

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0045
Valid 02/02/2026

BRACKS FARM SCHOOL
LANE
FREEHAY
CHEADLE

NEW DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Landscape Character Impact
- Heritage
- Design
- Amenity
- Highway Safety
- Biodiversity Net Gain

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site consists of an existing two storey brick and tile farmhouse and its associated curtilage, situated in the Cheadle South East ward. The existing farmhouse comprises a detached, 'L' shaped, two storey dwelling with a gross floor area of 90.87 square metres and a ridge height of 6.8m. A cluster of four associated outbuildings surround the existing farmhouse, covering a gross floor area of 461.08 square metres.

The site is located on open countryside land, where development is more restricted. The curtilage of the site is blanketed by open countryside land in all directions. The closest neighbouring dwelling at The Pipits, School Lane is situated approximately 49 metres North-East of the site. Other nearby neighbours at The Haven, Freehay Road are located approximately 56 metres South-West of the site. The School Lane highway runs adjacent to the South-Eastern curtilage boundary of the site.

PROPOSAL

The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing farmhouse and three of its associated outbuildings, and the construction of a replacement dwelling. The application proposes the removal of buildings 1, 3 and 4, with building 2 to be retained.

The proposed new dwelling will have a broadly 'L' shaped form, similar to that of the existing farmhouse. The main body of the new dwelling would be rooved by a series of pitched rooves (at single and double storey levels), incorporating a number of gable features. The proposed dwelling would have a gross internal floor area of 582.9 square metres and would stand to a ridge height of 9.7 metres.

The new ground floor accommodation comprises of an entrance hall, an office, a lounge, an open-plan kitchen / dining / bar area, a utility room, a WC, a plant room, a pool, a spa, a shower, a sauna and a steam room. At first floor level there would be a galleried landing, five bedrooms (the master room incorporating a dressing room and ensuite) and two more ensuite bathrooms which serve the other bedrooms. No third storey floor plan has been provided, although it is assumed that the third storey space will be utilised.

The replacement dwelling would be constructed from materials which would complement the existing dwelling at the site, including red / orange facing brickwork and Staffordshire Blue tiles.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing Developments
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
Appendix 2 Parking Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14
Section(s) 2 – Achieving sustainable development, 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes, 11 - Making effective use of land, 12 - Achieving well-designed places, 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands

New Dwellings and extensions to Dwellings

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD

Part 3 – New Development – Designing in Context

Staffordshire Moorlands Space About Dwellings SPD

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2025/0396 – New site access. Pending.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 28/02/2026
Neighbour consultation period ends: 27/02/2026
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No public comments have been received.

Town / Parish Comments

Cheadle Town Council has no objections to the application and would support the proposals submitted.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Application is for a new dwelling accessed using a new access subject of SMD/2025/0396.

There are no objections to the new dwelling. As the proposed access has not yet been approved, conditions relevant to the access are repeated here.

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 the alignment of the carriageway. Access is relatively steep rising away from the carriageway. Vegetation has since been cleared and the hedge layed which has improved visibility.

The 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 kerb line 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.

The applicant has now had the hedge layed. I assume from previous discussions that it is the intention to plant a hedge across the access to be permanently closed

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.

Conservation Officer

Summary of Significance

The proposal would involve demolition of Bracks Farm (although noted that some of the mapping refers to Black's Farm). The brick buildings on the site are visible on late-19th and early-20th century mapping (see Fig.1 & 2).

The site consists of a 2-storey two bay house constructed in brick with a pitched tiled roof. The house is double pile, has a simple plan form and is illustrative of traditional vernacular construction and detailing. There is a brick pitched roof outbuilding to the east of the main house, which has been altered and added to. It is not clear what extent of this remains (i.e. whether the additions have resulted in large new openings/removal of brick walling), but this has the potential to have some architectural and historic interest. With reference to the Council's Local Heritage Register, the main house is considered a non-designated heritage asset as it is a good example of local vernacular building.

