

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0421
Valid 03/11/2025

**GARAGE SITE AT
FROGHALL ROAD
CHEADLE**

**CHANGE OF USE AND
CONVERSION OF EXISTING
GARAGE BUILDINGS TO
FORM 2 NO. OF 'SELF BUILD'
DWELLINGS.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Design
- Street Scene
- Living Conditions – occupiers and neighbours

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The location is a former Council-owned site of garages in two linear blocks – one of six garages and one of seven garages – occupying a former slang of land between houses and the Cecilly Brook, a water course classified as 'main river' by the Environment Agency. The application red edge has been drawn to a lesser area than the full area in the application land ownership – shown by blue edge on additional revised drawing reference 0101 rev B. Areas of designated flood risk zones 2 and 3 overlap with the land ownership along its northerly margins and portions of the of the proposed development site edge would fall within the flood zones.

The site is accessed from the west off the A521 Froghall Road. It appears that up until the point of sale there was a broad public verge of 6m to 8m rear of the roadside pavement. The site has now been fenced and enclosed with a high close-board fence on the back of the pavement line. The access enters the site through high boarded gates on the line of the original route to the garages. These are on the right as you go in and are built up to the back garden boundaries of the semis on Churchill Road, and to that of the applicant's property at 86 Froghall Road.

The site had long been relatively open to the road and provided pedestrian through-access to the Churchill Road public recreation ground to the south east. This usage is strongly evident in air photos from at least 2006. It is not known on what basis this access was enjoyed, for example whether it was 'as of right' or on a more informal or even clandestine basis.

To the left side of the site and the line of the access route the site falls away to the brook which is lined with a band of mature riverine trees.

PROPOSAL

To convert each garage block to a single-storey one-bedroomed dwelling. Such matters as parking and outside amenity space are to be accommodated in the areas towards the road front and between the buildings and the tree line on the northerly sides.

A short 'Flood Risk Assessment' note compiled by the agent accompanies the application. This says that permeable surfaces, sustainable drainage, rainwater harvesting and raising the internal floor levels will be incorporated: *"groundcover on the application site will be permeable / SUDS compliant where possible and surface water will route directly to the Stream or to Attenuation Crates within the site. Rainwater from Roofs will initially be harvested into Tanks before excess water reaches the drainage systems."*

The scheme proposes to retain the existing exterior wall finishes in brick and to use matching brick for any repairs and / or infill sections necessary to facilitate the conversions.

The previously existing shallow mono-pitch roofs finished in corrugated asbestos cement fibre panels have been removed (a certificate regarding the removal accompanies the submitted details). In a revision from the first submission (prompted the agent says by the consultation response from Cheadle Town Council) the proposed roof of each conversion would be dual pitched and hipped, finished to a "plain tile appearance" – specific details not provided. Solar panels are shown to the southerly roof slopes and rooflights on the northerly aspects.

Large-form glazing would be introduced to the northerly facing elevations.

There is an accompanying planning statement which notes: *"The Garage Buildings are thought to date from 1940-1950 during the same period as the houses, this is supported by Historic Mapping. Both buildings are built using solid brick walls, typically 9-inches thick in a similar style to a barn building, these can be re-used. There is a solid concrete slab in each building, again this can be re-used."*

According to the statement there are large sewers owned by Severn Trent crossing the site and these are marked on the submitted drawings. It is suggested by the agent that this facilitates the proposed conversions but would be a significant constraint to wholly new development.

The units are designed to yield gross internal floor areas of 86m² and 75m² respectively.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

As proposed self-build developments the scheme is exempt from BNG requirements.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS7 Cheadle Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
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 (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

NPPF Annex 3: Flood risk vulnerability classification

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None on recent planning record.

CONSULTATIONS**Publicity**

Site Notice expiry date: 26.12.2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: 27.11.2025

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

[Nb dwellings in Ness Grove were notified in addition to those immediately alongside on Churchill Road.]

Town / Parish Comments

The Town Council has no objection to the principle of converting the garage buildings to 2 dwellings. It does however have concerns about the design of the proposed dwellings which to a large extent would retain the look of a row of garages. The Town Council therefore would object to the application due to the proposed designs.

