

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0319
Valid 02/07/2025

APESFORD FARM
APESFORD LANE
BRADNOP

ERECTION OF 2NO.
DWELLINGHOUSES IN LIEU
OF THE 2NO.
DWELLINGHOUSES
APPROVED BY APPLICATION
DET/2024/0005

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- 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 the ecological value of the site
- The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies within the open countryside about a mile to the south of Bradnop village and comprises part of a farm on the south side of Apesford Lane. It comprises two modern portal-framed blockwork and timber clad farm storage buildings which stand side by side and which are reached via a farm track off Apesford Lane which runs past several other farm buildings before reaching the site which is off a yard area at the end of the farm track and is on the southern edge of the farm. Each building has an open side which faces the gap between the buildings. The two larger buildings on site have an approval for conversion into dwellings under Class Q of Part 3 of the GPDO but no works have been undertaken and the buildings still appear in a rather derelict untidy state.

The other farm buildings at the farm property, outside of the site, include a traditional stone barn a short distance to the east of the buildings and which has an approval for a conversion into a dwelling. There is a smaller traditional barn to the north of this which also has a dwelling conversion approval. The farmhouse which appears rather derelict and vacant lies further to the east on the other side of the yard and farm track. There are other old and modern farm buildings to the north-east and east of the site. There is a separate farm property immediately to the north of the site ("Middle Farm") which has a separate access off Apesford Lane and which also comprises farm buildings and a farmhouse and another separate farm property to the west of this. Open fields lie to the west and south of the site.

A Public Right of Way (PRoW) runs along the farm access track then crosses the yard and then continues south through the fields. There is another PRoW crossing the field to the west of the site and which joins the other PRoW heading south.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application to replace the two modern portal framed barns with two new-build 3-bed bungalows of the exact same footprint and dimensions as the two barns. Barn A would be built on the exact same footprint as the west barn. The other bungalow, "Barn B", would be shifted about 6m across from the current east barn siting, opening up a gap between buildings. The new footprint of Barn B would occupy the siting of a third existing barn structure, which would be removed. The buildings would be clad completely in timber boarding and would have a zinc sheet roof with standing seams. The existing modern barns already have a Class Q approval to convert them into two dwellings but of course occupying the same footprints as existing.

The other difference is that the Class Q scheme comprises new timber walls above an existing blockwork base and retained the corrugated metal roof, whereas the new scheme does not include a blockwork base and changes the roofing materials.

Amended plans submitted with this new application insert floor to ceiling primary windows whereas the Class Q windows were above the blockwork base. The amended plans also introduce a triangular feature window into the south-facing gable, immediately above the bi-folds.

This new application is also a resubmitted full planning application for the most recent scheme which was refused and dismissed at appeal (in March 2025). This scheme involved replacing the modern barns with stone-clad detached bungalows with the same footprint of the two existing buildings but repositioned adjacent to the west and east boundaries of the red-edge site, a wider gap than the new scheme although Barn B would have had the same siting as this new scheme. The other difference is the refused scheme would have had a higher steeper roof (with a raised ridge but lower eaves) covered with Staffs Blue tiles and with windows of a more traditional rural building design. The scheme was refused for the following reason:

1.

Policy SS10 of the Council's Local Plan restricts new-build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in order to protect the character and appearance of the countryside and ensure sustainable development. The Council considers that, in principle, the development fails to comply with Policies SS10 and H1 in there is no essential need for two dwellings to be located on this rural site. The proposed dwelling is therefore contrary to Policy SS10 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and H1 'New Housing Development' of the Council's Local Plan (adopted September 2020).

The application includes a Planning Statement and a Bat Report, the same one as was submitted with the previous full planning application (dated November 2023).

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
- H1 New Housing
 - DC1 Design Considerations
 - NE1 Biodiversity
 - T1 Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design), 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET 2024 0005: Conversion of two portal framed farm buildings under Part 3 Class Q of the GPDO. Approved on 28th March 2024.

SMD/2024/0308: Erection of 2no. dwellinghouses in lieu of the 2no. dwellinghouses approved by application DET/2024/0005. Refused on 27.8.25. Appeal dismissed on 12.3.25.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 26.8.25

Neighbour consultation period ends: 26.8.25

Press Advert: 16.7.25 (Development Affecting a Public Right of Way (PROW)).

Public Comments

One letter of objection has been received from a local resident who considers there are too many new dwellings on the farm but they are helping to restore old stone buildings unlike this new scheme, regarded as out of keeping with the area. The objector also considers that the new lighting would affect wildlife.

Town / Parish Comments (Bradnop)

Recommend for approval.

Local highways authority

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions used for new dwellings on farms including a recommended noise insulation condition given that the site is adjacent to a working farm.

Peak & Northern Footpath Society.

We note that the PROWs Bradnop and Cawdry 16 & 17 are close to the proposed site. Use of the PROWs, and the safety of users must not be affected by the development, nor during the work taking place.

Ramblers

No objection.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

The waste collection point for these 2 proposed dwellings would be at the curtilage of the property - adjacent to the public highway.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The existing modern farm buildings benefit from a Class Q approval to convert them into dwellings. A full planning application was subsequently submitted to replace them with two new-build dwellings of the same footprint but placed further apart and with contrasting stone and Staffs Blue tile materials and a higher steeper roof. This was refused permission and dismissed at appeal. Appeal decisions and the comments made by a Planning Inspector at appeal, are material planning considerations in the assessment of new amended proposals. I consider the most important points raised by the Inspector, which are most relevant to this new revised planning application, to be as follows:

“The degree of weight to be given to the fallback position (i.e. the Class Q approval)... depends on whether or not the fallback position would be equal to or more harmful than the scheme proposed.”

