

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0507
Valid 05/12/2025

WOODSIDE COTTAGE
BROOKHOUSE LANE
ARMSHEAD
WERRINGTON

CHANGE OF USE OF
OUTBUILDING TO FORM 1NO.
DWELLINGHOUSE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance
- Protection of amenity for future and existing occupants of development

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site concerns an ancillary outbuilding said to be last used as a games room, originally provided, it would appear, as a garage to the side of the two storey dwellinghouse Woodside Cottage.

The outbuilding is built from concrete block and has a full pitch tiled roof, it has the scale and proportions of a sizeable detached double garage, and largely has the character and appearance of such a building. Albeit, it is apparent that work has already been carried out to provide for habitable use, it is described in the application as a 'games room', but onsite observation suggests it was already being used to provide a form of residential accommodation (a private patio is enclosed to one end, appears to have its own post box, windows screened out, individual house name attached, pushchair outside side doors, washing rails attached to side of building, and voices audible from inside the building).

The southern side of the building has large glazed openings that face directly onto the curtilage/garden space at the rear of Woodside Cottage. The northern side of the building has windows and elevation that flank directly a track that appears to provide access to equestrian facility and some form of commercial or farming activity that surrounds the property.

Woodside Cottage is at the end of a farm track that has access with the northeastern end of the rural road Brookhouse Lane. The lane terminates at the edge of Wetley Moor Common to the north and east. Woodside Cottage is 600m to the northwest of the Werrington settlement and 700m to the northeast of the Stoke on Trent boundary. The site is surrounded by farmland enclosed by mature tree line, hedgerow, and the edge of the common.

PROPOSAL

A kind of repeat application, after planning permission was refused in 2016 to convert the building into a dwellinghouse. That scheme would have included considerable enlargement and the addition of a separate garage. It was refused because it would have been harmful to the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area.

The application proposes to change the use of the ancillary outbuilding to provide a single independent dwellinghouse. With this application there would be no enlargement, no external alterations, and no separate garage to serve the new dwelling.

The application and plans detail the provision of accommodation to comprise of an open plan lounge / kitchen / dining room, two bedrooms, hallway and shower room. The gross internal floor area of the dwelling would be 73.9 square metres.

There are no external alterations proposed, an enclosed patio at the western end of the building would be enlarged to provide a garden of some 72sqm with a depth from end gable of some 10m. Space would be allocated within the existing yard area to provide two parking spaces at the eastern of the building.

The large full height window openings that face onto the space to the rear of the existing dwelling have already been screened with frosted film and this would be retained. Immediately to the front of these windows, a slither of the existing dwelling's curtilage would be reallocated as a personnel walkway to the side of the building, which, it assumed, would be enclosed with some form of fencing.

To provide the new dwelling with the standard necessary two parking spaces it is proposed to remove boundary hedge, wall and retaining structure from the north east corner of the cottages garden and to dig out a square of the raised level of the garden.

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
H1 New Housing Development

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2016/0629 Change of use from games room to dwellinghouse including works to extend the building, add a first floor, and construct a separate garage building.
REFUSED.

A previous application to extend the building and then convert it to a dwellinghouse was refused because it would have been inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 30/01/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 30/01/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

A comment from the adjacent neighbour, neither an objection nor support:
Site plans are labelled incorrectly. Sykeslaw is Woodside Farm. Woodside Farm is Woodside Cottage. Woodside Cottage is the application building.

Environmental Health

Recommend refusal due to insufficient information being provided to address the noise and odour impacts of the development and the suitability of this location for third party residential housing.

Town / Parish Comments

Werrington PC: no response within consultation period.

OFFICER COMMENTS**Impact on the Green Belt**

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the closed lists that appear at Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

A previous proposal to convert the building to a dwellinghouse was refused because it would have included significant enlargement and an additional outbuilding and would have been harmful to the Green Belt.

This application proposes the change of use to the building, to provide a dwelling, in a manner that would make use of the building within its existing envelope and not include any enlargement.

One of the exceptions provides for the reuse of buildings provided that the building is of permanent and substantial construction, provided the development preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

The building is of reasonably substantial and permanent construction, it is built from concrete block and has a full pitch tiled roof. The building would not be made any bigger and associated outdoor parking and amenity space would be contained on land that already has association with the applicant's existing dwelling. There would not be any harm to the Green Belt or conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt.

The development would be provided for by the stated exception and would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt and there would be no harm to the Green Belt.

Policy Approach to Rural Housing

For the purposes of the adopted Local Plan the site lies within an 'other rural' area of countryside well beyond the boundary of the nearest village. In the other rural area Policy SS10 applies.

Other rural areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural

areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. As a means of providing rural housing, the Policy SS10 specifically references an allowance for the conversion of a rural building in accordance with policy H1.

Specifically, in the 'other rural areas' of countryside, Policy H1 provides for the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion

Local Plan housing policy H1 requires that "all development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision".

That being said, the Council has an undersupply of housing and cannot demonstrate a 5year supply. For the purposes of paragraph 11d of the revised NPPF, adopted on the 12th December 2024, the development plan policies most important for determining the application shall be considered out of date. Planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

SMDC Local Plan DC1 generally requires all development to be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD.

