

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0224
Valid 18/05/2026

ELDERBERRY BARN
BENTY GRANGE LANE
WATERFALL

GENERAL PURPOSE
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO
HOUSE LIVESTOCK AND
IMPLEMENTS

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is to the boundary edge of a field parcel that surrounds the applicant's roadside barn conversion and is within the open countryside. The proposed building would be sited beyond the dwelling's garden and parking areas, some 90m to the southeast of the dwelling.

The application site and surrounding land is open agricultural grazing land. Due to the sloping topography of the surrounding area, relatively low height of the roadside stone boundary walls and hedges, and sparse vegetation on this side of Bentygrange Lane and around the proposed building, the application site is in a very exposed, open and fairly isolated location.

The landscape character type falls within the Gritstone Highland Fringe, a large scale undulating landscape with plateaus, steep slopes and valleys. Fields are generally large and enclosed with gritstone walls and some hedgerows. The site is surrounded by open grazing on three sides with Benty Grange Lane and Hill Rise on the other. Boundaries are formed by drystone walls to the south and west of the barn, sheep fencing to the north and metal gates to the east.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes the provision of a general-purpose agricultural building to house livestock and implements.

Essentially a repeat application to provide a building on the applicant's land, the previous proposal was to provide a building twice the size adjacent to the dwelling to house cattle and implements. The previous application was refused, and the appeal was dismissed because the proposed building would dominate the adjacent barn conversion and be intrusive in the countryside and harmful to the landscape, any benefits were found to be limited and not outweigh the harm.

The application proposes a building that would be smaller than that proposed with previous applications - 13.7m by 9.14m (previous proposals 13.7m wide, 18.3m deep). It would be of the same height as building previously proposed - 3.6m to eaves, and 5.5m to the ridge of a full pitch roof.

The building would front north presenting a box profile clad gable elevation with sliding shutter doors towards the rise in the sloping ground and the applicant's dwelling. It would face onto a strip of concrete hardstanding and a track that would extend north before making a right angle turn before linking to and extending the driveway and parking to the side of the dwelling.

It is shown on the drawings that the shed would have profile steel sheeting to the front (north) and side elevations (east and west) and a fibre cement roof. The rear or south facing elevation would have spaced Yorkshire boarding. As with the previous proposal, the boarding and profile sheet would be above concrete panels that would be faced with gritstone/drystone coursing.

Written notes on drawing number 005 refer to the use of profile steel sheeting to side elevations and *south* elevation, while a further note confirms the use of Yorkshire board cladding to the *south* elevation. That description doesn't quite marry up with what is shown in the drawings, which does not appear to show a mix of steel cladding and timber board on that south elevation. It is assumed that the reference to steel cladding for the *south* elevation is a 'typo' and it is meant to state it is the north elevation, along with the sides, that would be clad in steel profile (to accord with drawn detail).

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

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
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

DET/20125/0034 Class Q conversion of stone barn to a dwelling. Prior Approval Granted.

SMD/2017/0440 Planning permission for barn conversion (amendments to design) Approved.

DET/2022/0006 Agricultural shed. Prior Approval Required and Refused – Appeal Dismissed (APP/B3438/W/22/3296498)

SMD/2024/0417 Agricultural building to house livestock and store fodder and implements. Refused – Appeal Dismissed (APP/B3438/W/25/3365632)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 6th July 2026

Neighbour consultation period ends: 6th July 2026

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Waterhouses PC: No objection

Tree Officer

No response in consultation period

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No response in consultation period

SevernTrent Water

No response in consultation period

Environmental Health

No response in consultation period

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Acceptance

Access is through Elderberry Barn, off Bentygrange Lane. There is no track leading to the proposed barn. However, housing livestock and implements, it may be that a track is not necessary. It is also unlikely that regular access from the highway will be required. Proposal is unlikely to have a severe effect on the highway.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Buildings for agricultural purposes are generally appropriate, in principle, in the countryside.

The strategy policy for the 'other rural' areas of countryside at SS10 of the SMDC Local Plan states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be in the countryside. To sustain the rural economy the policy supports the limited expansion or development of business but does not specifically support development for new or start up business whether it is agricultural or otherwise.

To enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside the policy requires priority to be given to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requires all development to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance

Local Plan Policy SS10 states that to enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside it is required that priority be given to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requires all development to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD.

Local Plan Policy DC3 requires that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape by resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or would not respect and enhance local landscape character.

The design and external materials of the proposed building would be that of a typical modern agricultural building, with the intention that the green cladding would help blend the building into the backdrop of green fields and the existing hedge line. However, despite such, the proposed building would be particularly visually prominent due to its proposed open and exposed location on high ground.