[Nb – subsequently the designs were amended (27th April 2026) to present a scheme with dual pitched, hipped roofs.]

Environment Agency

It should be noted that the proposed change of use relates to two buildings wholly within Flood Zone 1, the low-risk Zone. Parts of the surrounding area are located within Flood Zones 2 and 3, the medium and high risk zones respectively. Based on the scale, nature and siting of the proposed development we would not provide bespoke comments on flood risk matters in this instance. You may wish to seek the comments of Staffordshire County Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and your emergency planning colleagues to ensure they are satisfied that the site, specifically site access, can be managed in a flood event.

Whilst the buildings lie within Flood Zone 1 it would appear that the proposed access road and carparking does encroach within, 8 metres of top of bank of a designated Main River. New development, built structures and/or storage of materials should ordinarily be set at least 8 metres from the top of bank of a Main River. This is to assist in operational management and maintenance, to help improve flood flow and conveyance; and in the interest of biodiversity.

In addition to obtaining planning permission any works, in, over or under, or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of any Main River may require a FRAP [Flood Risk Activity Permit] from us under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. For pre-application discussions, we recommend the applicant contact our area Partnerships & Strategic Overview (PSO) Team.

SCC Flood Risk Team

As non-statutory consultees for the proposed Change of Use and Conversion of Existing Garage Buildings to form 2 no. of 'self-build' dwellings, we offer the following comments in good faith:

We note that the application site is within Flood Zones 2 and 3 with risk of flooding from the Cecilly Brook (Main River). As the Environment Agency (EA) are a statutory consultee upon all proposed developments within Flood Zones 2 and 3 it is envisaged that the EA will comment on the flood risk vulnerability, flood depths and suitability of

the proposal in flood risk terms. Where the EA do not provide bespoke comments, you should be guided to their standing advice.

Therefore, the Flood Team have no further comments to offer on this application.

SWT Ecology

Recommend a holding objection – there is insufficient information to determine whether the building or surrounding trees on site are suitable for bats. A PEA focusing on bats is requested. This should include a data search.

If not subject to the Biodiversity gain condition, the applicant still needs to provide a net gain as per NPPF and local plan policy.

The applicant has not assessed the site for ecological features that may require protective measures. This is usually done by a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA). A desk study including a protected species data search has not been carried out. This is standard procedure for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEAs) as per CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, 2017.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Site Visit: carried out on 20/11/2025

Personal Injury Collisions:

Current records show that there was 1 Personal Injury Collision on Froghall Road within 43 metres of the site access between 31/12/2020 and 30/12/2023.

Background

The site is located on Froghall Road an A classified road (Road No. A521), it is subject to a 30mph speed limit, has footways, streetlighting and is a main route into Cheadle Town Centre.

Description of Proposal

Change of Use & Conversion of Existing Garage Buildings to from 2 no. of self-build dwellings.

Comments on submitted information

The application is for the change of use and conversion of 2 existing garage buildings (row of 6 garages and a row of 7 garages) to form 2 residential dwellings. The proposed dwellings will each have 1 bedroom. A parking area is shown on the submitted plan, Drawing Ref 25-14-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0102. The parking area showing 4 parking spaces is considered sufficient in size to accommodate the parking requirements stated within the Staffordshire Moorlands Parking Standards which are: Detached/Semi-detached property of 3 bedrooms will require 2 spaces (2.4 x 4.8m each space) for residents and visitors.

The access to the proposed dwellings will be via the existing vehicular access which serves the garage buildings. However, it was noted at the site visit that a fence and gates have been erected rear of the footway (Google Maps from Sept 2023 shows no fence or gates). It appears that the gates open inward and away from the highway; this would obstruct the proposed parking area. The opening of the gates over the footway would not be permitted and would obstruct and cause a danger to pedestrians. The gates when closed would hinder drivers wishing to access or vacate the parking area, which could cause vehicles to obstruct the footway and or the carriageway on Froghall Road whilst the gates were being opened or closed resulting in pedestrians to having to walk into the road.

