

[REDACTED]

From: planningcomments@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
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To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : SMD/2026/0164 Site Address: Beech Tree Farm Cloudside Congleton Staffordshire
CW12 3QQ Congleton Comments by: Mr & Mrs Anderson

From:
Willow Cottage
Cloudside
Cloudside
Congleton
Staffordshire
CW12 3QQ

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Submission: Neither

Comments: Re: Planning Application SMD/2026/0164 ħ Beech Tree Farm

We wish to submit the following comments in relation to the above application.

While we recognise and support the operational needs of this agricultural business, it's essential that this development is implemented in a way that avoids unacceptable harm to the landscape, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, and the setting of heritage assets, in accordance with local and national planning policy.

1. LANDSCAPE IMPACT AND FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT EXISTING LANDSCAPING CONDITION.

Previous planning permission SMD/2019/0730 included a condition (Condition 5) requiring the planting of native trees to the north of the building to mitigate its visual impact within this sensitive and highly scenic landscape.

This condition has not been implemented, and as a result the development currently has a significantly greater visual impact than was originally assessed and approved.

This failure is a material consideration in the determination of the current application.

If this application is to be approved, it is essential that:

ġ. The original landscaping condition is fully implemented

ġ Additional native planting is secured to the north and west of the proposed Fodder Store, where the building would extend beyond the existing treeline. This to be carried out in the first available planting season (November to March) following the completion of the development, or its first coming into use, whichever is the earlier.

This is necessary to ensure compliance with planning policy requiring development to minimise its impact on landscape character and protect important views, particularly in open countryside with views toward the Peak District National Park.

2. CONTROL OF LANDSCAPING TO PROTECT RESIDENTIAL AMENITY.

While additional planting is necessary, the application must ensure that the type, scale, and long-term management of planting is appropriately controlled.

Further uncontrolled tree growth could:

ġ Obstruct important views toward the Peak District National Park

ġ Result in overshadowing and loss of natural light to neighbouring properties, namely Beech Tree Cottage and Willow Cottage.

Due to the local topography, these properties already experience early loss of sunlight due to the position of The Cloud. If unmanaged, the additional planting required risks materially reducing sunlight during morning hours, particularly during winter months.

Local planning policy requires protection of residential amenity, including access to daylight and outlook. A detailed and enforceable landscaping condition specifying species, height, and maintenance is therefore essential, and we would ask that this be extended to include the mature trees to the west side of the existing building which already obscure views and reduces natural sunlight.

3. SITE MANAGEMENT AND FAILURE TO REALISE ORIGINAL PLANNING JUSTIFICATION

The justification for the original building (SMD/2019/0730) included the need to:

- ¿ Provide secure storage for agricultural machinery
- ¿ Reduce visual clutter within the surrounding landscape
- ¿ Protect equipment from theft and exposure

However, in practice:

- ¿ The building has not been consistently used for these stated purposes
- ¿ Agricultural machinery, trailers, and equipment continue to be stored externally
- ¿ The field to the north is regularly used for vehicle and equipment storage, resulting in visual harm and poor ground conditions which are transferred to the highway

This undermines the original planning justification for the development.

The current application proposes extending the existing building but does not clearly demonstrate how it will ensure that:

- ¿ Machinery is stored appropriately within buildings or screened areas
- ¿ External storage is minimised
- ¿ The overall visual condition of the site is improved rather than further degraded

Given the anticipated growth of the business, it is reasonable to expect that vehicle numbers and activity will increase further over time

It is therefore requested that any approval includes:

- ¿ Provision of a dedicated hardstanding and storage area, preferably to the east where it is at a lower elevation, further from the highway and less visually prominent

- ¿ A site management plan controlling the storage of machinery, trailers, and materials

This would help ensure that the proposed development fulfils the stated purpose of the original planning application of improving the site organisation, security, and visual amenity (SMD/2019/0730 - Design and Access Statement - Use of proposed building)

4. ACCESS, VEHICLE MOVEMENTS, PARKING PROVISION

The application does not clearly demonstrate how vehicle access, manoeuvring, and parking will be safely accommodated on site.

At present:

- ¿ Agricultural vehicles and machinery are frequently parked on the highway
- ¿ This results in obstruction and restricts access to neighbouring properties
- ¿ It has a particular impact on visitors to The Cloud Methodist Chapel, which has a regular programme of events and includes elderly attendees requiring safe and convenient access

The application should therefore:

- ¿ Clearly define access arrangements to the existing and proposed buildings,
- ¿ Demonstrate adequate on-site turning and parking provision
- ¿ Ensure that operational parking does not take place on the single track public highway

The Local Plan requires that development provides safe access and sufficient parking and manoeuvring space. The current application does not adequately demonstrate compliance with these requirements.

5. DRAINAGE AND IMPACT ON HIGHWAY SAFETY

There is an existing and ongoing drainage issue affecting Cloudside, particularly in the vicinity of neighbouring properties and the chapel.

It's understood that a highway drain discharges into the applicant's field, and that alterations within the field have impeded this drainage.

As a result:

- ¿ Surface water regularly accumulates on the highway
- ¿ Flooding occurs for extended periods during winter months leading to hazardous driving conditions
- ¿ The road surface has deteriorated, resulting in potholes

This has created a clear highway safety concern and has, at times, restricted access to neighbouring properties.

The Local Plan requires that development is supported by adequate infrastructure, including effective drainage, and that it does not exacerbate existing problems.

While the applicant has indicated a willingness to address this issue, any planning approval should be subject to:

- ¿ A fully designed and approved drainage scheme
- ¿ Demonstration that the development will not worsen surface water conditions
- ¿ Measures to ensure the long-term maintenance and effectiveness of the drainage solution

6. IMPACT ON THE SETTING OF A HERITAGE SITE

The site is located in close proximity to The Cloud Methodist Chapel, which is the oldest active Primitive Methodist Chapel in the country and is a Grade II listed building, therefore a designated heritage asset.

The rural and undeveloped setting of the chapel contributes significantly to its historic and communal significance.

The cumulative impact of:

- ¿ Increased building scale
- ¿ Expanded activity and vehicle presence
- ¿ Associated infrastructure - namely parking, ease of access and drainage.

has the potential to cause harm to the setting of this heritage asset.

National and local planning policy require that great weight is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and their setting. This harm must be clearly justified and, where possible, avoided or minimised.

CONCLUSION

While the principle of agricultural development is supported, the current proposal raises significant concerns relating to:

- ¿ Failure to implement existing planning conditions
- ¿ Site management and failure to realise the original justification for the development
- ¿ Highway safety and drainage
- ¿ Lack of clarity regarding access and parking
- ¿ Impact on the setting of a Grade II listed building

If the application is to be approved, it is essential that robust and enforceable conditions are applied to address these issues.

Without such controls, the development would result in unacceptable and avoidable harm to this sensitive rural location.

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