

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0516
Valid 12/12/2025

THORNBY LODGE
CONSALL FORGE
CONSALL
WETLEY ROCKS

ERECTION OF SINGLE
STOREY OUTBUILDING TO
FORM RESIDENTIAL ANNEX

(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUE

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
- Impact on the setting of designated heritage assets (Caldon Canal Conservation Area, Consall Lime Kilns, and Bridge at Consall Forge)

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Thornby Lodge dates from 1764. It sits on a hilltop aside the River Churnet and the Caldon Canal, adjacent to the Conservation Area designated for its industrial heritage. The property occupies a meandering plot and gardens that extends to an acre. The surroundings are that of ancient woodland deep within rural Green Belt.

To the north of the site, beyond the domestic curtilage of the property, lies Consall Forge (Grade II Listed). Further to the east / southeast lies a listed canal bridge (Grade II Listed). The land to the east, in the valley bottom, is located within the Caldon Canal Conservation Area.

The lodge is a stone-built property with a principal elevation facing south from elevated position across a small patio area. The dwelling's original central front entrance, that opens to an entrance hall and staircase, is now enclosed by a glazed conservatory that forms a porch and sunroom to the patio. The dwelling provides 5 bedrooms at first floor, plus separate study, lounge, dining/kitchen room and utility at ground floor.

A linear roof ridge has west/east orientation, and a rear elevation faces across more extensive gardens to the north that run toward a stepped public footpath that climbs from the canal to the east adjacent to the plot's northern boundary.

PROPOSAL

Proposed erection of a detached single storey building at the above property to provide ancillary annexed accommodation. The accommodation would provide two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen and an open plan dining lounge area.

The building would be located in the garden to the north of the dwelling, about 5m from the boundary of the plot and the edge of the public footpath.

The building would have a tiled full pitch roof, with a ridge height of no more than 4m from adjacent ground level. The building will occupy a floor area of 62 square metres and comprise a single storey structure that will range between 2.5m and 4.0 metres in

height. To the surrounds of the full pitch roof the building would extend into a flat roof area contained by external facing stone and parapet.

The annex is to be occupied by the applicant's partner's son who is disabled and needs assistance and care, whilst also allowing for him to have some limited degree of independence.

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 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

84/13477/OLDDC Proposed extensions and alterations. APPROVED.
SMD/2025/0349 Home office and gym. Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed Development. APPROVED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 30th January 2026
Neighbour consultation period ends: 30th January 2026
Press Advert: Leek Post and Times expiry 21st January 2026

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Consall PC: No response within consultation period.

Environmental Health

Peak and Northern Footpath Society

Consall 4 is close to the site. The use of the footpath and the safety of the users must not be affected by the development.

Ramblers Association

Consall 4 is close to the site. The use of the footpath and the safety of the users must not be affected by the development.

Canal and River Trust

No comment to make

Rural County Environmental Advice (SCC Archaeology)

Reviewed the application against the information held by the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (SHER) and associated datasets such as historic Ordnance Survey mapping. The proposed site lies just outside the Caldon Canal Conservation Area, and the remains of Consall lime kiln are located just 20m to the north of the proposed building. These are both a Scheduled Monument and a Grade II listed structure, comprising a bank of four early 19th century (disused) lime kilns. The kilns themselves consist of stoke holes and pots, aligned north-south, with a retaining wall built into a stone-faced bank. This type of structure is called a draw kiln and allowed high level access to feed the kilns, and low-level access for the extraction of the quicklime in a continuous process.

The SHER identifies that the site itself lies within an area for which there is documentary evidence for the site of an iron forge and slitting mill, in use from 1655, and still in use up to 1709-1710. The forge refined pig iron and most of the bar made was slit and sold as rod iron, mainly for the nailing trade in South Staffordshire. The exact site of the forge is uncertain, although the SHER records that on either side of the river, around the weir, is dark earth, slag, and building debris. The main concentration of debris (squared stones, tiles, etc.) on the north-east side of the river probably indicates the site of the forge buildings.

Although it seems likely that the main activity at Consall Forge was located away from the proposed development, it is possible that ancillary buildings and activity associated with the forge was occurring within the proposed site itself. This, together with the location of the Scheduled lime kilns to the immediate north, indicate that the site and immediate vicinity have been the focus of sustained industrial activity from at least the C17th onwards, and hence there is some archaeological potential within the site.

Please note, this advice focusses on the below ground archaeological concerns with regards to the application. The proposed site is located within the setting of several designated heritage assets, including the Scheduled Monument of Consall Forge, the Caldon Canal Conservation Area, and a Grade II listed bridge. It is strongly advised that you consult with both Historic England and your Conservation Officer colleague with regards to the potential impact of the proposed development on these nearby designated heritage assets.