Therefore, the most practical option would be to remove the gates. The fence obscures visibility for drivers and pedestrians, a plan showing pedestrian visibility splays should be provided, with no obstructions above 600mm within these visibility splays.

No Highways objection subject to the following conditions being applied:

1. Before the proposed development is brought into use pedestrian visibility splays of 1.5m x 1.5m shall be provided and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority covering both sides of the site. The pedestrian visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility over a height of 600mm above the adjacent carriageway level.
2. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the parking area have been provided in accordance with Drawing Ref 25-14-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0102 and shall thereafter be retained for the life of the development.
3. The gates are removed.

REASONS: To comply with NPPF; to comply with SMDC Core Strategy Policy DC1 and T1; in the interests of highway safety.

NOTE TO PLANNING OFFICER: The submitted plans do not show the boundary fence or gates. It is noted that the gates open inwards away from the highway. However, the gates when in the open position would obstruct the parking area. The opening of the gates over the footway would not be permitted and would obstruct and cause a danger to pedestrians. The most practical option would be to remove the gates hence condition 3.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

On the basis of being within the adopted Cheadle Development Boundary the proposed conversion of the two blocks of garages and attendant change of use of the site to residential occupation is appropriate and acceptable in principle in policy terms.

There are a number of key issues to be considered including visual design appearance; allocation of space and land use within the site; living conditions of the

occupiers; trees, landscaping and boundary treatments; and treatment and management of adjacent land outside the red edge but within the ownership.

By reference to the Local Plan Cheadle Inset Map there is no specific policy demarcation applying to the site. This contrasts with much of the land in the Cecilly Brook corridor (of which the site is a continuation) running south from the site and including the adjacent Churchill Road Recreation Ground which is variously ascribed Local Green Space / Open Space / Local Nature Reserve status for much of its length.

In response to LPA request the agent provided a short dossier to illustrate how the application has been contributed to by the two first occupiers of the two dwellings proposed. This helps verify that the applications are 'self-build' as given in the submitted description of the development.

Design

The enclosure of the former Council-owned (Moorlands Housing) open space to the roadside represents a change of use and a significant alteration to the visual street scene (see fig.1). The new road front boundary is now aligned in continuation with the front garden boundary of number 86. The principle of this becoming domestic space is therefore in that sense consistent with the domestic space of the frontage to no.86. The high close board fence that has been erected however presents a somewhat stark and severe frontage at odds with the street scene more generally. In the event of approval a condition should be attached to require a more sympathetic and more complementary boundary treatment to be submitted. It can separately be noted that the county highways authority consultation response would also require alterations to the boundary structures and any gating arrangements.



Fig.1

In terms of the built design appearance of the proposed conversions, a number of pros and cons can be identified. Facing walls would continue to be brick except that where previously there were garage doors various window insertions would be made. Where

previously there were shallow mono pitched roofs there would now be dual pitched and hipped roofing finished in an as yet unspecified “tile-like” appearance. In materials and roof form the conversions would echo the adjacent properties. In contrast they would differ notably in being single storey whereas much of the surrounding housing is two storey including the closest neighbours. It can though be noted that nearby 89 Churchill Rd some 60 metres to the south is a detached single storey bungalow property. Subject to site landscaping and boundary treatments the proposed conversions would potentially have limited prominence in the street scene. Overall it must be reasonable to conclude that the conversions would improve on the visual impression of the former garages which had become dilapidated. With the revised plan to show pitched roofing the conversions should not appear too obviously (if at all) like a row of garages as the Cheadle Town Council had initially been concerned by.

Design considerations in terms of the site layout are somewhat complicated by a number of factors. Again boundary treatment and site landscaping will be important in terms of defining the residential land area and distinguishing this from the brook course margins. This needs to be picked up by condition to require further details to be submitted for approval.

There is some inconsistency in the proposal in terms of how much of the brook embankment is within the development line or not and in this regard rather more of the brook course margin is shown in association with the second unit (further south east in the site) than for the first unit. The reasoning behind this is not clear although from the site visit the south east most corner involved less existing tree cover and perhaps has greater ability to serve as amenity area to the second unit.

