
From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
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Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0420 Site Address: Wragg Hall Farm Biddulph Park Road Biddulph
Staffordshire ST8 7SJ Stoke-On-Trent Comments by: Drs Neil & Caroline Johnson

From:

Melford Farm
Biddulph Park Road
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Submission: Objection

Comments: We are quite happy with the further development of the buildings at Wragg Hall and we support plans to demolish the old buildings and construct the new house. However, we object to the proposed additional vehicular access. If this had been included in the currently approved plans we would have objected to them.

If the planning committee's decision is that a new access road is essential, then it should be re-located to above the Scots pine trees shown on the site plan.

Our objection to the proposed development is on the following grounds:

1. Loss of Residential Amenity

Given the rural location of the site, the nature of the proposed development and its spatial relationship with our property we feel that the proposed development would be prejudicial to residential amenity and detrimental to our property use. We therefore feel that the proposal does not comply with LP Policy DC1 and paragraph 131 and 135 of the NPPF.

The proposed road would significantly reduce the use and enjoyment of our property and our quality of life would be greatly impacted. The road would take all forms of traffic, not just cars - since we are in a rural area, all neighbours make significant use of internet shopping so van deliveries are frequent. There would also be lorries delivering larger items, domestic fuel oil delivery from very large lorries (since we have no gas service in the area) and agricultural machinery to serve the fields. This represents a significant increase in vehicle movements right alongside our property so we would see more noise and pollution. Since the road would be directly visible from the downstairs and bedroom windows of the house and cottage, we would not be able to avoid seeing it and its associated traffic. Just as we will see the traffic, drivers, occupants and anyone working on the road will be able to look directly in on us.

Moreover, we disagree with the Planning Design and Access Statement that the development is not detrimental to any neighbouring land uses. The road's location would be within a few metres of our cottage (shown as 'EXISTING BUILDING' on the site plan). This is used daily as a home office and as a spare bedroom for guests. As an office it is used to participate in regular conference calls where quiet conditions are required. In the summer the rear bedroom window is usually opened for ventilation. This window would be a few metres above the proposed access road. Here the noise would certainly be a nuisance, particularly since some of the traffic would be delivery vans, lorries and farm equipment. If an additional access road is considered essential for the property, then locating it above the Scots pines would help to reduce this impact somewhat.

2. Loss of Privacy

The road's location would allow a direct line of sight into our garden, courtyard and the windows of our cottage and main house including our bedroom, resulting in a substantial loss of privacy. People in our area are fortunate in having considerable privacy afforded by the distance between properties. The proposals would mean there was nothing but a field fence between us and the access road. This would remove our privacy completely.

As the site plan shows, Mr and Mrs Cotton have planted a lot of trees to the south of Wragg Hall. In doing so they have significantly improved their privacy, which we applaud. But this proposed new access road is below the bottom trees so that it is invisible from Wragg Hall - siting it here protects Wragg Hall privacy but completely violates our own.

Non-residents and delivery drivers would have full view of our courtyard and property and would be able to see directly into our cottage and house. This is a significant concern for us for two reasons (1) it limits our use of the property because we would have to be mindful of who might be looking in, and we would have to close blinds and curtains even during the day and (2) we have had several thefts in recent years and this loss of privacy would further compromise our security.

Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF states that planning policies and developments should seek to 'create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.' We are already worried about crime in our area and having a road that runs alongside our boundary, opening-up our activities and property to non-residents who use it will only serve to increase our fears and vulnerability to opportunistic crime.

3. Highway Safety

We feel strongly that adding another access road on this bend, so close to ours would add significantly to the existing road safety risk. Biddulph Park Road has a 60mph limit and the road downhill is quite steep - it is used as something of a 'hill climb' and cars often travel at high speed and accidents have occurred. On July 12th 2019, a speeding car collided with and overturned a tractor on the downhill section of the road, approximately 110 metres below Wragg Hall. This caused serious injury to the tractor driver and required us to rebuild 30 metres of our stone boundary wall.

The Chapel at the bottom of the road has had to rebuild their wall on several occasions. Cyclists also favour the road and can reach over 40mph downhill. Hence there is a risk from traffic coming downhill where visibility is poor.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that in assessing applications for development, a safe and suitable access should be achieved for all users. Paragraph 115 goes on to state that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. We believe this condition is met for two reasons.

First, the Planning Design and Access Statement states that “The current access is not wide enough for two cars to pass, so in this scenario, a vehicle may be required to wait partially on the highway to allow a car to leave the access first. This is a very real and existing risk to highway safety.” But the original plans were subject to SCC Highways advice and approved on condition that the vehicular access to Wragg Hall was modified (approval condition #6 was that the visibility splays shown on plan 2022-2674-11 are provided and maintained unobstructed). If the Planning Authority felt these modifications would result in safe and effective access to the property, why is another access road even necessary? And if it is needed, is not the least environmentally impactful solution to the problem simply to widen the existing access road?

In any case, the point about passing cars would also be true for the proposed new road – with a width of just 3.7m there would barely be space for two small cars to pass. It would be even more of an issue when one considers that some of the traffic would be vans, lorries and farm traffic. This is compounded by the proposed road being very close to our own exist which has its own vehicle activity.

Second, consider the safe access to our own property. We use our top entrance to access our property because visibility uphill is slightly better. However, the uphill approach is on a blind bend so we need extreme caution when approaching – if an access road entrance is sited as proposed this will make our entry even more dangerous. Having another exit/entrance so close is just another thing to take account of, causing us to wait even longer on the bend in the road before turning in.

Also, we need to be mindful of other drivers’ behaviour. Some inattentive drivers coming down the hill might pull across the road to give more space to vehicles that are about to emerge from the proposed road. This might put them on the opposite side of the road on a blind bend. Any other vehicles coming uphill could be faced with fast oncoming traffic on their side of the road. Note that this danger has nothing to do with adequate line of sight for users of the access road, it is simply the likelihood of poor behaviour by other drivers when faced with a vehicle that appears ready to pull out of an exit.

4. Light Pollution

The site plan shows that the proposed road is positioned such that vehicles entering the access road will then have to turn towards our house before the road straightens – vehicle headlights will be turned directly into our property and probably shining into our kitchen and bedrooms! Little thought has been given to this aspect. It clearly would be preferable to have any headlights shining uphill towards Wragg Hall.

5. Surface Runoff and Drainage Impact

Given the gradient and soil composition in this area, we are concerned that the construction of a hard-surfaced road could lead to increased surface runoff and potential flooding, particularly during heavy rainfall. The application form says that surface drainage would be handled through a soakaway & but it does not say what it would drain into. Given the proposed location of the road there would not be enough ground between the access road and our driveway to absorb the water. Runoff from Wragg Hall fields is already significant & this water runs down the last few metres of our drive, out of our gate and into the road. This is mainly an issue in the winter when it sometimes freezes into sheet ice on the downhill road causing very dangerous walking, cycling and driving conditions. Neighbours have complained to us about this and we have discussed it with Severn Trent because we originally thought our water main was leaking, but they investigated and say nothing can be done because it is runoff. If the access road were not located here then some of this might be avoided.

6. Environmental and Visual Impact

The development would require the removal of established vegetation and alter the visual character of the area. This is contrary to the principles of preserving local biodiversity and maintaining the aesthetic quality of our neighbourhood. As the site plan clearly shows, locating the road higher up would require the removal of fewer trees so have less environmental impact.

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