Recommendations

Whilst we do not wish to raise any archaeological objections to the proposed development, taking the above into account, it is advised that, should permission be granted, an archaeological watching brief be carried out during all groundworks associated with the proposed development. The watching brief should be scalable to a strip, map and sample excavation should significant archaeological remains be observed during the archaeological monitoring works.

This approach, i.e. watching brief/ historic building recording is supported by NPPF (2024) 218. All archaeological works must be undertaken by an appropriately

experienced archaeological organisation (with suitably experienced personnel) or historic environment professional/ archaeologist working an approved Project Design, the production of which should be informed by our relevant Model Brief (which can be found in our Archaeology Standard), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) Code of Conduct (or equivalent), and to a level commensurate with the relevant CIfA Standards and Guidance.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

The proposal is off a track road and will not affect the local highways. No objection subject to the annex not being sold/ rented and separately occupied or disposed of.

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 exceptions that appear on the closed lists at Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Any harm to the Green Belt should be given substantial weight, planning permission shall not be granted unless there are other considerations, amounting to very special circumstances, that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the development.

The development would provide a new detached building for the purposes of providing residential accommodation to be annexed from the existing host dwelling. None of the exceptions provide for this form of development and the building is too far from the host dwelling to be reasonably considered as an extension of that building. In any event, the building, if considered in that manner, would be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building (which in this case, has already been extended with additions made in 1984).

The applicant's agent makes some claim to the new grey belt exception at paragraph 155 (NPPF Dec 2024). He submits that the development would utilise grey belt land and that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. The agent points to paragraph 63 of the NPPF that requires an assessment of the different needs of different groups within the community, citing people with disabilities as one such group, when establishing housing need; and, statement in the Local Authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) that references a forecast for an increased need for housing with care, particularly residential care.

The Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing, considered against established need through strategic assessment. Within that assessment, different groups were accounted for. The proposed development in this case, however, would not provide a house to contribute to housing supply for persons in need of care/adapted living, or otherwise. Rather, the proposed development would increase and add to the available living accommodation of an existing dwellinghouse for a member of the existing household in the form of an annexe, the application is for householder development and is made out in those terms.

There is not a demonstrable unmet need for that type of development. Moreover, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF, the development would not be in a sustainable location – it would be in a remote and disconnected rural location without access to public transport, facilities or services. The agent argues that sustainability is inherent in the connectivity with the existing household and the shared use of motor vehicles and journeys to and from the nearest settlements. However, this point further confirms that the development would be limited to ancillary/additional accommodation to an existing household and dwelling, rather than a contributor to assessed housing need across the plan area.

The proposed development would be harmful to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, that harm would be significant in terms of the development's impacts on the spatial and visual aspects of openness, the development would appear substantial from the proximity of the adjacent public footpath and would have a footprint that is of significant scale in comparison to that of the existing dwellinghouse, and would appear as intrusive in the countryside.

Impact on Character and Appearance

In the other rural areas of countryside, outside of the villages and towns, Local Plan Policy SS10 makes provision for additional domestic outbuildings to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area.

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that all development shall 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, new development should incorporate creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

Local Plan policy DC3 states that development which leads to a prominent intrusion into the countryside should be resisted.

Thornby Lodge dates from 1764. It sits on a hilltop aside the River Churnet and the Caldon Canal, adjacent to the Conservation Area designated for its industrial heritage. The property occupies a meandering plot and gardens that extends to an acre and is surrounded by a belt of woodland. The site location is distinctly rural and accessed only via narrow lanes and tracks that wind through woodland, that brings a sense of remoteness. Thornby Lodge has a neighbour, Rock Cottage, that is situated in a plot below on a lower tier of the hillside.



On the lower ground, to the other side of the canal, there is the White House and the Black Lion public house. These dwellings are well spaced across the landscape, appearing individually within woodland setting.



All these dwellings are obvious age, 19th century and earlier, and share character with limited signs of alteration or enlargement. These properties are experienced and appreciated as contributors to the quality environment and the character and appearance of the area by visitors that stroll canal side or enjoy woodland walks.

Specifically, to the edge of the applicant's northern boundary the steep steps of public footpath no. 4 provide passage through steep woodland between the applicant's meandering plot and the SSSI to the north. Dropping down from the high ground to the west the path provides approach to the Conservation Area below and the canal side Grade II listed Consall Forge lime kiln. From the footpath there are glimpses through trees and shrubbery across the terraced gardens and toward the host dwelling Thornby Lodge.

The proposed development would be built adjacent to the footpath, and it would appear as a prominent intrusion to the woodland edge. It would be a large, detached building that would appear oddly appointed and positioned. The development would adversely affect the 18th Century host dwelling's relationship with its woodland setting and would interrupt and obstruct available glimpses of the property through gaps in tree line and shrubbery. The development would appear obtrusive and dominant against the host dwelling.



