

## DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

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**SMD/2025/0396**  
**Valid 09/09/2025**

**BRACKS FARM SCHOOL**  
**LANE**  
**FREEHAY**  
**CHEADLE**

**NEW SITE ACCESS**  
  
**(FULL - MINOR)**

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### MAIN ISSUES

- Landscape Character Impact / Design
- Highway Safety
- Biodiversity Net Gain

### DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site consists of an area of agricultural field owned by the owners of Bracks Farm, School Lane, located in the Cheadle South East ward. Furthermore, the site is situated on countryside land, where development is more restricted. The field sits within the immediate context of Bracks Farm. The field gradient drops away from Bracks Farm towards School Lane. The existing vehicular access to the site lies approximately 67 metres Northeast of its junction with Barkers Bank. The access lies close to an existing bend in the carriageway to the Southwest. Open fields otherwise enclose the site on all sides.

### PROPOSAL

The proposed development comprises the creation of a new access to serve Bracks Farm. The proposed new access will provide a driveway leading around the Northern flank of the existing buildings on the site, leading to a new parking and manoeuvring area at the rear. The access will be 3.6 metres wide and be served by radius kerbs where it meets the public highway. The vehicular access and hard standing area will comprise of tarmac 50mm back from highway, then gravel.

The application additionally includes the existing vehicular access off School Lane serving the farm being closed off. A new hedgerow will be planted across that access as a continuation of the existing vegetation that encloses the frontage to the site.

### RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

#### **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)**

SS1 Development Principles  
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy

SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy  
DC1 Design Considerations  
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting  
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources  
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14  
Section(s) 4 – Decision making, 12 – Achieving well designed places

### **SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS**

SMD/2026/0045 - New dwelling. Refused.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

#### **Publicity**

Site Notice expiry date: 09/10/2025  
Neighbour consultation period ends: 08/10/2025  
Press Advert: N/A

#### **Public Comments**

No public comments have been received.

#### **Town / Parish Comments**

No comments have been received from Cheadle Town Council.

#### **Staffordshire County Council Highways**

*Recommendation Summary: Conditional*

#### **NOTES TO PLANNING OFFICER**

*Application is to relocate access to the farm.*

*Existing access is close to a bend on School Lane, a road subject to national speed limit. Visibility to the south is approximately 60m, restricted by vegetation and the alignment of the carriageway. Access is relatively steep rising away from the carriageway.*

*The submitted Technical Note (TN) includes a speed survey. The survey itself cannot be downloaded from the website. The method of survey is not stated in the TN. Speeds are measured at 43mph northbound and 47mph southbound. The visibility splays are then calculated used MfS. However, MfS does not apply at*

*speeds greater than 37mph, School Lane could not be considered a 'street' and DMRB standards must apply. TN also states that visibility splay to the north is measured to the centre of the carriageway. However, the drawing shows it measured to an undefined point which appears to be the centre of the lane. This is incorrect. Splays are measured to the near kerbline under DMRB.*

*However, it is clear from the drawings, site visit and discussions with the applicant that the intention is to move the access away from the bend. Although DMRB visibility splays cannot be achieved, they are not available at the existing access. Relocating the access away from the bend will improve visibility in the primary direction which will be an improvement in safety over the existing situation. The proposed location will also provide a reduced gradient.*

*Currently proposed achievable splay is measured and shown incorrectly. Condition recommended above requires revised drawing showing achievable visibility correctly located and dimensioned to maximise safety.*

*I understand from discussions with the applicant that it is his intention to lay the hedge on the boundary which will permanently close the access on the boundary. Condition recommended above will remove the access crossing and reinstate the footway/verge with full height kerb to permanently close the access within the highway.*

*Current records show that there were no Personal Injury Collisions on School Lane within 215m either side of the property access in the previous five years.*

### **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust**

No formal comments have been received from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, however informal discussion has taken place regarding the application.

Concern has been raised regarding lack of detail relating to habitats, protected species and how the mandatory 10% net gain can be achieved.

