

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0068
Valid 07/03/2025

LAND NORTH EAST OF
BRUND LANE
CHEDDLETON

CONVERSION, ALTERATION
AND EXTENSION OF
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO
FORM DWELLINGHOUSE,
AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
The principle of the proposal
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenities.
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the current ecological value of the site and protected species
Biodiversity Net Gain

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the countryside a short distance to the west of Cheddleton and is also in the Green Belt. It is on the north-east side of Brund Lane, a narrow country lane leading out of Cheddleton and which provides the access to the site. The village Development Boundary is approx. 400m to the east. It comprises a derelict and dilapidated small single-storey brick and tile former agricultural building, in the form of an old stables block. The walls are intact but virtually all of the south-east facing roof slope has collapsed and more than half of the north-west facing roof, understood to be the result of the recent Storm Darragh. The building is about 15m from the edge of the lane. There is recently constructed farm gate entrance and small gravel/aggregate hard-standing next to which is not shown on June 2023 Streetview images. Several trees, some large and mature, appear to have been removed immediately to the south of the building, revealing the building more when viewed from the lane. There is a Public Right of Way next to the new access which runs northwards along the north-west boundary of the site and another PROW about 100m to the east connecting the lane with Cheddleton village. The site is surrounded by open fields. The field to the north-east of the site is shown to be within the same ownership as the application site. The application site does not appear to have any marked boundaries other than the line of small trees marking the north-west boundary.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the conversion of the building into a one-bedroom dwelling and this would involve a small extension to the eastern elevation and the complete replacement of the roof (which would have Staffs Blue tiles) and a

small side extension. New windows and doors will be inserted into the existing openings, with one of the openings at the front enlarged. The existing access would be re-used and parking and turning area for two cars would be created in front of the new dwelling. Native hedgerows would be planted along the north, south and east boundaries where there is currently no vegetation. An area to the front of the building would also be maintained as a grass lawn garden. The site plan also shows proposed shrub planting areas, a small meadow, two new planted trees and bat, bird and hedgehog boxes provided around the site.

The application includes a Planning Statement, Structural Survey Report, Bat Scoping Assessment and BNG Assessment Report with BNG Metric calculations.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (Adopted Sep 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
H1 New Housing Development
DC1 Design Considerations
NE1 Biodiversity
T1 Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Feb 2025)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design), 13 (Green Belts) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 22.4.25
Neighbour consultation period ends: 22.4.25.
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Local Highways Authority

No objection subject to a condition requiring the provision of the parking and turning area before occupation and its retention.

SCC Minerals and Waste

No comments to make.

Ramblers Association

The proposal will not affect the footpath but care must be taken during the construction process that this will remain unaffected.

Peak & Northern Footpaths

The safety of users of the path must not be affected.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the countryside (those areas deemed to be outside of the Development Boundaries which are drawn around the towns and large villages as shown in the Local Plan) and is also in the Green Belt. The Strategy for the Countryside, Policy SS10 states there will be strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paras 154 and 155 of the NPPF list the forms of development which are exceptionally, not inappropriate in the Green Belt. Para 154(h) allows, inter alia, the re-use of buildings provided they are of “permanent and substantial” construction. I consider that due to the dilapidated state of the building which is a small derelict brick building with most of its roof missing that it cannot be described as being permanent and substantial. It seems clear that over time the building will continue to deteriorate and become even less permanent and substantial. The Structural Survey report also outlined that about a quarter of the walls are unstable to the point where they would need to be rebuilt if the building was to accommodate a new use. The collapse of the roof has caused some significant bowing of the walls.

The proposal is not considered to fall under any of the other categories of development listed in paras 154 and 155 (e.g. it is an agricultural building and therefore does not fall under the definition of “previously developed land” (PDL)). The proposed development is therefore deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved unless “very special circumstances” exist that are considered to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

It is not considered that such very special circumstances exist. The only real benefit with the scheme apart from the perhaps the opportunity to restore a traditional rural building that is not out of character with the area, is the provision of a small unit of accommodation in an area of housing shortfall. The District currently has less than a five year housing land supply. The NPPF attaches significant weight to allowing “sustainable” new dwellings but I do not consider the site to be in a sustainable location. It is in the countryside and accessed via a narrow country lane with no public transport. The large village of Cheddleton is about a half a kilometre from the site but the shops and services here cannot be reached other than the private car, or by a walk or cycle ride along a narrow lane which may be a suitable means during hours of daylight but would not be encouraging at night. There is no footway and

there is no road lighting. Overall it is accepted that the occupants of a dwelling in this location would be using private transport in order to reach workplaces, shops and services. In any case, the contribution towards addressing housing need via this proposal would be very limited.