The Environment Agency 8m bank top margin presents a further constraint on the design layout. Extensive path making and gardening has already taken place within the 8m zone. Presumably this has occurred following acquisition. It is arguably not appropriate in design terms when consideration is given to the natural environment implications. Again a condition could be attached to agree a management approach for these areas.

In discussion with the agent it is not fully clear as to why parking for both units is confined to the frontage so that whilst this is reasonably close to unit 1, the second unit is left with no direct vehicle access alongside. In response the agent has commented that a separation from vehicle parking space is not uncommon. In this case the distance from the allocated parking space is approximately 30 metres for the second unit. Access is pedestrian-only by way of a c.1.7m wide path passing across the curtilage frontage of the first unit. Whilst this would appear to be a compromise on the living conditions it perhaps does not make the scheme unacceptable as such. Indeed, there is an obvious design benefit in that keeping vehicles away from the frontages leaves better connection between the dwellings and their garden spaces and makes overall for a better living environment.

Amenity

In terms of indoor living space each dwelling would provide comfortably in excess of the minimum nationally described space standards which for a one-bedroomed single

storey two-person dwelling is expected to provide 50m² of gross internal floor space whereas these dwellings provide 90 and 75 square metres respectively.

Drwg 404 Rev A shows 18.5m x 4.9m = 90m² gross internal floor
Bedroom wld be 5m x c.4.6m = 23m²

Drwg 405 Rev B shows 15.8m x 4.75m = 75m² gross internal floor
Bedroom wld be 3.3m x 5m = 16.5m²

The submitted layout shows three areas of garden space with a 91m² and 114m² parcel serving unit 1 and a 374m² parcel potentially serving unit 2 though as noted above a significant part – approaching half of this latter area – is within the 8 metre main river standoff zone. Each dwelling therefore is given well in excess of the 65m² minimum garden area specified in the space about dwellings guidance.

In terms of privacy and overlooking there are no conflicts when assessed against the council's space standards in which a 22m separation is required. Each dwelling would face across to the rear elevations of properties on Ness Grove but the separation distances would be at least 28m to 30m and in addition there is the screening factor of the mature trees along the river line. There would be no overlooking to or from the properties on Churchill Road as there would be no windows in the rear elevations of either unit.

The addition of the pitched roofs to ridge height of c.4m would increase the visible profile of the converted buildings making them more noticeable from the rear elevations and back gardens of properties on Churchill Road. No.116 would be closest but with its lengthy back garden of c.18 metres there would be no adverse implication for the living conditions at number 116 and similarly 114 and 118 would also not be adversely affected.

Highway Safety

Subject to conditions in accordance with the county highways authority advice the scheme can be accepted in highways terms. The highways response refers to the block plan reference 0102 which has later been superseded by revision A though without altering the proposed parking arrangements.

Other Matters

Flooding

The responses of the Environment Agency and SCC Lead Flood Authority need to be noted – the latter in effect recommending deferral to the former. In turn the EA directs the LPA to assess the proposal by reference to the EA's on-line guidance. Whether or not a professional flood risk assessment is required is a matter of the scale and risk. Government guidance says:

*You will usually need to pay a flood risk specialist to carry out a FRA for you.
An exception to this may be if it is for a simple, low risk development, for*

example, a house extension. In this case you may be able to do it yourself. If you are not sure, contact the Environment Agency for advice.



Fig.2

Figure 2 above is an extract from the Environment Agency's online flood map for planning in which flood zone 2 is shown in pale blue and the higher risk flood zone 3 in dark blue. No habitable accommodation would come within flood zones 2 or 3 and indeed the separation distances would be some 8m to 9m from the EA's marked flood zone 2 and/or zone 3 edges. Areas of proposed change of use and development within flood zones 2 and 3 include parts of the site marked as garden to serve the second or most southerly unit. Also, the greater part of the proposed parking spaces in the northwest corner serving both units would fall within flood zone 2.

