

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0498
Valid 28/11/2025

LAND ADJACENT
WOODLAND COTTAGE
CONGLETON ROAD
BIDDULPH

APPLICATION FOR
PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE -
SINGLE DETACHED HOUSE

(PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance
- Impact on Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Land between Woodland Cottage and Greenfields, Congleton Road, Whitemore. The application site comprises part of the plot belonging to Woodland Cottage, an end of terrace property to a short row of five. The site provides a highway access, parking area, garden and garages adjacent and to the south of Woodland Cottage.

The site provides a 15m gap within a short-established ribbon of residential development that appears within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, approximately 600m to the southeastern of Congleton's urban edge and 1.5km to the north of Biddulph's settlement boundary.

The site fronts the western side of Congleton Road, the land to the rear, or the west of, the site is steeply rising grazing land to woodland edge and the tree lined Biddulph Valley Way.

The eastern side of Congleton Road, opposite the site, remains open farmland countryside.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks a permission in principle to build a single detached dwelling on the site. The application includes a location/site plan, a flood risk assessment and a planning statement.

There is expressed intent for the dwelling to be provided as a single detached two-storey three-bedroom dwelling.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles

SS2 Settlement Hierarchy

SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy

H1 New Housing Development

DC1 Design
T1 Sustainable Transport

Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

DES1 Design Policy
DES2 Parking and Public Realm
HOU1 Housing

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2018/0190 Pair of semi-detached dwellings. Withdrawn.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 02/01/2026
Neighbour consultation period ends: 02/01/2026
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

An adjacent neighbour is concerned that the full extent of his landownership up to the edge of the highway is shown on the proposed site plan.

SCC Minerals and Waste

Local Planning Authorities need not consult the Mineral and Waste Planning Authority when planning applications fall within an MSA for Coal or Fire Clay if there are no other mineral or waste-related constraints. When application sites are small, and constrained by existing development, particularly residential development, we conclude that it is not practicable or environmentally acceptable to extract any underlying minerals.

SMDC Waste Collection

No response in consultation period.

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No response in consultation period.

SCC Flood Risk Management

No response in consultation period. However a response to a previous application for two semi detached dwellings (withdrawn) was provided as follows:

The site is within the uFMfSW 1 in 1000 year outline, so has a chance of surface water flooding of greater than 1 in 100 (1%) and 1 in 1000 (0.1%) each year and has a low probability of flooding. Our mapping shows the site to be within 20 metres of a historic flooding hotspot. Unfortunately, we do not have detailed information about this flooding incident. We presume United Utilities might have this information as we were notified of another incident few metres from the site. We recommend the developer contacts United Utilities for further advice.

Taking into consideration the proximity of the site boundary to Biddulph brook, the applicant may wish to improved resilience and future proof the new dwellings for lifetime of the development by raising finished floor levels higher than existing, subject to accessibility requirements.

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No adverse comments, refer to planning officer.

United Utilities

We strongly recommend that the applicant or any subsequent developer contacts United Utilities, using our pre-development enquiry service to discuss their proposals directly with our Developer Services team. They can find further advice, along with a pre-development enquiry form, on our website: Building & Developing - United Utilities Alternative ways to contact the team are available in the Appendix, Section 6.0 'Contacts'.

DRAINAGE

Directed by the principles set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance and the new National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (2025) we require developers and Local Planning Authorities, to do all that they can to avoid surface water entering the public sewer, unless absolutely necessary. This applies to all proposed development. See Appendix 1.1 'Surface Water Hierarchy'.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Refusal/object

It is impracticable to provide an access on the frontage of the site which can provide the requisite visibility splays contrary to the interests of highway safety. In conflict with NPPF Paragraph 115, 116; in conflict with SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1; contrary to the interests of highway safety.

Existing access is located on the inside of a bend. Visibility towards Congleton is restricted. Visibility towards Biddulph, the primary direction, is severely restricted. Visibility cannot be improved without third party land. Intensification of use of this severely substandard access would be contrary to the interests of highway safety. Speed limit on Congleton Road at this point is 40mph. Visibility splay required for an access to a new development would be 2.4mx120m in both directions. This cannot be achieved. It is acknowledged that this is an existing access. However, due to the location of the site, visibility, particularly towards Biddulph cannot be improved to the extent where the access could be considered safe and reasonable for all users. Intensification of use of this access or any access on this frontage, would be contrary to the interests of highway safety.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Introduction

The scope of permission in principle applications is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Where permission in principle is granted by application, the default duration of that permission is 3 years. Local planning authorities must specify the location of the site, the type of development and provide an indication of the amount of development the site has permission in principle

for. The amount of residential development must be expressed as a range, indicating the minimum and maximum net number of dwellings (ie taking in to account any existing dwellings on the site) which are, in principle, permitted. It is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle and its terms may only include the site location, the type of development and amount of development.

