

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0152
Valid 13/05/2024

**CICELY HAUGHTON
SPECIAL SCHOOL
WESTWOOD MANOR
WESTWOOD
WETLEY ROCKS**

**REMOVAL OF AN EXISTING
OIL TANK TO THE SCHOOL
BASEMENT AND THEN THE
INSTALLATION OF A NEW OIL
TANK TO THE SCHOOL TO BE
INSTALLED IN A NEW
LOCATION EXTERNALLY.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the countryside and Green Belt about a mile to the north-west of the village of Wetley Rocks. It comprises the Cecily Haughton Special School which is part of Westwood Manor, reached via a long private lane connected to Mill Lane about a mile to the south. The private lane divides and one part of it leads directly to the school, finishing with a vehicle turning area immediately to the south of the cluster of main school buildings, a mix of modern and old. The other part of the private lane continues a short distance to the west of the buildings and heads further north.

PROPOSAL

This is a full application for the installation of an oil tank for the heating purposes of the school. This would be placed immediately to the west of the vehicle turning area on a raised grass verge above stone retaining walls and there are further stone boundary walls to the west enclosing the grass verge, which also has a number of trees. The rectangular shaped tank would have a footprint of 3.5 x 2.5 metres and a height of 2.5m and would have a green metal finish. A photo of the proposed tank has been provided. It would be placed on a concrete base, poured onto an area of removed topsoil (extraction via micro digger). No trees would be removed.

The tank is a replacement for an existing smaller oil tank currently kept in the basement.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Section 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 25.6.24

Neighbour consultation period ends: 25.6.24

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Cheddleton Parish Council have No Objection provided there is security for protection from flammable substance and landscaping.

Environmental Health

No objection. The proposed storage tank should be installed in compliance with Building Regulations Document J:Combustion Appliances and fuel storage systems and if applicable the Oil Storage Regulations.

If leakage is found during removal of the existing oil tank then works to remediate should be undertaken in compliance with the condition and advisory below. In addition all works to remove the existing tank should be conducted in compliance with HSE and Environment Agency guidance.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt and the strategy for the countryside, Policy SS10, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt in order to protect its openness. Paras 154 and 155 of the NPPF list the exceptional forms of development which are deemed to not be inappropriate. Whilst oil tank structures or similar are not specifically listed, para 154 (g) does allow the "limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land.....which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The school site can be deemed to be previously developed land and the oil tank structure would be placed between two of the school buildings, with the

main school buildings approx. 10 to 15m to the north and another building approx. 30m to the south. The structure would also be placed adjacent to retaining stone wall and boundary stone wall structures of approx. 2m in height. Given the very small scale and height of the structure and its exact siting close to existing buildings and other structures, I consider that the proposed works can be deemed to be “limited infilling” of a previously developed site which does not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

With regard to overall character and appearance, although of a functional metal box design which would not harmonise with the traditional rural qualities of the area, it is a very small structure in relation to the scale of the school buildings and would be completely screened from the public realm including roads and footpaths, the nearest of which runs along the private lane to the west. The structure would be screened by trees and the stone boundary wall when viewed from the road. The green colour would also help the structure to blend in with its surroundings. From within the school grounds, it would also not appear harmfully intrusive.

The adjacent trees would not be harmed as although some extraction would be needed for a concrete base for the tank to sit on for safety reasons and to avoid pollution, this would comprise the removal of top soil with a mini-digger and this would not significantly harm tree roots.

The proposal would harm less the 5mx5m of habitat and therefore there are no BNG requirements.

The Parish Council do not object providing there is security and protection from flammable substances. This is not a planning matter and is covered by separate legislation. The Environmental Health Section state that the tank should be installed in accordance with Building Regulations Document J:Combustion Appliances and fuel storage systems and if applicable the Oil Storage Regulations. An informative would be added to the planning permission informing the applicant of this duty and in the event of its later removal, this should be conducted in compliance with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency guidance.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not harm the rural character and appearance of the area. It complies with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 8.7.24

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council