



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 July 2025

by **C Billings BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/W/25/3365632

Elderberry Barn, Bentygrange Lane, Waterfall, Staffordshire ST13 7PU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr M Bradley against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref is SMD/2024/0417.
- The development proposed is general purpose agricultural building, to house livestock and to store fodder and implements.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and host property, Elderly Barn.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is within the open countryside and comprises an area of open land to the side of an existing stone barn converted to a dwelling. The proposed building would be sited beyond the garden and parking areas of the dwelling, although it would share the vehicular access with it. Surrounding the appeal site and converted barn is open agricultural grazing land, including a small rectangular field to one side, owned by the appellant. Due to the sloping topography of the surrounding area, relatively low height of the roadside stone boundary walls and hedges, and sparse vegetation on this side of Bentygrange Lane and around the proposed building, the appeal site is in a very exposed, open and fairly isolated location.
4. Buildings for agricultural purposes are generally appropriate, in principle, in the countryside. Also, the design and external materials of the proposed building would be that of a typical modern agricultural building, with the intention that the green cladding would help blend the building into the backdrop of green fields. However, despite such, the proposed large building would be particularly visually prominent due to its proposed open and exposed location. Furthermore, the scale and massing of the proposed building would be significantly larger than that of the converted barn. Consequently, the proposal would unduly dominate this nearby attractive, traditional stone building, harmfully reducing its open rural setting.
5. As the proposed access and hardstanding areas for the new building would principally share that of the existing dwelling, no significant additional areas of hardstanding are proposed, with most of the new areas set behind existing field boundary walls and the converted barn. Therefore, this would limit the extent and visual impact of the areas of hardstanding. Also, the building would be on an area

of rough land and would be built partly within the hill slope, which together with the proposed cladding colours would help to assimilate the building into the landscape on approach down the hill. However, despite the proposed external colours of the new building and small area of new planting, due to the scale and position of the proposed building, it would be particularly dominant on approach up the hill, including from the road. As a result, the building would be unduly visually prominent from public vantage points within the surrounding open rural landscape.

6. Furthermore, the Gritstone Highland Fringe landscape character type is identified in the Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape Character Assessment as very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change. Consequently, due to the scale and overly prominent location of the proposed building, it would harmfully reduce existing wide open views across the sloping landscape, discordant with the landscape planning guidelines for this character area type.
7. There are examples of existing large agricultural buildings further along Bentygrange Lane and at Waterfall Cross. However, from the evidence provided and my site observations, they tend to be co-located with other buildings and/or near to more substantial vegetation. Furthermore, even though I do not have substantive information to compare the planning history or merits of such agricultural buildings with that of the appeal proposal, these examples are in a different location, not within the same open and exposed hill slope as the appeal site.
8. In view of the above, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the host property, Elderly Barn, in conflict with Policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020) (LP). Such policies require, amongst other matters, that development enhances and conserves the quality of the countryside, including that proposals respect and respond sensitively to the qualities and character of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, Policy DC3 sets out that development will be resisted where it would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside.

Other Matters

9. While the appellant is currently principally a builder, he is seeking to progress to a full-time career in farming, by establishing a new farming enterprise. The appellant currently rents land some miles away to graze and keep cattle and asserts that his wife is from a family of generational farmers, with his son keen to be involved in farming in the future. Also, at the time of my site visit there were a few cattle on the land within the appellants' ownership. Notwithstanding such, and even though there is policy support for a thriving agricultural sector, the current agricultural holding is small and not particularly established.
10. The evidence provided does not demonstrate that the holding is currently or projected to be a viable farming enterprise. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that a building of the proposed scale and location is essential, would create a business for employment purposes to help sustain the rural economy, or that it would enhance the countryside, aligned with all the requirements of Policy SS10 of the LP.
11. The proposed building would provide shelter for cattle, allowing the appellant's cattle currently kept on a bed and breakfast basis on rented land elsewhere to be kept at the appeal site. Also, the proposal would provide some welfare benefits for

the cattle and provide secure storage for equipment that is currently stored outside and so, susceptible to crime and weather damage. However, even though such would be beneficial to the appellant and support the rural economy through the establishment of a new farming enterprise, due to the scale of the development, such benefits would not be significant.

12. Additionally, the proposal would provide some wider economic and environmental benefits from the proposed food production and local sale. However, even though no substantive information has been provided regarding such, the benefits derived from the proposed building and projected number of cattle would not likely be that significant.
13. Despite that Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has objected to the proposal, it is demonstrated that there would be biodiversity net gain provided. However, notwithstanding such, no habitat management and monitoring plan has been provided, nor has any mechanism been put in place, to ensure the delivery and long term maintenance of the proposed biodiversity net gain. Therefore, this has limited weight in favour of the proposal.
14. The actions of the Council during the consideration of the planning application and lack of objections from nearby residents are matters which do not affect my findings on the main issue.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and material considerations do not indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with it.
16. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Billings

INSPECTOR