In these regards, the development would provide an additional domestic outbuilding to an existing dwelling that would not be of an appropriate scale and design and it would have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area. Conflict with Local Plan policy SS10 in those regards.

There would be an unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area when experienced and appreciated from the adjacent public footpath Consall no. 4. The development by reason of its size, design, position, and proximity to the boundary would appear as an odd or alien form of development that would make a prominent intrusion in the countryside. There are no other considerations that amount to very special circumstances and clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms that would result from the development. There would be conflict with policies SS10, DC1, and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan and the terms of the NPPF.

Impact on the setting of designated heritage assets

The site has proximity to the Caldon Canal Conservation Area and the other designated heritage canal side below. From the canal side the development would be concealed by trees and hidden from view. It would not directly affect the setting or the experience and appreciation of the assets. The development would affect only the experience of the walker, and their appreciation of their surroundings from outside of the Conservation Area, on approach from the west as discussed above.



Other Considerations

The development would be harmful to the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area and approach to designated heritage assets, experienced and appreciated from the adjacent public footpath. Planning permission should not be granted unless there are other considerations, amounting to very special circumstances, that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms that would result from the proposal.

The claim of a 'fall back'

The applicant points to what he describes as a 'fall back' position. He has recently been granted a certificate of lawfulness relating to a proposal to build a detached building on the site required, he said, for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse (a gym and home office). In those circumstances such a building would have been permitted by Class E, Part 1 of the GPDO, regardless of whether the development would be harmful in planning terms.

However, with this application, he undermines that position, revealing that, rather than a building for incidental enjoyment, what he actually requires is living accommodation to function as an annexe - development that is not permitted. The application for the certificate now appears rather contrived. It cannot now be assumed that he can press ahead with the development considered under the terms of the certificate application and at a later date change its use to annexed accommodation – the change of use might not require permission within the residential planning unit, but it is likely to demonstrate, depending on the timings, that the building was not required in the first place for incidental purposes. This particularly so, now there is the evidence of this current application relative to the applicant's intentions.

The General Permitted Development Order effectively grants a planning permission for a particular form of development that would be harmful for those reasons discussed above. That does not in itself provide good reason for the authority to grant a further planning permission for development that, when considered against the policies of the development plan, would be just as harmful in planning terms.

Applicant's Circumstances

The annex in this case is to be occupied by the applicant's partner's son, who is disabled, with the applicant and his partner providing care for him. The close proximity of the building to the existing dwelling will also allow for the applicant's son to take meals with the rest of his family.

The application explains the son's relationship with the existing dwelling as a member of the established household; his occupation of the development would be intrinsically linked to the dwelling as an ancillary use in those terms. The existing dwelling, however, is large. It has five bedrooms at first floor and extensive accommodation at ground floor, providing a separate study additional to kitchen, dining room, and lounge. The dwelling serves a large household well, with accommodation and space that provides for the shared experience of living together as a family or household, while allowing space for privacy or time apart. Against that provision, the need is less than essential and the desire for yet more accommodation, with increased independency, is not a matter that clearly outweighs the harm.

Other than the care that can be provided to the son if he is included as part of the household, his medical conditions or disability are not advanced as a 'special reason' to provide the development in this Green Belt location. In those regards it is poorly located for access to services, facilities and support.

Ecology and Biodiversity

The Environment Act (2021) places a legal requirement on all development, unless otherwise exempt, to compensate for impacts on and loss of biodiversity habitats with the delivery of a 10% net gain on site or, where this cannot be achieved, off site, which can include the purchasing credits from a registered habitat bank.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that policies and decisions should minimise impacts on biodiversity and that development should mitigate or compensate for the loss of habitat whilst delivering enhancement and net gain in habitat.

The applicant describes the proposal as householder development and has made the application out in those terms. Householder development has exemption from the BNG legislation, another point which undermines the applicant's earlier argument that this is a dwelling which will contribute to housing land supply.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt, it would be harmful to both the visual and spatial aspects of openness and cause countryside encroachment. There would also be an unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area when experienced and appreciated from the adjacent public footpath Consall no. 4. The development by reason of its size, design, position, and proximity to the boundary would appear as an odd or alien form of development that would make a prominent intrusion in the countryside. The development would adversely affect the 18th Century host dwelling's relationship with its woodland setting and would interrupt and obstruct available glimpses of the property through gaps in tree line and shrubbery. There are no other considerations that amount to very special circumstances and clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms

that would result from the development. There would be conflict with policies SS10, DC1, and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan and the terms of the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 6th February 2026

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council