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From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
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Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

[REDACTED]

Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0537 Site Address: LAND BETWEEN RUDYARD ROAD AND HOT LANE
Rudyard Road Biddulph Moor Staffordshire Comments by: Paul Scragg

From:
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Biddulph Moor
Stoke-on-Trent
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[REDACTED]

Submission: Objection
Comments:

To the Planning Authority,

I write to formally object to the outline planning application for up to 9 dwellings on land between Rudyard Road and Hot Lane, Biddulph Moor

This objection should be read in full and gives particular attention to the applicant's explicit claim that the site constitutes 'Grey Belt' land, a position which is misleading, unsupported in policy, and contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1. Green Belt Designation and Incorrect Reliance on 'Grey Belt'

The application site is designated Green Belt land. The applicant explicitly claims that the site should be treated as 'Grey Belt'; however, this term has no statutory basis in planning law or national policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework does not recognise 'Grey Belt' as a planning designation. Referring to land as 'Grey Belt' does not alter its Green Belt status, nor does it diminish the protections afforded to it.

Any alteration to Green Belt boundaries can only be achieved through a Local Plan review, supported by exceptional circumstances and subject to full public consultation. No such Local Plan process has occurred, and local residents have not been consulted on any re-designation of this land.

Accordingly, the site remains Green Belt, and the proposal constitutes inappropriate development as defined by NPPF paragraph 152. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful and should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances, which must clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

The applicant's reliance on the non-statutory term 'Grey Belt' appears to be an attempt to circumvent Green Belt policy, and this argument should be afforded no weight in decision-making.

2. Failure to Demonstrate Very Special Circumstances

The application fails to identify any Very Special Circumstances, let alone demonstrate circumstances that would clearly outweigh:

Harm to Green Belt openness

Encroachment into the countryside

Harm to landscape character

Infrastructure, flooding, and highway impacts

General housing need, site availability, or claims of degraded land do not amount to Very Special Circumstances, either individually or cumulatively, under established planning case law.

3. Loss of Openness and Encroachment into the Countryside

The proposed development would result in:

A clear loss of openness, both spatially and visually

Encroachment into the countryside

Permanent urbanisation of a currently open site

This conflicts directly with the fundamental purposes of Green Belt designation as set out in NPPF paragraph 138.

4. Outline Application & Inadequate Detail and Inability to Assess Harm

This is an outline application, providing no meaningful detail regarding:

Layout and density

Access arrangements

Drainage strategy

Levels and landform

Ecological mitigation

Granting outline consent on Green Belt land without sufficient information prevents a robust assessment of harm and is therefore premature and unsound.

5. Flooding, Drainage, and Sewer Capacity

The local area experiences regular surface water flooding during heavy rainfall due to sewer capacity being exceeded. Properties on Rudyard Road and within the Parklands cul-de-sac have previously flooded, and roads in the area routinely hold surface water.

The proposal would increase:

Hardstanding and runoff

Pressure on already constrained sewer infrastructure

Flood risk to neighbouring properties

No detailed or credible drainage solution has been provided, contrary to NPPF paragraphs 159¿169.

6. Highway Safety and Traffic Impact

Rudyard Road already experiences:

Regular speeding despite the 30 mph limit

Police enforcement and speed camera activity

High pedestrian activity associated with the nearby village hall

The village hall accommodates scouts, cubs, beavers, mother-and-baby groups and other community activities, resulting in frequent pedestrian and vehicular movements.

The cumulative impact of additional dwellings has not been adequately assessed, and access arrangements remain unclear at outline stage.

7. Electrical Infrastructure Constraints

Parts of Biddulph Moor, including Rudyard Road, are served by older underground electricity infrastructure. Increased demand raises concerns regarding:

Capacity

Reliability

Disruption to existing residents

The application provides no evidence that the existing network can safely support the proposed development.

8. Ecology and Protected Species (Bats, Owls and Great Crested Newts)

The application site lies within a green belt / semi-rural village setting characterised by open land, hedgerows, mature trees and nearby gardens, forming a well-established wildlife corridor. This environment provides high-quality habitat for protected species, including bats, owls and Great Crested Newts, all of which are afforded strong legal protection.

There is direct evidence of bat activity in the immediate vicinity of the site. A bat was found on the doorstep of a nearby property on Hot Lane.

Owls are also known to live and hunt within this green belt landscape. All owl species in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with additional protections for nesting sites. The open fields and boundary features surrounding the site provide essential foraging habitat, and development would result in habitat loss, increased disturbance and artificial lighting, all of which are known to adversely affect owl populations.

In addition, Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are a European Protected Species, protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Staffordshire is a county with known Great Crested Newt populations, and the application site and surrounding land offer suitable terrestrial habitat, including grassland, hedgerows and garden areas, which are commonly used for foraging, shelter, hibernation and movement between breeding ponds. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that Great Crested Newts are absent or that the proposal would not cause harm.

Crucially, the application is outline only, with no confirmed layout, access arrangements, drainage strategy, lighting scheme or construction methodology. This makes it impossible to properly assess the impact on protected species at this stage. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that where there is a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present, surveys must be undertaken prior to determination, not deferred by condition.

The absence of:

Adequate, seasonally appropriate ecological surveys

A clear assessment of impacts on habitat connectivity

Detailed mitigation or avoidance measures

means the proposal fails to demonstrate compliance with national and local biodiversity policy and risks harm to legally protected species.

Given the sensitivity of the site, the known presence of protected wildlife in the immediate area, and the lack of robust ecological evidence, the application should be refused, or at the very least not determined, until full ecological surveys and impact assessments are completed and made publicly available.

The site lies within a rural Green Belt setting known to support wildlife.

Owls, protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, are present in the area.

Bats, all of which are legally protected, are known to forage locally.

The outline application fails to provide sufficient ecological surveys or mitigation proposals, contrary to NPPF paragraph 180 and relevant legislation.

9. Landscape Character and Precedent

The proposal would harm the rural character of Biddulph Moor and erode the transition between village and countryside.

Approval would set a harmful precedent, making it increasingly difficult to resist further Green Belt erosion through similar 'Grey Belt' arguments.

Conclusion

This proposal:

Is inappropriate development in the Green Belt (outside village boundary)

Relies on a non-statutory and misleading 'Grey Belt' argument

Fails to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances

Lacks sufficient detail to assess impacts

Causes harm to openness, landscape, infrastructure, ecology, and highway safety

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the planning authority refuse this application.

Yours faithfully,

Paul and Barbara Scragg

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