The NPPF Annex 3 Flood risk vulnerability classification defines buildings used for dwelling houses as being 'more vulnerable'. No specific category is given for associated curtilage such as garden and parking areas and nor is it fully clear that such a distinction should be made. However given that the reference is specifically to 'buildings' it is perhaps appropriate to make this distinction and particularly so in the case of this development where it is limited portions of the curtilage that would fall in flood zone two or three. Perhaps indicative of the assessment and judgement to be made it can be noted that 'car parks' are categorised as less vulnerable.

In conclusion with regard to flood risk it would seem reasonable to accept the proposed parking spaces within food zone 2 and potentially to accept some areas of outside garden or amenity space as shown within flood zones 2 and 3. In doing so it would however be critical to include controlling conditions in the event of approval that restrict the nature of any surface development such as fencing in particular that could interfere with flood water flows and also restrict access to within the 8 metre margin of the main river which the guidance directs should be kept accessible for maintenance purposes by the Environment Agency as and when required.

Trees

Informal consultation and discussion has taken place with the Tree Officer. It is recognised that a form of garden use has already begun under the trees of the riverside embankment. It is judged that in the event of approval a condition should be

attached to restrict groundworks in the tree canopy areas over the embankment. It is recognised that the proposed amenity or access areas at least on the level ground would largely take place in areas long established as compacted gravel access to the former garages. New adverse impacts are unlikely to be introduced. It is however noted that the parking spaces, especially the most southerly of the four would appear likely to impose on the root plate area of at least one mature tree. It is the tree officer's view that ideally this 4th parking space should be repositioned elsewhere in the development. There appear to the case officer a number of alternative options for relocating this parking space and therefore it is proposed to deal with this issue by condition. Whilst the applicant may alternatively be able to show by tree survey in accordance with BS 5837 how the space could be developed, this may still be an unsuitable location due to the annual spring through to winter falls of tree arisings and leaf exudates.

Wildlife / ecology

The ecology response is primarily concerned with the likely use of the river corridor by bats and potentially the use of the riverside trees as roosting places. As no work is proposed directly affecting trees along the river corridor as a result of this application it should not be necessary to obtain bat survey information in this case. It would however be appropriate to attach a condition with regard to lighting in these areas in order to avoid excess lighting.

It is also evident from the LPA site visit (see photos) that the former garages will at present offer negligible opportunity for bat roosting. Again therefore survey is not required and would be unreasonable to request.

Again, as can be seen from the LPA site photos, the site is in a generally disturbed state and as regards those parts of the site that are to be developed there would be little to gain from any additional ecology survey which the Wildlife Trust might more ordinarily expect.

As regards biodiversity gain, a condition can be attached to require submission of details which might for example include the introduction of bird and bat boxes.

Public rights of way

It is noted in the report (above) that over a long period of years there appears to have been the enjoyment of through access on foot from Froghall Road to the recreation and access land in the Cecilly Brook corridor to the south. Indeed current versions of the Ordnance Survey base map show the line of a path indicated. No public representations have raised this issue and it has not been mentioned by the Cheadle town council. Nevertheless there is the potential for a public right of way to have become established as of right by custom and practice. The granting of planning permission would not prevent this matter being raised under separate relevant legislation and this could potentially lead to a right of way being claimed. There is no role here for a planning condition but it is recommended that an informative on this point should be attached to the decision. It can also be noted that ultimately if a right of way was shown to exist the development as proposed would not preclude this from being provided for.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The application raises a diverse range of considerations as discussed in the report. It is perhaps surprising that the Council through its successor body in regard to this land, Moorlands Housing, has apparently not attached any restrictions in the use and development of the site following its sale.

A series of reservations about the development have been discussed in the report. These include matters arising from the site's location such as the prominent frontage appearance to Froghall Road; proximity to a main river and the 8 metre standoff zone; proximity to and overlap with flood zones 2 and 3; and proximity to trees which as a group represent a significant public feature of the location. It is however concluded that these various matters can be managed by condition rather than necessitating refusal.

The design concept is also a compromise due to being a proposed conversion rather than a new build development. Again a condition with regard to materials should be attached especially with regard to the roof finish materials as the roofing will be the most prominent part of the built part of the development which otherwise is somewhat tucked away from the public street scene.

The development would have the benefit of providing an additional two dwellings and on balance is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 29.05.2026

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council