## **OFFICER COMMENTS**

### **Principle of Development**

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. For decision takers this means (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are more important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless: i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental.

In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment. A more limited focus on future growth is to be directed to rural areas, including Freehay (on the outskirts of Cheadle). When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The application site is located in the Open Countryside whereby Policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that these rural areas will provide only for development that has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

Part (3) of policy SS10 seeks to protect the quality and character of the area and requires all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Notably, no specific clause under Policy SS10 permits provision for new accesses or driveways. Regardless of this, there is a requirement under Policy T1 to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development does not lead to an increase in on street parking. In this case, the proposed new access offers a betterment when compared to the existing site access, in that access into the farm will be safer. Thus, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle in this instance, as it can be justified by relevant Local Plan policy.

Accordingly the general principle is considered acceptable subject to considerations of landscape character impact, design, highway safety and biodiversity net gain.

### **Landscape Character Impact / Design**

Policy DC3 of the Local Plan seeks to protect and where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Policy DC1 seeks to ensure that all development is well designed and of a high quality, contributing to local distinctiveness and harmonising with sense of place.

The plot of land naturally gradually slopes downwards from the site to the public highway on a grassed, sloping site. Notably, minor excavation works would be required in order to accommodate for the development to create an appropriate surface. This being said, the access would virtually remain at ground level. The greatest level change would be to create parking adjacent to existing built development, sitting within the context of the developed landscape. Therefore, the excavation work is not considered to be as prominent as it would be in the middle of

a field away from any developed landscape. For this reason, the proposed new access is not considered to cause a detrimental level of harm to the landscape character.

The design of the proposed new access integrates into the rural landscape appropriately. The hard surfacing would comprise of tarmac 50mm back from the highway, then gravel.

It is therefore considered that the proposal would not harm the existing character of the surrounding landscape and would maintain the character of the area. The proposal would therefore accord with the provisions of local plan policies DC1, DC3 and section 12 of the NPPF in this regard.

### **Highway Safety**

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and should contribute to making high quality places. Policy T1 seeks to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development does not lead to an increase in on street parking.

Staffordshire County Council Highways do not object to the proposed development, as it would not increase the traffic levels in the area and would therefore not impact the local highway.

Highways have specified in their comments that the proposed development would in fact be a betterment when compared to the existing access in terms of highway safety. Notably, the existing access is close to a bend on School Lane, a road subject to national speed limit. Visibility to the South is approximately 60 metres, restricted by vegetation and the alignment of the carriageway. Access is relatively steep rising away from the carriageway.

Relocating the access to be further away from the bend will improve the visibility in the primary direction of travel, which will be an improvement in highway safety compared with the existing situation. The proposed location will also provide a reduced gradient.

Thus, the proposed development is compliant with Policy T1.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

Policy NE1 of the Local Plan seeks to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas by positive management and strict control of development.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have reviewed the information and figures submitted and are concerned that they have insufficient information with regard to BNG. There is a

lack of detail relating to habitats, protected species and how the mandatory 10% net gain can be achieved.

Given the concern raised by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, at this stage, insufficient information has been provided to definitively demonstrate that mandatory biodiversity net gains will be delivered. The applicant has been given the opportunity to submit the required information, however despite the submission of additional information, it remains unsatisfactory when viewed by SWT. Therefore in the absence of sufficient BNG information the Council cannot conclude that the mandatory 10% gain can be achieved. The development is therefore contrary to Policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

## **CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE**

In consideration of all of the above, the application is recommended for refusal. Insufficient information has been provided which definitively demonstrates that the proposed development would deliver mandatory biodiversity net gains, and that any net gain would be secured long term. The development is therefore contrary to Policies SS1 and NE1 of the Council's adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the proposed development is not deemed acceptable under planning policy and is recommended for refusal.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE**

**Case Officer: Hannah Varley**  
**Recommendation Date: 24/03/2026**

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Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

**On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**