

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0290
Valid 18/06/2026

LAND AT WINTERFIELD
LANE
HULME

OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF UP TO
4NO. DWELLINGHOUSES
WITH SOME MATTERS
RESERVED - MATTER FOR
APPROVAL BY THIS
APPLICATION - ACCESS

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance
- Impact on biodiversity
- Impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Application site includes the north eastern corner of an old builder's yard that comprises 0.17ha of previously developed land occupied by buildings, currently in use, with planning permission, as a vehicle repair garage by three separate tenants. With this application, the site extends to a total area of 0.21 ha and takes undeveloped farmland to the north.

Within the curtilage or yard area of the repair garage there are haulage containers, scrapped cars, parts and equipment. The repair garage has a dedicated access with Winterfield Lane and is enclosed by hedgerow to the east, south and north and tree line to the west.

The remainder of the builder's yard to the south is vacant and disused forming land and property associated with and belonging to the separate owner and occupant of the bungalow "The Cumberlands" to the south.

The application site and the wider area of the 'old builder's yard' are otherwise surrounded by plateau farmland irregularly shaped field parcels enclosed by traditional hedgerow.

The site lies outside any settlement boundary and is in the Green Belt. The hamlet village of Hulme (a small cluster of dwellings) is about 1km to the north, and the larger village of Werrington some 2.5km kilometre to the north. The residential edge of Weston Coyney is some 500m to the south. The centre of Weston Coyney and a small cluster of shops is 1.2km to the south.

Winterfield Lane is a narrow rural lane that has junction to the south with the A520, there are no footways or paths to safely connect pedestrians from the application site to Weston Coyney in the south or Werrington to the north.

PROPOSAL

Outline application for construction of up to 4no. dwellinghouses with all matters reserved except for access.

The application provides:

- Application form
- Location and Site Plan
- Indicative Block/Layout Plan
- Supporting Planning Statement
- Tree Report
- Noise Survey Report
- BNG metric and enhancement plan

The applicant already has a planning permission granted (outline with reserved matters recently approved) to provide 4 dwellings on part of the application site by making use of the existing access to the garage, its hardstanding area, and replacing the existing buildings. That proposal was limited to the existing garage access and the previously developed land. The approved scheme would provide primary visibility to the south. To the south, the hawthorne hedge, unlike roadside hedge to the north, does not include mature trees within the row. The hedge could be removed and replanted along a line that would be set behind visibility splay with limited impact on roadside character and appearance.

It has always been the case, and parties have always been aware, that delivering the approved scheme depended upon land that is outside the control and ownership of the owner and that this may prove problematic and a barrier to the development.

The first iteration of the proposal, an application submitted in 2019, included land to the north that is beyond the limits of the previously developed land (outside the scope of the 1997 repair garage permission). It was clear that the proposal sought to include land that was not previously developed land and the application was withdrawn.

This application seeks to exclude the land outside the applicant's control by including the land to the north, outside of the previously developed site, to provide a new access point through the roadside tree line and a new driveway that would cross the open undeveloped land.

The proposed access would provide 4.5m carriageway width with a 1m wide footway to the southern edge of the access carriageway. The access would cross the verge and open to the edge of the road with a bellmouth construction.

The plan shows visibility splays to be provided at - 2.4m x 45.0m (southbound) 2.4m x 60.2m (northbound)

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
E1 New Employment Development
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

The former builder's yard was owned and run by, Mr. Pedley, the original owner and occupier of the 'The Cumberlands' (bungalow to the south). He traded under Leonards Fitments Ltd "joinery installations and construction". The planning applications relating to this business spanned from 1957 to 1964. The company was dissolved in 1995 and following the cessation of this business the bungalow was sold to a Mr. Carnall, and the north east corner of the builder's yard was sold to a Mr Bourne.

Planning Permission was granted at the end of June 1997 for this part of the site to be used for a vehicle accident repairs workshop subject to conditions (SM97/0197). The repair garage is now owned by the current applicant Mr Filcher who, together with Mr Carnall, applied in 2014 to redevelop the whole of the builder's yard and build 40 dwellings. This was refused on Green Belt and highway grounds and the bungalow was sold to the current owner a Mr. Robinson. The remainder of the builder's yard, outside of the repair garage site, has apparently remained vacant and unused since 1995.

2746 Use of garage to store builders materials and joinery shop. Approved 1957.

4778 Extensions to joiner's shop in builders yard. Approved 1963

5418 Extension to garage to provide office. Approved 1964.

SM97/0197 Change of use to vehicle repair workshop. Approved.

SM98/0134 Advert Consent. Allowed at Appeal.

SMD/2014/0230 40 affordable homes. Refused & dismissed at Appeal.

SMD/2019/0562 4 dwellings on repair garage site. Withdrawn (the application site included land to the north that is not previously developed)

SMD/2020/0266 Outline permission 4 detached dwellings. Approved.

