

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0361 Valid 01/08/2024	SINGLE STOREY BRICK BUILT AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO NORTH WEST OF CLOUD PARK FARM DIAL LANE CONGLETON	CHANGE OF USE OF SINGLE STOREY AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO DWELLING AND ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL DOMESTIC AMENITY; NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS; TEMPORARY SITING OF STATIC CARAVAN.
		(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
The principle of development in this rural location
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on residential amenity
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies within the open countryside to the west of “The Cloud” and about two or three miles east of Congleton and comprises a cow milking parlour building of single-storey height and with a pitched roof and end gables. It has ground dimensions of approx. 20 x 10 metres, red brick walls and a corrugated metal roof. The site was formerly part of a farm property, Cloud Park Farm, to the south-east of the site which comprised a farmhouse and outbuildings within the same property, which is on the west side of Gosberryhall Lane, a narrow country lane which adjoins Dial Lane, the nearest main road, a short distance to the south. The site is still reached via Cloud Park Farm despite it recently becoming in separate ownership to Cloud Park Farm. Gosberryhall Lane becomes a track after the Cloud Park Farm access and then runs along the north-east boundary of the site. Between the lane and the cow-shed building there are a couple of smaller dilapidated former farm outbuildings. Cloud Park Farm and the site are surrounded by open land. The site is in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the conversion of the building into a 4-bed single-storey dwelling. A Class Q conversion approval was given for a 4-bed dwelling under a 2022 application and this new full application is for a similar conversion but with the retention of more of the windows on the long elevations, the increase in large modern floor-to ceiling openings in the north gable elevation, the re-positioning of the front entrance door from the south gable-end elevation to the long east elevation and some internal layout changes. The new application also looks to

change the roofing materials to grey Marley Ashmore tiles whereas the Class Q approval proposed Staffs Blue tiles, although the application forms do state the latter as the proposed roofing material. The main difference with the new application is the access arrangement and hard-standing parking areas. The Class Q approval retained the existing access which was via the farmyard of Cloud Park Farm, accessed via the original entrance to the farm off Gosberryhall Lane. However, the farm is now in different ownership to the application site and therefore a new access would be built further along the lane leading to a new driveway which would be partly within the footprint of the two outbuildings on site which would be demolished. This would lead to a parking area in front of the dwelling i.e. to the east of it. This differs with the previous approved driveway leading from Cloud Park Farm to a parking area to the south of the building. The access from Cloud Park Farm would be closed off. The existing redundant track leading from the farm to the cow-shed would also be removed. The new entrance would be marked by a 5-bar stock gate. The new drawings show a caravan placed there which would be removed. The scheme is shown on amended plans which also show added bird and bat boxes on the building along with bee bricks for ecological mitigation.

The amended site plan shows a 3m wide new driveway with grass centre strip. The surfacing material for the driveway and the new parking area would be gravel. The driveway would be enclosed on one side by 1.2m post and rail stock fencing and with a new native species hedgerow to the other side. There would also be new native species tree planting. The existing hard-standing to the north of the building would be retained as a patio area (same as in the previous scheme).

The original submission was accompanied by Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report (dated July 2022), Design & Access Statement (dated July 2024), a Structural Surveyor Letter (2022) and Bat Activity Survey Report (dated September 2022). A PEA & Bat Roost Assessment (Sep 2024) was submitted in December 2024. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report was submitted in November 2024 with BNG Metric Calculations and a new BNG Report was submitted in March 2025. A Bat Emergence and Re-Entry Surveys (BERS) Report (Sep 2024) was submitted in November 2024.

Method Statements for Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam were submitted in May 2025.

A Construction Ecological Mitigation Plan (CEMP) was submitted in June 2025. An amended CEMP was received in September 2025.

In Sep 2025, an amended Location Plan and amended Block Plan, showing the red line application site reduced to include solely the building, new driveway, parking area and patio area, were received, to define the residential curtilage.

In October 2025, the same Method Statements submitted in May 2025 were re-submitted.

In August 2025, the applicant's agent confirmed that this was a Self-Build proposal, via email. The application forms originally submitted also state this. In addition, a standard Self Build form was received on 16.10.25 which states the following:

Applicant shall be completing build as Principal Contractor and the completed dwellinghouse will be their principle and permanent residence and that the client is working directly with Principal Designer to produce building control compliant plans.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
- H1 New Housing
- DC1 Design Considerations
- NE1 Biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2025)

Sections 6 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET/2022/0033: Conversion of former agricultural building into dwelling under Class Q. Approved 27.10.22. Not implemented.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 08.10.24
Neighbour consultation period ends: 08.10.24
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town/Parish Council Comments

“No adverse comments.”

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions normally applied to the conversion of farm buildings into dwellings.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Initial Consultation Response (August 2024)

A Holding Objection was issued on the grounds the Bat Activity Survey Report, produced in 2022, was out of date.

In December there was a request for further Ecology Reports that were referred to in an updated Bat Activity Survey Report (2024) received but which were not submitted.