In particular, to comply with the policy, new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place.

The development in this case relates to a building that has its origins as a garage outbuilding, used now as ancillary accommodation or a games room for the existing dwelling. Where the building's appearance and visual relationship with the site is that of a secondary outbuilding, as a dwellinghouse it would appear strangely appointed, positioned and arranged in a manner that is at odds with the pattern of the surrounding residential development.

Overall, however, the building would largely retain the external appearance and character of an outbuilding or garage adjacent to and within the curtilage of the host dwelling, and, in these regards, there would be no significant or demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area.

There would not be any conflict with Policy SS10, H1 and DC1 of the SMDC Local Plan and the SMDC design guide, in these regards.

Amenity/Living Conditions of existing and future occupiers

The existing building is of a scale and size, and has the proximity, physical relationship, and situational arrangement, that would be most commonly associated with a garage, or similar outbuilding, placed adjacent to a host dwelling within an obvious area of its curtilage.

This means that, in this case, a principal elevation facing south, containing the largest patio windows that would serve the main living space, have immediate proximity, and open, to the amenity space at the rear of the host dwelling. Circulation space around the building crosses over and converges with obvious areas of the host dwelling's curtilage. Those largest windows face onto a yard area that is shared with the rear elevation of the host dwelling and provides driveway to a garage to the west of the outbuilding. This conflict and cross over of spaces were actually apparent on site, where washing driers attached to the side of the outbuilding hung out into the existing area of amenity space and a push chair sat outside the patio windows in the open space to the side of the building.

To mitigate for this relationship, frosted film has been attached to these large patio windows to prevent views in or out of the building through this exposed side elevation. The proposal is to retain the film. However, the film would deprive the main living space of outlook and light. This heavily windowed elevation would be exposed to noise and disturbance from within the area behind the host dwelling, which immediately to the side of the building, is used as a driveway to access the garage to the west. It was also audible on site that somewhere within the site the host dwelling was kennelling more than one dog and that, kept within the farmstead setting, these dogs were prone to loud barking. Given the close proximity of the outbuilding, to the host dwelling future occupants are likely to be disturbed by barking dogs.

On the other side of the building smaller, higher-level windows, also currently covered with frosted film, would serve both bedrooms and the kitchen sink. These windows would do little to serve the main living space with outlook and light and they present immediately to the side of an access track that appears to serve commercial and/or equestrian activity and facility that surround the property to the north and west. Use of the track and the surrounding activity is likely to cause noise and disturbance for future occupiers.

By reason of a restricted window arrangement, the new dwelling would be poorly served in terms of daylight, outlook and ventilation – opening the windows for ventilation would negate the effects of the frosted film in the windows. Temporary window film is, in any event, a poor and inadequate solution in that it can be easily removed and can deteriorate.

Overall, for all of these reasons, the proposal would provide a dwelling of relatively low quality that is not capable of providing an appropriate and acceptable standard of living condition and amenity for persons/future occupiers that do not have a pre-existing connection or association with the occupation and use of other adjacent land and the host dwelling.

It is noted that to the western end of the building the main living space would be served by one clear glazed patio window that would open to an enclosed outdoor patio that, it is said, would be enlarged to provide a Space About Dwelling standard compliant garden area. It is not clear how that garden space would be achieved given that the back of the patio currently drops off from the top of a retaining wall down to a significant fall in levels to a concrete hardstanding. However, the provision of this end patio window and the garden enlargement, would not compensate, and adequately mitigate, for the poor living conditions that would be afforded in all of these other respects.

It is also apparent that if the use and occupation of the building were to become concentrated and consistent in a manner associated with full occupation as a sole independent residence and full dwellinghouse, that would have the potential to cause noise and disturbance that would negatively affect living conditions at the host dwelling. Moreover, at ground floor level the host dwelling has principal kitchen windows in the side elevation, that would have outlook directly onto the parking spaces that are proposed for the new dwelling. The cars would be 4m from the kitchen window, they would obstruct outlook and vehicle movements independent of the host dwelling could cause disturbance at such short proximity.

The existing building, by reason of its positioning, limited space, arrangement, and proximity to the neighbouring host dwelling, would fail to provide a 'high quality' house with acceptable living conditions and standards of amenity provided for existing residential neighbours and future occupiers of the development. In these regards there would be conflict with policy SS10, H1 and DC1 of the adopted SMDC Local Plan 2020, and the terms of the NPPF.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The building would not provide a high-quality house having regard to its location, the characteristics of the site, the limited space within the plot, and its proximity to its neighbour (the host dwelling). A regular and sustained use of the building as an independent and sole residence would introduce an intensity of use and activity in a concentrated area that would affect the amenity of the adjacent neighbour through overlooking, noise and disturbance. The building and its limited plot would, by reason of its relationship to the adjacent curtilage, surrounding activity, lack of circulation space, and restricted window appointment, fail to provide acceptable standards of amenity and living conditions for future occupiers that would use the accommodation as their sole and independent residence.

In these regards there would be conflict with Policy SS8, H1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

The proposal to provide a low-quality substandard dwelling would make a negligible contribution to housing supply and there would be little, or no benefit associated with that. The adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 30/01/2026

X *J Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council