There are some modern blockwork and corrugated metal buildings on the site which are of no heritage value.

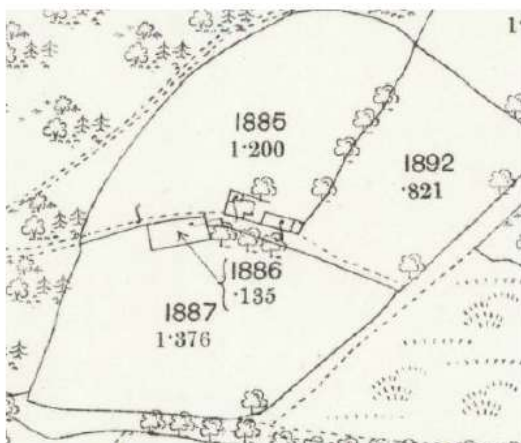


Fig.1 c.1881 OS map [online] (National Library of Scotland)

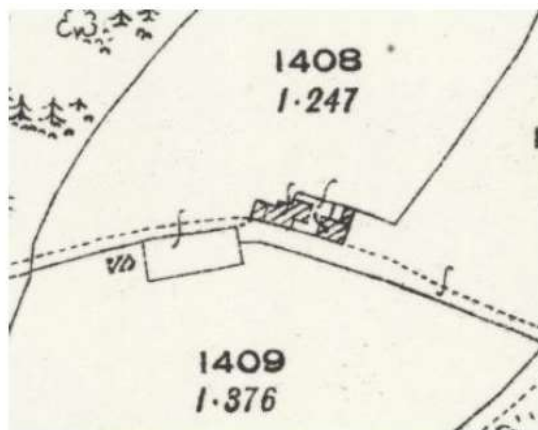


Fig.2 c.1924 OS map [online] (National Library of Scotland)

Assessment and Impact

The proposal would result in total demolition of the farmhouse and the surrounding outbuildings and replacement with a new dwelling.

The proposed demolition would result in the total loss of significance of a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) which is illustrative of rural vernacular construction in the locality. Its removal would result in the loss of appreciation of the local architectural interest and fortuitous traditional appearance of the building.

The removal of the modern outbuildings would likely better reveal the significance of the NDHA, and it is not clear whether the existing historic buildings could be incorporated into any new development instead of resulting in total loss of their significance.

Legislation and Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining applications and a balanced judgement will be required in regard to the scale of harm or loss of significance of the non-designated heritage asset (par.216).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- *Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment*

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in total loss of significance of a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) and there would be no heritage-related public benefits to outweigh the total loss (par.216 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). From a conservation perspective, we cannot support the proposal and would defer to the decision maker as to whether there are any public benefits which balance or outweigh the heritage harm arising from the proposal.

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.

SMDC Waste

The proposed new premises should have sufficient space for storage of 3 x wheeled bins and 1 x food waste caddy. Bins and caddy should be presented for collection at the curtilage of the property – adjacent to the public highway.

Severn Trent

Severn Trent requests that any approval be conditioned.

Before undertaking any work on site, all applicants must determine if Severn Trent has any assets in the vicinity of the proposed works. This can be done by accessing our records at www.digdat.co.uk

Severn Trent Water advise that even if our statutory records do not show any public sewers within the area you have specified, there may be sewers that have been recently adopted under The Transfer of Sewer Regulations 2011.

Public sewers and Water mains have statutory protection and may not be built close to, or diverted without consent, consequently you must contact Severn Trent to discuss your proposals. Severn Trent will seek to assist you obtaining a solution which protects both the public sewer and the proposed building.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development / Landscape Character Impact

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. 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.

Part (1) of Policy SS10 allows for the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H 1.

Policy H1 of the Local Plan states that in other rural areas in the open countryside, proposals for replacement dwellings can be permitted, provided that they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling.

Policy DC3 of the Local Plan states that the Council will protect and where possible, enhance the local landscape and setting of settlements in Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement.

