

Annie Burgess

From:
Sent: 24 September 2025 19:01
To: Chris Johnston
Cc: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: SMD/2025/0249 - Stanley Farm Bungalow, Dial Lane, Congleton

Categories:

Chris

I have the following comments on this application:

Summary: objection – not in principle, but in relation to specific elements of the scheme as currently proposed, namely the projecting single storey lean-to element at the northern end of the proposed “lower barn” and associated vehicle access/turning arrangements, and the proposed new boundary wall; this due to loss of and harmful impact on protected trees and, in the case of the wall, incongruous visual impact out of keeping with the character of the site and surrounding area.

Detail

The application site lies wholly within the extent of Area A1 protected under Tree Preservation Order no. SM.77.

The application submission includes a comprehensive Arboricultural Report. Unfortunately, this does not relate directly to the detail/layout of the application as originally submitted (nor as now amended) and is presumed to show an earlier scheme for a proposed new detached dwelling subsequently discarded in favour of the actual application scheme. Ironically the discontinued scheme shown in the Arb Report has the least (and acceptable, at least in relation to the proposed dwelling itself) impact on existing trees! Whereas the submitted scheme does raise some additional concerns in relation to trees, and more so under the latest amended plans.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a site visit has enabled me to assess the application, and I have done so on the basis of the latest amended plan as shown on Drg. No. C545/25N4R2.

The Arb Report includes recommendations to fell 8 trees due to their poor/dead/dangerous condition irrespective of development proposals, and I would agree with this. The Arb Report also identifies the proposed removal of 3 further trees (3 conifers in Group G4) in order to accommodate the proposed development, although this is in relation to the pre-submission discontinued layout and their removal is actually not required, and nor would they be directly affected, by the submitted amended scheme; nevertheless these conifers are small trees of no significance to wider public amenity and are anyway of inappropriate/incongruous species in this rural location and I would not object to their removal. However, as none of these trees are directly required to be removed to accommodate the proposed development their removal would not specifically be authorised by the grant of planning permission if the application is approved, and any such tree removal would need to be dealt with separately under TPO procedures.

The main proposed “upper barn” element lies entirely within the footprint of the existing (south-western) portal frame building. The northern-most corner of the proposed “upper barn” element may just encroach into the Root Protection Area RPA) of tree T20, but this would be only a minor amount and anyway within the existing building footprint, so I do not object to this.

The glazed link between the two main elements raises no tree issues.

The main (2 storey) part of the proposed “lower barn” element lies within the footprint of the existing (north-eastern) Nissen-type building. Whilst the northern end of the 2-storey part would encroach by up to 3 – 4m into the RPA of tree T18, this again is within the existing building footprint and unlikely to have significant new detrimental impact on T18, and up to this point I again do not object.

However, the proposed single storey lean-to element at the northern end of the “lower barn” would be a completely new built form extending even further into the presently undisturbed unmade ground within the T18 RPA and within c.2m of the base of the tree stem. This would be likely to cause significant root damage, in practice to the extent that T18 would be unlikely to survive and could not be reasonably retained.

In addition to this, the latest amended plan (Rev 2) shows the integral garage access door now moved to the north-west elevation of the single storey lean-to, with associated requirement for a vehicle access/turning area extending a further 6m beyond the north-west elevation which would be likely to at the least have harmful impact on the roots of tree T20 but again in practice probably also require removal of this tree.

I object to the projecting single storey lean-to element at the northern end of the “lower barn”, and to the associated vehicle access/turning arrangements at this end of the building.

Given the extensive potential development area unrestricted by RPAs within the majority of footprint areas of (all 3) existing buildings and open ground to the south of them, it does not seem appropriate or acceptable that development be approved which would require removal of and/or detrimentally impact protected trees (other than the 3 conifers, and the 8 trees in poor condition, as previously noted). These mature trees, whilst technically not forming “woodland” as such, nevertheless contribute to a continuous canopy of significant tree cover around the northern and eastern sides of the site, being of significant amenity value and making a notable contribution to the attractive landscape of this rural area, and furthermore their retention (again other than those in poor condition, or the incongruous conifers G4) would be important in providing screening and landscape setting of any redevelopment of this site which is allowed. In addition, it is noted that the elements of the scheme giving rise to these tree-related concerns are an integral garage/store and associated vehicle access/turning area, and I suggest there could be scope to omit these elements and perhaps make provision for these facilities in a separate garage building such as within the footprint area of the existing bungalow which I understand would be removed on completion of the proposed new dwelling. Alternatively, if an integral garage was crucial, a return to the garage access doors being located in the north-east elevation as originally proposed (having sufficient vehicle access/turning space within the existing Nissen building footprint) together with omission of the projecting single storey element at the northern end of the “lower barn” would be likely to make the proposed dwelling itself acceptable from a tree impact point of view.

I note that a new 1.8m high stepped stone boundary wall is proposed to the roadside (north-east) and part north boundaries of the application site. Whilst no construction details are shown, given the expense of such a structure and the architectural aspirations of the whole scheme it is considered very unlikely that such a wall would be contemplated without including robust and secure new footings of more substantial construction than the shallow compacted ground scrape typical of traditional field stone wall boundaries. The footing/construction of new wall would be very likely to cause substantial root damage to a large number of the frontage protected trees along the roadside boundary of the site and initial return along the northern boundary. In addition, the prominence, scale and formality of the proposed new wall would be significantly visually incongruous and out of keeping with the informal rural character of the site and surrounding area. I object to the proposed new wall for these reasons.

I appreciate that a fall-back position of approved residential conversion of the existing portal frame building and Nissen building to provide 2 dwellings is mentioned in the application. However, this would not include new structure/extension construction beyond the existing footprint areas of these buildings, and (presumably?) would not in itself include/allow the new stone boundary wall proposed in the current planning application. I would clarify that implementation of permitted development rights (as opposed to specifically granted full planning permission) does not authorise work or damage to TPO-protected trees – such as for instance a new boundary wall with foundations under permitted development requiring tree root severance.

Arboricultural Officer
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