Consultation Response received following the receipt of all requested reports (Jan 2025)

The Holding Objection was maintained as further BNG info was required and details of lighting were also requested. SWT accepted the findings of the Bat Activity Report and the mitigation measures including bat boxes and sensitive lighting. It also recommended conditions requiring method statements for Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam (invasive plant species), measures for invertebrates, bird boxes, method statements for badger, amphibians, hedgehogs, reptiles and nesting birds and the submission of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure best practice measures are implemented to minimise the possibility of pollution during construction affecting nearby deciduous woodland.

Consultation Response received following the receipt of “conditions details” for bird/bat/bee boxes and invasive species method statements (July 2025)

The Holding Objection was maintained as further info was needed relating to BNG. SWT confirmed bird/bat/bee measures details were acceptable. Further info was requested for the Himalayan Balsam method statement but this could be included in the requested CEMP. The previous conditions were repeated and a lighting details condition was added.

Consultation Response received following the receipt of a CEMP (August 2025)

“We have now been informed that the development is self build and therefore exempt from the Biodiversity Net Gain Condition. The CEMP has also been provided. We have reviewed the new documents and responses provided and recommend a **holding objection**”

SWT requested a LEMP (relating to landscaping and ground contamination) and details relating to soils and grassland data to achieve some form of “gain” despite no actual BNG being required. It required further information to be included in the CEMP such as the method statements.

On the 1st October 2025, following a phone conversation requested by SWT, it was decided that SWT would accept an approval on the basis of either the submission of method statements that were previously requested for badger, amphibians, hedgehogs, reptiles and nesting birds for approval or for a pre-commencement condition to be added requiring a CEMP.

In October 2025, in response to submitted Japanese Knotwood and Himalayan Balsam method statements, SWT approved the former but requested further information for the latter and also reminded of the request for the protected species method statements (above) and also details of lighting.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No issues with regard to waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The conversion of the building into a dwelling was approved under a "Class Q" application in October 2022. This full planning application has been submitted because the applicant wishes to change the access to a sole access off Gosberryhall Lane instead of the shared access via Cloud Park Farm as shown in the approved drawings. This would entail a new hard-surfaced access drive which requires full planning permission. The conversion aspect of the scheme is largely the same as the Class Q scheme and would result in no further harm. The design and appearance of development was considered acceptable. I also consider the proposal would comply with Policy SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan in that the building is physically, architecturally and in character terms suitable for a residential conversion. The site is also in the Green Belt and Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF in paras 154 and 155 sets out the exceptional forms of development which are not deemed to be inappropriate. Para 154 includes the change of use of buildings where they are permanent and substantial and I consider the building does accord with this requirement and therefore the proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt in compliance with Section 13 of the NPPF as well as policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan. The proposed conversion is acceptable in principle.

With regard to the other works, a new hard-surfaced driveway would be created over grassland and also a new parking area larger than the one in the previously approved drawings and in a different part of the site. This would be built on the footprint of two outbuildings to be demolished as well occupying some grassland. I do not consider this would have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt and due to the significant screening of the site is acceptable in character and appearance and landscape impact terms. There would be no removal of trees as part of this proposal.

The proposal would not lead to any harms to residential amenity. The nearest dwelling outside of the site is about 50 metres away and the new separate access would, if anything, benefit their amenities. The proposed dwelling would substantially exceed the floorspace standards in the Nationally Described Space Standards (for a single-storey dwelling with four double bedrooms) and there is a patio area for the occupants along with ample green space surrounding the proposed curtilage within the property.

The proposal would therefore comply with Policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

The proposal would not lead to any detriment to highway safety as the lane is a private road and there would be sufficient parking provision in compliance with the Council's parking standards.

With regard to ecological impact, although Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) had initially asked for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information, BNG is not required as the proposed conversion is a Self-Build scheme and is therefore exempt from this requirement. A condition will be added requiring the development be carried out and occupied in accordance with the Self-Build legislation. The owner has assisted in the design and build and will occupy the dwelling.

In terms of ecological impacts, bat activity surveys have been carried out on the buildings and conclude that there was no roosts found but there was some foraging activity. SWT is satisfied that the proposal would not lead to harm to bats or other protected species with the safeguard of conditions requiring mitigation measures such as bat, bird and bee boxes and other measures outlined in the Ecology Reports. Pre-commencement conditions can be added requiring method statements for protected species to be submitted for approval before works commence and also for Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam, invasive plant species present on the property and the spread of which affects the biodiversity the site and wider area and would need to be controlled. A further condition would be added requiring details of lighting to be approved as sensitive lighting is required to avoid harm to bats.

CONCLUSION

The proposed conversion would have no additional impacts in relation to the Class Q scheme approved. The proposal as a whole including new access, would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is acceptable in terms of the overall principle of development. It would not lead to any harms to the visual or residential amenities of the area and would not harm the ecological value of the site and surroundings with the safeguard of conditions. The proposal would therefore comply with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 17.10.25

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council