

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0341
Valid 18/07/2025

**TITTESWORTH VISITORS
CENTRE , BLACKSHAW
LANE , MEERBROOK ,
LEEK , STAFFORDSHIRE ,
ST13 8SW**

**INSTALLATION OF 1NO.
STORAGE BARN
(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of the development
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is in the countryside a few miles to the north of Leek but is not in the Green Belt. It comprises part of a Severn Trent Water visitor centre and is adjacent to Tittesworth Reservoir which lies to the west.

The site is to the west of the visitor centre buildings and is a small open clearing with an untidy storage yard surrounded by trees. It is reached by a track off the main access road which goes down the side of the buildings towards the water's edge.

The site is in the Churnet Valley.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a storage shed constructed from Juniper green powder coated steel roof & wall sheeting, with two shutter doors.

The proposed new structure will provide a secure, dry environment for the storage of plant and materials, significantly improving operational efficiency and staff welfare by offering a safe and functional working space for the Severn Trent rangers working at Tittesworth Water Visitor Centre.

The proposed storage building is located on existing hardstanding where there was previously an area for storage bays for aggregate materials for 20+ years. These proposals seek to re-use the area for the new storage building.

The storage building measures 12m x 8m and 4.3m to apex (3.6m to eaves). The storage floorspace is open and not subdivided. The front elevation has a single pedestrian door and two shutter doors.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy

E4 Tourism and Cultural Development

DC1 – Design Considerations

Other

Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan

National Planning Policy Framework

Sections 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy) and 12 (Achieving well-designed places)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2021/0534 Installation of 2 No.Cabins

SMD/2021/0372 2 x freestanding entrance signs

SMD/2012/1186 Signs

SMD/2009/0465 Replacement toilet block

SMD/2006/0987 Landscaping

SMD/1999/1144 Extension to visitor centre

SMD/1985/0155 Extension to form toilet for the disabled

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 11/09/2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: 12/09/2025

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None received

Town / Parish Comments

None received

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

None received

Trees SMDC

None received

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

With regard to the principle of the development, Policy E4 encourages tourism-related development, which can include development to assist with the running of a

visitor centre which would attract tourists, particularly in the Churnet Valley, providing this would not lead to any harm to the character and appearance of the area or generate significant traffic or harm the natural or historic environment in general.

Design/Amenity

The cabins are required for storage space for use by the rangers. The Juniper green powder coated steel roof & wall sheeting, with two shutter doors is a standard commercial storage building and will not be out of keeping in a yard area away from the visitor centre and not public access. The building will be screened by the surrounding trees and not be overly prominent from either the water or the visitor centre or anywhere else within the public realm as located in a clearing at the end of a private track.

Arb/Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment has been undertaken and advises:

- A pre-commencement badger survey is recommended, owing to the suitability of habitats such as woodland within 30m of the Site. This survey should be conducted if the works for the Scheme have not commenced within six months of this report.
- A CEMP for the Scheme is recommended to manage potential impacts on these habitats, including strict adherence to Pollution Prevention Guidelines (CIRA C532) and root protection areas for retained offsite trees during works. This has been provided as part of the application and will be conditioned to be adhered to.
- Efforts should also be made to minimise effects of lighting upon the trees/woodlands adjacent to the Site and the Tittesworth Reservoir within the wider environment. Lighting should be avoided where possible, and night works should not be undertaken.
- Construction for the Scheme, including any vegetation clearance should take place outside of the core nesting bird season (1st March to 31st August) to avoid the potential disturbance, damage or destruction of occupied nests or harm to nesting birds. If this cannot be achieved, works within the core bird nesting season will require an inspection of vegetation to be cleared for birds and their occupied nests by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours prior to any works being undertaken. If any nesting birds are identified during the survey, they will be left in situ for their entire nesting period and alternative approaches to the work proposed. This may include leaving an exclusion zone around the nests to avoid disturbance.
- It is recommended that a pre-commencement survey for otters is undertaken within 50m of the Site. This survey should be conducted if the works for the Scheme have not commenced within six months of this report.
- A Precautionary Method of Working (PMW) is recommended to mitigate the risk of killing or injuring reptiles during the work and this should be detailed within a construction ecological management plan (CEMP)

The CEMP reflects the PEA findings – Concluding that further surveys returned no evidence of the presence of badger, bats, birds, otter, reptiles and other priority fauna, however there was suitable habitat present for them, both within and immediately adjacent to the Site. Therefore, the submitted CEMP (RammSanderson

Ecology Ltd (RS) and PMW, is produced to mitigate for any ecological receptors which may be present on-Site during construction and will be conditioned to be adhered to.

The storage building will be positioned on an existing concrete slab and compacted earth with a significant proportion of rubble, shingle and gravel – an artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – both of which have a zero value and would therefore be exempt from the 10% gain target. The positioning is on the footprint of an existing hardstanding and does not adversely impact the viability of the nearby trees. The site is exempt from BNG due to being less than 25sqm.

Highway Safety

The development is not associated with any increase in staff so there would be no impact on traffic generation.

For these reasons, the storage building complies with Policy E4 and Policy SS10. The development also complies with Policy SS11 as it does not harm the Churnet Valley.

Other matters

There is no conflict with the Leekfrith Neighbourhood Plan.

CONCLUSION/PLANNING BALANCE

The development is associated with improving the running of a visitor centre and the maintenance of the attractive rural surroundings. It is not harming the character and amenities of the area. It complies with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Pet Twigg

Recommendation Date: 26th September 2025

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council