To divorce the proposed building from an overly dominant relationship with the barn conversion (a criticism of previous application) the application site has been moved from a position adjacent to the dwelling, to a location that is more remote and isolated from the house. However, in doing so the development would inevitably rely on extended access track and new areas of hardstanding that would have an adverse visual impact on the landscape. Also, in this location, the building would not be on an area of rough land and would not be built within the hill slope (matters of merit identified by the appeals Inspector that they thought would, together with the proposed cladding colours, help to assimilate the building into the landscape on approach down the hill).

However, with this application, despite the proposed external colours of the new building and small area of new planting that is proposed, due to the scale and position of the proposed building, it would be particularly dominant on approach up the hill, including from the road. As a result, the building would be exposed, isolated, and unduly visually prominent from public vantage points within the surrounding open rural landscape.

Furthermore, the Gritstone Highland Fringe landscape character type is identified in the Staffordshire Moorlands Landscape Character Assessment as very sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change. Consequently, due to the scale and overly prominent location of the proposed building, it would harmfully reduce existing wide-open views across the sloping landscape, discordant with the landscape planning guidelines for this character area type.

There are examples of existing large agricultural buildings further along Bentygrange Lane and at Waterfall Cross. However, from site observations, they tend to be co-located with other buildings and/or near to more substantial vegetation. These examples are in a different location, not within the same open and exposed hill slope as the application site.

In view of the above, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the host property, Elderly Barn, in conflict with Policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020) (LP). Such policies require, amongst other matters, that development enhances and conserves the quality of the countryside, including that proposals respect and respond sensitively to the qualities and character of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, Policy DC3 sets out that development will be resisted where it would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside.

Impact on Amenity

The nearest resident to the application site is the neighbour just 25m to the northwest of Elderberry Barn at Hillrise. Google maps marks the premises as 'Mark Harrison Builders', suggesting the residents might not have association with agriculture.

However, the planning history reveals that the shed to the north of the neighbour's dwelling was granted a prior approval in 2016 for the storage of feed/hay/straw and machinery in association with the rearing of suckler calves and 15 lambs. This is indicative of the premises already having association with the keeping and rearing of livestock and the applicant's proposal should not introduce unreasonable noise and disturbance over and above that which might already be experienced by the resident resulting from his own farming activities.

Other Matters

While the applicant is currently principally a builder, he wishes to embark on a farming business, there is a family tradition in this type of employment. With this application there is some evidence that with nearby land rented under an FTA, the holding extends to 6ha. It is said that he holds 15 head of sheep with lambs at foot, he wishes to expand his stock and introduce rare breeds. The holding and medical register for the flock is provided with the application. The proposed building would be a lambing shed, provide winter shelter, and store farm equipment.

At the time of the officer's visit the sheep were not present on the applicant's land ownership. Also, there is no mention in the application, or evidence on site, of the cattle herd that was presented as justification and need for a building under the previous application and cover of the appeal. It is now said that the applicant farms sheep. On site there was no evidence that the land is currently in use for agricultural purpose or enterprise. However, at the time of the officer's inspection, there were still, stored in the open, equipment and machinery that is most likely associated with the applicant's employment as a builder – two diggers, a freight container, and a cement mixer. With each iteration of the applicant's planning applications, the stated need and justification has changed and been different in each case, however, the outside storage of building equipment has remained a consistent factor.

Even though there is policy support for a thriving agricultural sector, the current agricultural holding is, at best, small and not particularly established.

The evidence provided does not demonstrate that the holding is currently or projected to be a viable farming enterprise. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that a building of the proposed scale and location is essential, would create a business for employment purposes to help sustain the rural economy, or that it would enhance the countryside, aligned with all the requirements of Policy SS10 of the LP.

The proposed building would provide winter shelter for sheep and a lambing shed, along with the storage of implements and equipment. This application does not mention the cattle that the applicant had said, at appeal, were kept on a bed and breakfast basis on rented land elsewhere.

However, even though such development would be beneficial to the applicant and could give some support to the rural economy through the establishment of a new farming enterprise, due to the scale of the development, such benefits would not be significant.

Additionally, the proposal could provide some wider economic and environmental benefits from the proposed food production and local sale. However, even though no substantive information has been provided regarding such, the benefits derived from the proposed building and projected number of sheep would not likely be that significant.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has not made comment on the application. However, generally it is demonstrated that there could be biodiversity net gain provided on the site and that it could be managed appropriately. This has limited weight in favour of the proposal.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed shed would not relate well to the existing landscape. In these regards the development would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside and would fail to respect and enhance local landscape character. There would be significant harm to the landscape character and the character and appearance of the area. As such there would be conflict with policies SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan and the terms of the NPPF. The stated requirements and needs of the applicant, and any small benefit to the rural economy that might be associated with that, would not justify the provision of the development in this location or outweigh the harm identified above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date:

X *J Curley*

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council