SMD/2023/0556 Reserved Matters 4 detached dwellings. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13th July 2026

Neighbour consultation period ends: 13th July 2026

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

1 Objection received. No comments made.

Town / Parish Comments

Werrington PC: Werrington Parish Council wishes to raise concerns regarding the highway implications of the proposed development. The Parish Council requests that the Highway Authority undertakes a full assessment of the proposed access to and from the site.

Winterfield Lane is frequently used as a busy rat run and already experiences significant traffic volumes. The Council is concerned that the lane is unsuitable to accommodate any additional traffic generated by the development due to its poor condition, the substantial drops along the road edges, and the numerous narrow sections where two vehicles are unable to pass safely.

The Parish Council therefore considers it essential that a comprehensive highways assessment is undertaken to determine whether the existing highway network can safely accommodate the proposed development and to identify any mitigation measures that may be required for additional number accessing and regressing the houses.

Environmental Health

No response within consultation period

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No response within consultation period

SMDC Waste Collection

No response within consultation period

Severn Trent Water Ltd

No response within consultation period

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Site Visit 1st Jul 2026

Conditional

The access has been relocated from previous application. This moves it away from the bend and is positive.

Visibility splays were agreed for the previous access of 2.4mx45m to the south and 2.4mx215m to the north. Drawing 2018-2384-08A applies. The 45m was an absolute minimum. As the access is moved away from the bend this Y distance can and should be increased to maximise visibility and safety at the access.

215m was agreed as it is available and could be provided within land under the control of the applicant or within highway. This appears to still be the case. This splay should be provided. The proposed splay of 2.4mx66.2m to the north is not an improvement. The speed survey submitted with SMD/2020/0266 was taken solely to demonstrate that the 45m could be considered as an absolute minimum.

Hedge will need to be set back behind the visibility splay and maintained such that it does not encroach into the visibility splay.

Site is not in a sustainable location with no pedestrian links or safe pedestrian routes. However, it has a longstanding series of approvals and for this reason, Highways maintain conditional approval. Developer could consider providing footway links to A520 Leek Road.

SMDC Tree Officer

It appears that the site could accommodate development with relatively low arboricultural impact. However, it is unclear why the existing driveway is not being utilised within the proposed layout. The proposed new access would result in a significant incursion into the Root Protection Area (RPA) of tree SB17 and necessitate the removal of tree OK16. Although not illustrated on the submitted plan, it is also likely that the RPA of tree SB15 would be affected by the proposed driveway.

Whilst the proposed engineering solutions would help to mitigate impacts to the retained trees, it would be preferable to utilise the existing access arrangement. This would minimise changes to the rooting environment of the frontage trees, eliminate or substantially reduce the need for tree pruning to facilitate access, and avoid the unnecessary removal of trees. Thereby potentially reducing the biodiversity net gain (BNG) compensation requirements.

It is understood that the submitted layout is indicative and may be revised at the Reserved Matters stage. This would provide an opportunity to address the above concerns and achieve a more sustainable relationship between the proposed development and the retained trees.

From an arboricultural perspective, the site is capable of supporting development. However, the scheme should seek to maximise the use of existing areas of hardstanding to minimise or eliminate the need for tree removal and reduce impacts on retained trees.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Local and National Policy Approach to Rural Housing Development

As defined by the Local Plan settlement hierarchy at policy SS2, the site has a location that is beyond the edge of any 'larger village' or town, within the Green Belt and an 'other rural' area of countryside that surrounds the villages and towns.

For the purposes of the SMDC Local Plan, in the other rural areas, policy SS10 applies. These areas will provide only for development which 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. The policy

places restriction on new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with Local Plan housing Policy H 1. Where the other rural area also provides Green Belt, policy SS10 and H1 reiterate that strict control shall be exercised over development in accordance with the terms of the NPPF.

Local Plan Housing policy H1 requires that, generally, all development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision. In addition, the policy requires that, all housing development should be at the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, and with the character of the surrounding area; and that in all cases the development would not lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

However, notwithstanding, the authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land, the development plan policies most important for determining the application shall be considered out of date, and it is paragraph 11 of the NPPF that applies. Planning permission should be granted unless - the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance, such as the Green Belt, provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

The provision of up to four dwellings would make a small contribution to housing supply and there would be some economic and community benefit associated with the development in those regards.

Impact on Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists at Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Any harm to the Green Belt must be attributed substantial weight and planning permission cannot be granted unless there are other considerations, amounting to 'very special circumstances', that clearly outweigh that harm and any other harms that would result from the development.

Planning permission has been granted on a limited part of the application site that is 'previously developed land'. It was determined that the provision of dwellings on an area of existing hard standing occupied by a cluster of sheds and scrap cars would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

This application proposal, however, seeks to take in and include an area of periphery farmland to the north that is outside the previously developed area (the site edged red under the 1997 permission for the repair garage and occupied by that development). The area of the site that is not previously developed land would provide a new access and driveway that would appear as intrusive engineering works of a suburban character. The access and drive way would both spatially and visually cause harm to

the openness of the Green Belt, and encroachment into the countryside. The proposed development in this case is not provided for by the exception.