The site is located on the Northern side of School Lane, on a grass embankment which sits at a considerably higher ground level than the adjacent public highway. There is no sense of development surrounding the site; the plot is completely blanketed by open, countryside landscape. At present, there is no boundary screening as the hedge has been laid, and therefore the site is completely exposed. Although the hedging will regrow, hedging is not a reliable form of screening. This can be seen in the photograph below, which exhibits a view from the Southern site boundary:



Figure 1: Southern Site Boundary

Due to the prominent, exposed location of the site, a dwelling of this size and scale would be wholly inappropriate in the rural character of the countryside landscape. Although the land has previously been developed on, the existing unobtrusive simple farmhouse and single storey rural buildings would be changed to a dwelling of a significantly larger size and scale, with large areas of glazing which would appear significantly more prominent and suburban in character. Thus, there can be no doubt that the proposed replacement dwelling would have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling, having a prominent intrusion into the countryside.

The proposal would therefore not accord with the provisions of local plan policies SS1, SS2, SS10, H1 and DC3 and the NPPF in this regard.

Heritage

Policy DC2 states that the Council will safeguard and where possible, enhance the historic environment by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance; promoting development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area; and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development.

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF (2024) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential

harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 213 of the NPPF (2024) states any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

The main house is considered a non-designated heritage asset as it is a good example of local vernacular building. As the proposed development involves a non-designated heritage asset, the Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted.

The Council's Conservation Officer has stated that the proposed demolition of the farmhouse would result in the total loss of significance of a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), which is illustrative of rural vernacular construction in the locality. Its removal would result in the loss of appreciation of the local architectural interest and fortuitous traditional appearance of the building. The removal of the modern outbuildings would likely better reveal the significance of the NDHA, and it is not clear whether the existing historic buildings could be incorporated into any new development instead of resulting in total loss of their significance.

There are some modern blockwork and corrugated metal buildings on the site which are of no heritage value.

In conclusion, the proposal would result in total loss of significance of a NDHA and there would be no heritage-related public benefits to outweigh the total loss. From a conservation perspective, the proposal cannot be supported, unless any public benefits can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm.

The proposal would therefore not accord with the provisions of local plan policy DC2 and section 16 of the NPPF in this regard.

Design

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. Development must also use high quality, durable materials, to complement the site, character and surrounding context.

Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF outline what is expected of good design and required for the development of high quality, beautiful places, and provides for a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's Design Principles SPG outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that new dwellings should relate to existing buildings in terms of scale and proportion, massing and materials and should derive their inspiration from local tradition. The Council's Design SPD outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that a new building should respect the scale of those surrounding it and be well proportioned.

Due to the significant level change between the public highway and the site, there is no doubt that the site is in a highly prominent, exposed location to the street scene. Notably, the existing farmhouse has a gross floor area of 90.87 square metres and a ridge height of 6.8 metres. Combined with its existing associated outbuildings, the built up area at the site equates to a gross floor area of 551.95 square metres. The existing farmhouse sits comfortably within the landscape and despite its two storey level, sits at a reasonable, lower height. Moreover, the existing outbuildings at the site are all single storey and therefore sit unobtrusively amongst the landscape.

The proposed dwelling is of a considerably larger size and scale to the existing farmhouse. The proposed dwelling would have a gross internal floor area of 582.9 square metres and would stand at a ridge height of 9.7 metres. The volume of the new dwelling is too large and reads completely differently to the simple, small farmhouse and collection of associated outbuildings, having a significantly more prominent and intrusive impact on the landscape. The replacement of the existing farmhouse with a dwelling of a larger gross floor area than all existing buildings combined is considered overdevelopment in the context of the land surrounding it. Furthermore, the increase in the height of the dwelling by 2.90 metres is considered excessive, adding to the intrusiveness of the proposed dwelling.

