

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0083
Valid 14/03/2024

THE HAYBARN
MARSH GREEN FARM
MARSH GREEN ROAD
BIDDULPH

**PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO
AN EXISTING VEHICULAR
ACCESS AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A 4M
WIDE TRACK IN THE
ADJOINING FIELD TO
IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE
AGRICULTURAL LAND.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Green Belt
- Impact on character and appearance of the area
- Impact on non-designated heritage asset
- Impact on Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Timber field gate, 3m wide, within hawthorn hedge (described as an existing access, however, nothing has been constructed between carriageway edge and field that breaches the verge).

The gate provides access from the rural lane, Marsh Green Road, to the 1 ha of grazing land that surrounds, to the west and north, Marsh Green Farm and the arrangement of converted barns (including the applicant's at The Haybarn) that provide the 19th Century farm stead (appearing on the County Council's record of historic asset).

The Haybarn, the applicant's dwelling, is to the north of the farmstead and backs onto the field with extended curtilage and garden that has a large looping enclosure that follows a D shape to the rear of the converted barn.

The land and property is in the Green Belt beyond the edge of the Biddulph settlement boundary.

PROPOSAL

The proposal would increase the width of the opening to 4m and set a new gate 6m back to the rear of the carriageway edge behind a bound surface, it is said that visibility would be improved by reducing hedge to 1m in height.

The proposed road would be provided with compacted crushed stone, it would be 4m wide and extend from the road for roughly 50m into the field before turning to the east

and looping round for a further 20m to the rear of the applicant's dwelling and toward the edge of their extended garden.

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
DC2 Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape Character
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2015/0383 New garage and store. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 9/05/2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: 9/05/2024
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: Awaited

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Awaited

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the 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 and 145 of the NPPF. One such exception is an engineering operation providing the development preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The construction of a roadway with sections of bound and compacted stone surface can be considered an engineering operation. The openness of the Green Belt should be considered in terms of both spatial and visual aspects. Spatially, the coverage of the hard surface over open field, would be considerable (some 70m long and 4m wide), disproportionately so within, and serving, a modest 1 ha of field. Visually, the views from Marsh Green Road from the west and east are open and far reaching above

drystone wall and hedgerow across open the open field. Within that context the roadway would have a visual impact that is prominent and intrusive as a form of hard construction within open field. In these regards the development would not preserve openness.

Moreover, one of the five purposes is to assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment. The development would introduce a considerable run of hard standing to the outside edge of, and surrounding, the built form of the farmstead and its existing areas of yard and driveway within that arrangement. The effect would be to extend and expand that built form and extent of hard surfacing into the open land to the west causing encroachment beyond the farmstead arrangement into the countryside.

The development therefore would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. Any harm to the Green Belt should be attributed substantial weight. Planning permission should only be granted where considerations amounting to 'very special circumstances' clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harms that would result from the proposal.

The access and roadway is said to be for agricultural purposes, the applicant describes how it would provide access to their fields that can only otherwise be accessed from the rear of their dwelling. It is said that they keep and graze alpacas on the land. It was not obvious, at the time of the officer's visit, that the land was in agricultural use, grazing animals were not present or observed on the land from the roadside, it maybe that there were animals grazing on land behind the house. Notwithstanding, if the applicant is minded to engage in small scale agricultural grazing, commensurate with the 1.5 ha holding, then the obvious solution is to farm and access the grazing land from the rear of the dwelling.

In any event the applicant's case and presented need does not amount to very special circumstances that would clearly outweigh the harm that the development would cause, identified above and below.

Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

The arrangement of the historic farmstead surrounded by open fields with far reaching landscape views across stone walls and hedgerow toward rolling hills and deciduous tree line, provides the character of the area and the quality of the environment. From Marsh Green Road, a narrow rural lane, the roadside hedgerow is interrupted only by a small timber field gate just 30m to the west of the farmstead access.

Within that setting the substantial opening in the roadside hedgerow and the introduction of bound surface and a 4m wide roadway would be intrusive and harmful to the setting of the farmstead and the character of the landscape.

The development would cause significant intrusion into the countryside with harm to landscape character and the character and appearance of the area. The development would be contrary to Local Plan policies DC1 and DC3 in these regards.

Impact on non-designated Heritage Asset

The Haybarn, the applicant's dwelling, is a brick built threshing barn. Together with the other grouping of converted barns they form the historic 19th Century farmstead to Marsh Green Farm arranged around a central yard and driveway access. The Haybarn and the historic farmstead appear on the County Council heritage record and to that extent they are non-designated heritage assets. Historic significance can be identified in the clear grouping and arrangement of the buildings as being part of a whole served around central access and yard. An additional access and roadway that loops around the outside of the farmstead, just 30m to the west, would confuse and detract from that historic arrangement and setting, with resultant harm to their historic significance.

The development would be contrary to Local Plan policies DC1, DC2 and DC3 in these regards.

Highway Safety

The application plan does not demonstrate visibility splays – rather it refers to the scheme as alteration of existing access and details 4m roadside width with hedge reduced to 1m in height.

The alterations would apply to what is now only a 3m wide field gate within the hedgerow. Presumably providing occasional access for mowing. It is assumed that the development would bring increased vehicle movements and interactions with the highway. Increased access width and removal or height reduction of the hedge would be in turn harmful to the character and appearance of the area and, in the absence of awaited comments from the highway authority, it is not clear that visibility arrangements would be adequate and that an unacceptable impact on highway safety would not result.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. There would also be harm to landscape character and the character and appearance of the area and the significance of a non-designated heritage asset. There are no considerations that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and those other harms that would result from the development. Contrary to Local Plan policies SS10, DC1, DC2, and DC3 of the Local Plan and the terms of the NPPF.

There is also concern that the access would not be provided with appropriate visibility in both directions without significant alteration and harm to the roadside hedge and the character and appearance of the area.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 09/05/2024

X *J. Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council