Impact in the Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt between the towns of Biddulph, in Staffordshire, and Congleton, in Cheshire.

In the Green Belt development is inappropriate and harmful, by definition, unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

Any harm to the Green Belt must be attributed substantial weight and planning permission cannot be granted unless there are other considerations, amounting to 'very special circumstances', that clearly outweigh that harm.

The application proposal would provide housing development however, the site is not within a village and the development would not make a limited village infill; the development would not provide affordable housing for a local community need; and the site is not previously developed land (it provides residential garden and excluded from the NPPF definition). In all of those considered respects the listed exceptions do not apply to the development proposed.

Since Dec 2024 the updated NPPF has included a 'grey belt' land exception at paragraph 155. Grey belt is defined for the purposes of the NPPF as land in the Green Belt that does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. These purposes are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; and, to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The site provides a relatively limited gap between existing buildings; in those respects, there are physical features in reasonable proximity of the site that would restrict and contain development. The site provides two garages and so is not free of existing development, it forms a small gap within a ribbon of development. In all of those respects it does not form a substantial part of a gap between towns, and the development of the site would not result in the loss of visual separation between the towns. Neither Congleton nor Biddulph are historic towns. The site, therefore, is not land in the Green Belt that strongly contributes to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.

The development, therefore, would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed; and the development would be in a sustainable location – it would front a footpath, be within walking distance of a bus stop, pub, shop, primary school, and church. All of the criteria at paragraph 155 would be met and the exception at paragraph 155 can apply.

The proposed development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not be harmful to the Green Belt.

Impacts on the Character and Appearance of the Area

The existing gap between Woodland Cottage and Greenfields, provides space and visual penetration within the row of dwellings, and specifically provides a visual break between a line of five Victorian cottages and a, larger, mid-20th century detached dwelling.

The land to the rear provides steeply rising hillside and a line of trees and bushes extend from the woodland edge to the west and provide visual containment and enclosure to the end of the terraced row. To this extent the gap or visual break contributes to the quality of the rural character that surrounds and provides a setting to the ribbon of dwellings.

A two-storey dwelling, built within this gap, would conceal and obstruct views of the land behind - closing the visual break and obstructing visual penetration. The street scene would become more substantially built up at the expense of the looser and scattered arrangement of the ribbon development.

In these regards there would be some harm to the character and appearance of the area and conflict with SMDC Local Plan Policies SS10 and DC1 and Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan Policies DES1 and the terms of the NPPF.

Traffic Impacts of the Development

The site provides an existing access, parking and turning space to the adjacent dwelling at Woodland Cottage. The access is positioned on the inside of a bend with restricted visibility in both directions – severely so towards Biddulph, the primary direction. The access coincides therefore, with a particularly treacherous point on the highway. Currently, impacts on highway safety are limited because the access serves just one dwelling and its aperture is relatively wide.

An additional dwelling would mean that the access would be serving two dwellings, the new dwelling would reduce access aperture and the parking and turning space that is available to the existing dwelling. It would also increase the use of the existing access.

It is impracticable, to provide an access on the frontage of the site which can provide the requisite visibility splays for new development/two dwellings, contrary to the interests of highway safety. Visibility cannot be improved without third party land. Intensification of use of this severely substandard access would be contrary to the interests of highway safety.

Speed limit on Congleton Road at this point is 40mph. Visibility splays required for an access to a new development would be 2.4mx120m in both directions. This cannot be achieved. It is acknowledged that this is an existing access. However, due to the location of the site, visibility, particularly towards Biddulph cannot be improved to the extent where the access could be considered safe and reasonable for all users.

Intensification of use of this access or any access on this frontage, would be contrary to the interests of highway safety. The development would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

The proposal conflicts with the NPPF Paragraph 115, 116; and SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1; contrary to the interests of highway safety. This provides a strong reason for refusing the proposal.

Other Considerations

The Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, and the provision of a single dwelling would make a small contribution to housing supply and there would be some small economic and community benefit associated with the development.

However, the unacceptable impact on highway safety and the harm to the rural character and appearance of the area are adverse impacts that would result from the development that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. and conflict with the aims and purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

However, unacceptable impacts on highway safety and detriment to the character and appearance of the area are adverse impacts that would result from a planning permission being granted that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that would be associated with the development.

There would be conflict with SMDC Local Plan Policy SS10 and DC1 and the terms of the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 29/12/2025

X *J. Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council