed access would be gated with an estate style fence gate and the existing field access would be relocated slightly to the south west. Three parking spaces would be provided to the eastern side of a detached ancillary outbuilding which lies to the north east of the main dwellinghouse. These would be located on an existing area of lawn and would be provided using a cell web system.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives

SS1 Development Principles

SS10 Other Rural Area
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None Relevant

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 19/04/2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: 19/04/2024
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No objection subject to the existing access being closed off and there being no highway objections.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Object/Refusal

Site Visit Conducted on: 07-Mar-2024

Current records show that there were not any Personal Injury Collisions on Top Road within 215 metres of the property from 01/01/2019 to 31/12/2021. The property is located on Top Road (Road No. C0173). Top Road is subject to a 60mph speed limit, there are no footways or streetlighting.

A plan showing visibility at the location of the proposed access has not been supplied with the application and therefore a plan showing visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m from the centre of the proposed access to the nearside kerbs/edge of carriageway in both directions with no obstructions to visibility over a height of 600 mm above the adjacent carriageway level is required.

It would appear that the proposed gates are to be set back less than 5m rear of the highway.

The proposed access track scaled at 3.1m is insufficient in width and should be a minimum of 4.2m to allow 2 vehicles to pass and prevent road users waiting on the public highway as a result of vehicles using the access track.

The objection does not prejudice consideration of a revised application that demonstrates:

- A plan to scale, showing visibility splays for the new access of 2.4m x 215m with no obstructions 600mm above carriageway on land within the applicants' ownership or highway land. The visibility shall not cross any third-party land.

- A plan showing the proposed gates to be set back at least 5m from the rear of the highway.
- A plan showing the access track width of a minimum of 4.2m wide.

The highway officer later clarified, in separate correspondence, that rather than a 4.2m width the whole of the tracks length, a single passing place pull in would be acceptable, to limit impacts on Green Belt and landscape.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at paragraphs 144 or 145 of the NPPF. One such exception is for engineering operations that preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposed of including land within it.

The construction of the access with the highway and the installation of the limestone track would be an engineering operation. As a driveway access to a single dwellinghouse, the access aperture would be limited creating an opening within a low rise stone wall. The track would have a single carriageway width of 3.1m and take a short 30m straight line across a small roadside field parcel to adjoin an existing private track that serves the equestrian yard, grazing fields and the rear of the dwelling. The extent of hard surfacing would be limited and vehicle movements associated with a single dwelling would be relatively occasional. The track would not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The three additional parking spaces would be provided in an area of garden or curtilage to the rear of the dwelling adjacent to an ancillary outbuilding to the west and paddock boundary to the east. Within that context the parking would not harm the openness of the Green Belt either spatially or visually.

The development would not be inappropriate and there would be no harm to the Green Belt.

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

Biddulph Moor Top Road occupies a moorland plateau ridge with farmland falling steadily, each side, to the west and east. The farmland each side of the road is divided into irregular field parcels enclosed with low drystone walls and livestock fencing, the character of the area is open affording wide reaching views across countryside and into the valleys. The cottages and farms along the road are scattered and occasional and in most cases are set back from the roadside served by single carriageway limestone farm tracks.

The proposed driveway would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area and the landscape character. A narrow limestone track providing access for a short distance across small field parcel serving a setback farm dwelling would be similar in character and appearance to other occasional farm driveways along the road.

The development would not cause significant intrusion into the countryside or harm landscape character it would be compliant with Local Plan policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 in those regards.

Impact on Trees

The edge of the parking spaces would be within 6m of the trunk of a mature garden tree that is not protected. Potentially the development would encroach on its root system. To limit damage to the tree the light domestic parking would be provided on a shallow dig cell web system to spread the load and weight.

Highway Safety

The highway authority raised objection – the plan originally submitted did not show visibility splays, indicate opportunity for vehicles to pass, or confirm that the gate would be set back at least 5m from carriage way edge. With concern that a 4.2m wide track would seem excessive for a single dwelling and have unnecessary impacts on the Green Belt and rural character and appearance, the highway officer on enquiry conceded that a single passing place would be acceptable.

Although it has a speed limit of 60mph, Top Road is generally straight with good visibility on approach and opportunity to assess and anticipate the movements of other road users.

A revised plan has been submitted. The plan demonstrates visibility splays of 2.4m x 215.0m across the frontage above existing drystone wall (close to or reduced to 600mm) the existing post and rail fence is inside this line to retain horses set behind visibility lines. A cobblestone demise would be provided to prevent stone chippings spreading onto the highway and the gate would be set back 5m from the carriageway edge. The plan indicates opportunity for vehicles to pass at the intersection of the new and existing track.

There would not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, given that the access would only serve a single dwellinghouse and in the interests of limiting impacts on the Green Belt and the rural character and appearance of the area it is considered that the arrangements detailed on the revised plan are acceptable. The comments provided by the Town Council are noted, however the highway officer has not recommended the closure of the existing access for highway safety reasons. Both access points are far enough apart to ensure that conflict would not arise between vehicles either exiting or entering the site.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt. It would have minimal impact on the character and appearance of the area and by reason of limited dimension and use of lime stone material would not harm landscape character. To address highway concerns a revised plan has confirmed visibility splays across frontage provided in each direction above low dry stone wall, a passing place, and the gate set back 5m. The development would not conflict with the policies of the Local Plan listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 02/05/2024

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council