Policy SS10 of the Local Plan allows the conversion of rural buildings in the countryside into residential uses where they are physically, architecturally and in character terms suitable for such a change of use. Although it can be argued that in character terms the building, even in its current state, is not unsuitable in that it is not out of keeping with the traditional rural qualities of the area, it is not, due to its current condition architecturally and especially not physically suitable. As stated above, the roof is mostly missing and would need to be completely replaced. The collapse of the roof has caused significant bowing of the walls and the Structural Report outlines that those parts of the walls would need to be replaced and a new floor would also need to be provided. I therefore consider that for this reason along with the deemed inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the proposal would not comply with Policy SS10 overall.

The agent has outlined an example of an approval elsewhere in the Green Belt in the District (in 2017 ref: SMD/2017/0005) involving the residential conversion of a “similar” dilapidated old building, outlining that there are comparisons with the current scheme. However, this involved a much larger traditional stone building which was deemed to be of particular historic merit. This was also not considered to be permanent or substantial but the approval was allowed under “very special circumstances”, outweighing the harm to the Green Belt, due to its heritage value. The application was also determined under a previous Local Plan which has been superseded by the current Local Plan in 2020. The previous plan had a policy, R2, which allowed the residential conversion of rural buildings where this would safeguard a building of particular merit and the proposal was deemed to comply with this policy. However, the policy has not been carried forward into the current Local Plan and has been deleted. In any case, I do not consider the building on the current application site to be of any particular sufficient historic merit despite it having some traditional historic characteristic which are in keeping with the rural area. It is made of brick and not stone and the Structural Report with the 2017 application did mention that despite the loss of the roof of the stone building, the extant parts of the building were robust, probably because they would have been less affected by bowing, unlike the less robust single-skin brick building with the current scheme. Each application has to be judged on its own individual merits and overall I do not consider there are sufficient comparisons between the current scheme and the 2017 scheme, due to the differences in the buildings and also the planning policies in place at the time, that would lead to a more positive decision on the current scheme.

If the scheme was deemed to not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the proposed extension would also not be inappropriate as paras 154 and 155 allows the enlargements of buildings where this would result in them not being disproportionate in relation to the original building. I do not consider the extension would amount to disproportionate addition.

There are no other harms identified with this proposal. The alterations and additions to the building would harmonise with building and character of the area. The works

and creation of a parking area would not lead to significant harm to visual amenities of the area and no further harm would result to the remaining perimeter trees.

There are no other nearby dwellings and so existing residential amenities would be protected. The total floorspace, by virtue of the addition of the proposed side extension, would meet the thresholds of the governments Nationally Described Space Standards and the proposed private garden in terms of its size would also comply with the private outdoor amenity space standards set out in the Council's Space About Dwellings SPG.

The local highways authority do not consider there would any harm to highway safety and that the access onto the country lane is safe.

Finally, with regard to biodiversity, a bat survey was undertaken and revealed evidence of potential for bats using the building and recommended activity surveys during the optimal time of year when they are present (May to September). However, since this was undertaken, the roof suffered further damage and a subsequent inspection revealed that the potential for bat usage has now been removed. It is not considered the proposal would lead to any harm to protected species. With regard to Biodiversity Net Gain, the current biodiversity level of the site (the "baseline") has been calculated and an accompanying BNG report assessed that proposed measures to be provided, including native planting, the provision of a meadow area and bat, bird and hedgehog boxes would lead to a BNG gain of over 11% which is in excess of the 10% required.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt which by definition is harmful to its openness. There are no very special circumstances considered to outweigh the level of harm to the Green Belt. The proposal would therefore not comply with Council's Local Plan or the government's planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore should be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 2.5.25

X *J Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council