Although the planning application was refused on principle grounds due to conflict with Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside, which does not allow new-build dwellings, the Planning Inspector at appeal, clearly attributed weight to the fact that two new dwellings had already been approved for the site under a Class Q conversion scheme and that this would be a material consideration in the assessment of an alternative scheme involving the provision of two new dwellings, overriding the conflict with Policy SS10. However, the Inspector also makes clear that any such new scheme should result in no more harm than the scheme which was previously approved. The Class Q approval is still extant i.e. can be implemented.

The Inspector made the following comments regarding whether any more harm would result:

“Notwithstanding the environmental benefits outlined by the appellants in favour of the proposed dwellings, including in terms of energy efficiency standards, it has not been demonstrated that these benefits would offset and exceed the effects of the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of two new dwellings. By comparison, the reuse of existing structures upgraded to modern standards is likely to have considerable environmental benefits.”

“It is not shown that the appeal scheme would be clearly superior in design terms to the proposed conversions. Moreover, the latter would reflect a genuine agricultural original whereas the proposed design would not.”

“Consequently, overall, the proposal would be more harmful than the fallback scheme. As such, it does not weigh in favour of permitting the appeal proposal, rather the opposite.”

With regard to design, this has reverted from being a narrow and elongated bungalow form finished in stone and roof tiles to a building which attempts to emulate the form of the existing portal framed buildings on site, albeit with some changes including floor to ceiling windows and cladding which extends to ground level.

According to the agent, new-builds are also required to meet more stringent building control energy efficiency standards than a conversion, which I do not dispute. However, the previous inspector was not convinced *“that these benefits would offset and exceed the effects of the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of two new dwellings. By comparison, the reuse of existing structures upgraded to modern standards is likely to have considerable environmental benefits”* and I see no reason why the change in the design would lead to a different conclusion. There are still significant environmental impacts associated with the demolition and replacement with new-builds, in comparison with the conversion of existing buildings instead, due to matters relating to the additional resources required such as new materials and therefore potential for increased vehicle movements. This matter was referred to in the Planning Inspectors report and contributed to the dismissal of the scheme at appeal.

Whilst the design is now very similar to the previously approved Class Q conversion, it remains the case that it would not *“be clearly superior in design terms to the proposed conversions”* (my emphasis). As with the previous proposal the development would not *“reflect a genuine agricultural building”*, unlike the approved Class Q. Rather it would be two modern dwellings “dressed” to appear as quasi agricultural buildings but with features such as full-height glazing and zinc roof sheeting which are not characteristic of such structures. Furthermore, the buildings would be essentially a “pastiche” rather than a “genuine” agricultural building as referred to by the inspector. As new build dwellings in the open countryside, the buildings are not of a design which would normally be supported by the Council or would reflect the advice in the Council’s Design Guide which discourages, for example, the use of timber boarding. The proposal is therefore also contrary to Policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

It considered that in principle, design and environmental terms the impacts of replacement buildings would be more harmful than the approved Class Q conversion fall-back position. Therefore, the proposal should be determined solely with regard to the Local Plan. In this respect, as with the previous full application to replace the buildings, it remains in conflict with the Local Plan Policy SS10 which resists new-build dwellings in the countryside and therefore the principle of development is considered unacceptable.

With regard to residential amenity, it is noted that the long east elevation of Barn B would be between 11 and 15m from the long west elevation of the traditional barn to the east which is approved for a residential conversion and which would have windows facing the proposed new Barn B. However, the siting of Barn B from the previous siting of the refused scheme was not refused on residential amenity grounds affecting the stone barn to be converted to the east and the Inspector found no residential amenity harms overall. Furthermore, the amended plans with this new application show no primary windows on Barn B facing the stone barn to be converted.

With regard to other impacts, the internal floorspace would meet the threshold in the government's Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) applicable to 3-bed single-storey dwellings. The private outdoor garden areas for each unit would also comply with the size thresholds set out in the Council's Space About Dwellings SPG (there would be 80sq.m of garden space in excess of 65 sq.m required). Overall, the proposal would not result in harms to the residential amenities of existing or future residents of the site or surrounding area.

The submitted Bat Report reveals that three existing buildings to be demolished as part of this scheme have negligible potential for bats and therefore the scheme would not result in any harms to the ecological value of the site. There is no requirement to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) under this application as existing hard-surfaced yard areas for the new development and no grass areas or vegetation would be removed (and therefore no areas of potential habitat lost) and therefore would fall under the exemptions for providing BNG.

Finally, although the proposal would result in an increase in vehicle movements by providing two new dwellings in an unsustainable location, the access onto the lane is deemed to be safe and there is ample areas for vehicles to park and turn. The local highways authority has raised no objection to the application purely in terms of highway safety.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Overall, it is considered that the new-build proposal would result in more harm to the environment, than the implementation of the approved conversion scheme under Class Q i.e. the "fallback" option. The proposal therefore remains to be determined against Policy SS10 of the Local Plan and would, like the previous scheme, conflict with the policy as well as policy DC1 and advice within the Council's adopted Design Guide SPD. The principle of the proposal remains unacceptable, does not comply with the Council's Local Plan or the government planning guidance contained within the government planning guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework

(NPPF) and therefore should be refused for the same reason for refusal as the previous full planning application to replace the buildings.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 29.10.25

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council