

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0331
Valid 09/07/2025

**CAULDON CEMENT
WORKS
CAULDON**

**CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW
33KV CONTROL AND
SWITCHROOM CONTAINER,
CONCRETE ACCESS ROAD
AND FENCING LOCATED
WITHIN THE EXISTING
CAULDON CEMENT WORKS**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Siting and design
- Function
- Landscape

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is deep within the existing large-form development of the highly industrial limestone processing and cement manufacturing complex at Waterhouses known locally as Cauldon Cement. The site overall is principally governed for planning purposes by Staffordshire County Council as Minerals Planning Authority. There is an existing electricity distribution hub or sub-station within the site some 30m to the south east of the current proposal location and extending to some 36m x 32m.

There is likely to be some visibility of the development from a public footpath (no. 70 Waterhouses) some 200m to the north west. There is unlikely to be any other public visibility due to the dwarfing large scale manufacturing complex to east and south and strongly tree vegetated rising ground to the west.

There is a Listed Building (Grade II) at Orchard Farm within 200m to the south west but no interconnectivity is likely due to embanked land with tree cover between this and the proposal site.

The existing site conditions comprise actively worked gravel hardstanding and/or stored gravel and this disturbed un-vegetated state is consistently recorded through past air photos to at least 2006.

PROPOSAL

The proposal by the National Grid Electricity Distribution company (NGED) is for the installation and construction of a new 33kV control and switch-room container, concrete access road and palisade fencing located within Cauldon Cement Works.

The application is accompanied by a supporting statement in which it is stated that *“the proposed location for the substation is on land within an existing cement works, the development will require the land to change use to operational land for electricity undertakings”*.

It is stated at 1.1.2 of the supporting statement: *“Staffordshire Moorlands District is experiencing significant development with numerous new housing projects planned within the current local plan period. The containerised substation will both benefit NGED’s existing electricity network and the cement factory. NGED’s existing outdoor compound is a shared site with live 33kV assets. The existing assets require replacing in due course and to enable this to be done safely, the new containerised substation is required. This is a long-term benefit for the NGED and the cement works as each will have a sole use substation”*.

Outwardly the main element of the development would comprise in effect a container of length 8m x width 4.2m and height c.4.0m but this would be mounted on stilt pilings meaning that the top height would stand at 5.8m above ground level. A 6m high aerial would be attached with a top height of 7.8m above ground level. A short external flight of steps would give access via a landing at floor level (2.0m up) from ground level.

The outside of the container is to be painted ‘Light Grey’ (RAL 7033). The container walls would be clad in 16swg (1.6mm) Zintec sheets on the inner skin and 14swg (2.0mm) Zintec corrugation to the outer skin as would the roof. This would be treated with ‘100m RWA45 Mineral Wool’. The inside of the container would be painted ‘Bradgate Standard White’ and the underside would be painted ‘Bradgate Standard Black Underseal’.

An enclosing compound c.12m x 10m would be created with a 2.4m high galvanised metal palisade boundary fence. Access to the compound would be routed via an existing track within the site involving minor land form change (removal / levelling of a low mound) and formation of a concrete access road. This is described at 3.7.2 of the statement as *“a small section of concrete hardstanding... laid to connect the internal track to NGED’s proposed substation”*.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application claims exemption on grounds that:

“Due to the proposed location of the Site being entirely on hardstanding, with no priority habitats and/or species to be impacted as a result, the development would fall under the ‘de minimis’ exemption – therefore, the mandatory 10% BNG is not applicable to this development. Further, as the development is entirely on hardstanding, the baseline value of the site will be 0 and subsequently NGED cannot provide a 10% increase on this figure.”

Details of an external lighting scheme are provided. The supporting statement sets out that: *“During construction, some external lighting may be necessary for health and safety of operatives on Site, however this will be switched off when not required. Additionally, in the event of non-planned faults during operation, lighting may be required in the hours of darkness, though this will be infrequent. Any lighting will be*

pointed towards the equipment and away from the trees surrounding the Site to reduce any potential impact to bats and breeding birds.”

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Heritage
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

82/11724/OLDDC [SMD/1982/0802] Construction of new warehousing, process control and other buildings together with new cement and clinker sites – approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13th August 2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Waterhouses Parish Council – no objection

Environmental Health

Two conditions are recommended:

- 1) Time of development work noise to avoid anti-social hours; [not requ'd see below]
- 2) Reporting unexpected contamination.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommend 'acceptance' noting that the application is for a 33KV substation. And that this is located within the existing cement plant. Access off Earlsway will be as existing. Proposal will have no effect on highway.

Staffordshire County Council Mineral and Waste (31st Oct 2025)

No objection. This planning application is for the construction of a new 33Kv control and switch room container; concrete access road and fencing located within the existing Caudon Cement Works. The proposed development is located adjacent to the applicant's existing substation and is intended to enable the safe replacement of existing assets with benefits for both National Grid's wider network as well as for the cement works.

The application site is within an area subject to mineral planning permission (ref: IDO/SM/6) but this part of the permission has not been subject to mineral extraction because of the development of the cement works. The proposal would not prejudice compliance with any current approved restoration scheme for the quarry and as mentioned above serves not just the cement works, hence the application being made to the district planning authority.

Severn Trent Water

Initially a drainage condition was requested requiring drainage plans to be submitted for approval by the LPA in advance of any site development taking place.

Subsequently a drainage scheme detail was submitted in dwg NS17-102-008 rev 1 and forwarded to STW 12th Sept 2025. In an e-mail response dd 13th October 2025 STW confirmed, based on surface water being discharged to soakaway and no foul sewage discharge, the proposals would be acceptable as presented.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The relevant spatial policy is SS10 for the rural areas. Understood as an up-grade to the electricity supply network system the proposal can readily be seen as being

essential in both its need and proposed location alongside an existing substation facility. It is therefore acceptable in principle.

The main issues are matters of design and potential impacts on the character and appearance of the area.

Design

This is a functional structure lacking aesthetic design and could understandably be considered odd in its raised position perched on stilt supports. On inquiry this has been explained as being necessary to receive the connecting cable trunking at a viable angle from its underground routing.

Due to being very much in amongst a highly industrial site with little to no visibility likely from any public surrounding vantage the structure should not appear to stand out unduly. It will also to some extent be masked by the fencing of the immediate surrounding compound. Visibility can be expected from Waterhouses fp 70 but at the separation of c.200m and with the background of a large scale industrial works with tall buildings the development is unlikely to be noticed.

Amenity

Any overspill of sound or lighting will merge into the greater pre-existing impacts of the cement works site as a whole and should not be found to add to any impacts on residential neighbours. In terms of this proposal nearest dwellings are well separated by the existing works and its bunded and tree planted areas. For these reasons the suggested EH construction work noise condition is judged not reasonably necessary.

Highway Safety

As in the SCC response, no issues.

Drainage

The agent commented in an e-mail (dd 08.08.2025) in response to STW to say that given the proposed development is solely for electrical equipment—with no generation of foul water—and that the site comprises existing hardstanding with no increase in surface water runoff, a drainage condition would be unnecessary and not relevant to the nature of the proposal. On receipt of a revised drainage plan this was accepted by STW.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The LPA was able to confirm at the site visit and by reference to the air photo records that the site is actively worked un-vegetated ground devoid of significant biodiversity. Although not a 'sealed' surface the absence of visible vegetation means the site is exempted as impacting less than 25m² of habitat.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In consideration of all of the above the scheme is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 21.11.2025

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council