In the instance of the proposed dwelling, it is considered that the proportion of roof to elevation is too top heavy. A significant amount of height in the proposed dwelling would be accumulated from the roof space, which is considered off-balance with and disproportionate to the ratio of elevation. Thus, the proportions in the makeup of the dwelling are considered inappropriate.

The existing farmhouse and outbuildings at the site have a higher solid to void ratio, consisting of considerably more brickwork / walling than glazing. The proposed dwelling incorporates an excessively large amount of glazing, including a large number of windows (a number of which are elongated from floor to ceiling) and glazed doors. The excessive amount of glazing on the proposed dwelling would be a complete contrast to the largely blank walls of the existing farmhouse and outbuildings, which blend into the countryside landscape. Due to the isolation of the site, the area forms a tranquil landscape, with a minimal amount of street lighting meaning that the area gets particularly dark during the evenings. Consequently, the glazing would illuminate the surrounding countryside and the dwelling would incongruously stand out amongst the isolated, rural landscape.

Materials used in the construction of the proposed dwelling would match those used in the construction of the existing farmhouse which it would replace. Red / orange facing brickwork and Staffordshire Blue tiles would be used in the construction of the proposed new dwelling. Thus, the proposed materials would be considered acceptable in this instance and would not be considered to detract from the character of the area. However, this does not outweigh the harm in terms of the size, scale and design of the dwelling as outlined above.

The proposal, by virtue of its size, scale and siting does not maintain the character of the existing dwelling and area. The proposal would therefore not accord with the provisions of local plan policy DC1 and section 12 of the NPPF in this regard.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF seeks to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants. Local Plan Policy DC1 requires development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and to not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity.

Notably, the site sits amongst a generous, spacious curtilage plot. The closest neighbouring dwelling at The Pipits, School Lane is situated approximately 49 metres North-East of the site. Other nearby neighbours at The Haven, Freehay Road are located approximately 56 metres South-West of the site.

Due to the substantial distances between the site and both of its closest neighbouring dwellings, it is clear that light and privacy amenity impact would not occur.

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.

The proposed new dwelling would accommodate five bedrooms. It is clear that there would be sufficient off-highway parking space at the site to comply with the parking standards as set out in the Council's Local Plan.

Staffordshire County Council have stated that the development will not severely impact the local highway network. Therefore, they have no objections to the proposed new dwelling at the site.

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 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. The proposed new dwelling would have a detrimental impact on the open countryside land, it would result in total loss of significance of a non-designated heritage asset, it would not be appropriate in design terms and insufficient information has been submitted in relation to biodiversity net gain.

Due to the prominent, exposed location of the site, a dwelling of this size and scale would be wholly inappropriate in the rural character of the countryside landscape. The existing outbuildings at the site are all single storey and therefore sit unobtrusively amongst the landscape. There can be no doubt that the proposed replacement dwelling would have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling, having a prominent intrusion into the countryside. This would conflict with policies SS1, SS2, SS10, H1 and DC3 of the Council's Local Plan.

The proposed demolition of the farmhouse would result in the total loss of significance of a non-designated heritage asset, which is illustrative of rural vernacular construction in the locality. There would be no heritage-related public benefits which would outweigh the total loss of the non-designated heritage asset. Therefore, the proposal cannot be supported from a conservation perspective as it conflicts with policy DC2 of the Council's Local Plan.

The proposed dwelling is of a considerably larger size and scale to the existing farmhouse, reading completely differently to the simple, small farmhouse and collection of associated outbuildings. The proportion of roof to elevation is too top heavy, which is considered off-balance and disproportionate. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling incorporates an excessively large amount of glazing. The glazing would illuminate the surrounding countryside and the dwelling would incongruously stand out amongst the isolated, rural landscape. For these reasons combined, the design of the proposed dwelling is considered inappropriate, contrary to policy DC1 and DC3 of the Council's Local Plan.

Lastly, 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, NE1 and DC1 of the Council's 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: 23/03/2026

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council