Since Dec 2024 the updated NPPF has included a 'grey belt' land exception at paragraph 155. Grey belt is defined for the purposes of the NPPF as land in the Green Belt that does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. These purposes are: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; and, to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The site is beyond the edge of a 'larger village' and is some distance, 500m, from the eastern edge of the large built-up area of the Potteries conurbation. The site is not, therefore, adjacent or near to a large built-up area. The site is not land that lies to the edge of a town, or forms part of a gap between towns, historic or otherwise, where erosion of the land could result in merger or the loss of visual separation between the towns. The site, therefore, is not land in the Green Belt that strongly contributes to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143 and it could therefore, be considered to be grey belt land.

However, to be provided for by the exception at paragraph at 155 the development must be in a sustainable location. The site is in a relatively remote location, some distance from, and without connection to, any services, facilities or amenities. The nearest village of Werrington, is some 2.5km to the north and the narrow rural lane is, for that distance, prohibitive for daily routine travel by foot or cycle. The edge of Weston Coyney and the nearest bus stop, to the south, is more than 500m from the site, reached only from a busy A road that is without footway or path. The centre of Weston Coyney and the nearest shop is a total of 1.2km from the site. Realistically, the use of the private motor car is the only option to reach and connect with services and facilities. The development would not be in a location that would limit the need to travel or offer a choice of transport modes. In those regards the development would not be provided for by the 'grey belt' exception at para 155.

While some of the site includes previously developed land, overall, the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt that would cause harm to openness and countryside encroachment. There would be harm to the Green Belt in all of those regards.

Protection of the Green Belt provides a strong reason to refuse the application. Substantial weight is attributed to the harm to the Green Belt.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

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.

In particular, new development should incorporate creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and, be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

Local Plan policy DC3 states that development which leads to a prominent intrusion into the countryside should be resisted.

The approved scheme would limit impacts on visual amenity by making use of the existing access arrangement and improving visibility to the south by replanting a section of hedge line that is currently sparser and of less amenity value than the roadside tree and hedge line to the north.

This application proposes to construct a new access point in a position to the north of existing arrangements. The new access would cut through and create a new opening in an existing roadside hedge and tree line. With the footway access width would be 5.5m opening to 6.5m with bellmouth construction. The development would result in an incursion and significant opening across verdant highway verge and within roadside tree and hedgeline. Areas of access hardstanding would encroach into the root protection areas of trees and require the removal of at least one tree. Submitted plans suggest visibility splay could be provided without removing other trees. However, as per the highway officer's consultation response, a full construction of a bell mouth access is anticipated, with details of construction to be provided for approval, and, to provide visibility, the hedge must be set back, with pruning, cut back, and maintenance of the hedge, tree canopy and any other obstruction to visibility.

To the north of the existing business access, Winterfield Lane is narrow and tree lined with a character akin to a woodland avenue. Roadside tree line, verdant highway verge, and intervening shrubbery and hedgerow continue for a distance of 75m before roadside aspect becomes more open and provides extensive views across open farmland to the east and north.

The removal of verdant highway verge and a break and opening within tree and hedge line would be detrimental to the character of the countryside enjoyed and experienced from the rural lane. The introduction of a bell mouth access and a driveway that would loop through agricultural periphery would appear as a prominent, suburban and engineered, intrusion in the countryside. The access and driveway development would appear divorced and visually disconnected from the proposed dwellings that would otherwise be restrained to the infrastructure and sheds of the existing repair garage to the edge of the redundant builder's yard. Visually, the totality of the development would sprawl and encroach further to the north into the countryside, it would not demonstrate the constraint of the approved scheme.

The access would appear as engineering works that are residential or suburban in character and this would appear alien and at odds with the rural character of the area and the farmland landscape.

The proposed access and driveway would result in a prominent intrusion in the countryside that would be harmful to the rural character and appearance of the locality and the visual amenity enjoyed from the roadside. There would be conflict with policy DC1 and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan and the terms of the NPPF. That harm would amount to an adverse impact that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits associated with the proposal.

Other Considerations

The site is in the Green Belt and countryside where housing development is only provided in exceptional circumstance. Planning permission has only previously been granted because the applicant demonstrated that the development could be restricted to areas of previously developed land and that impacts on openness and the character and appearance of the area could be limited by making use of existing access and providing visibility to the south.

The site is not well connected to shops and facilities or served by public transport. In those regards the development's contribution to housing supply is of a lesser quality and a limited benefit. This is particularly so where, in this case, the existing site provides employment and business interest for the current occupiers. Benefits associated with the provision of housing would be countered to some degree by the loss of an existing employment site.

The applicant has been aware from the earliest of his applications, that delivery of such a scheme would be dependent on third party land belonging to an owner that was not necessarily sympathetic to the proposal and that this could be a barrier to the development.

The problems he continues to face in those respects do not provide good reason or very special circumstance that serves to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harm that is identified above.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and harmful to the Green Belt. There would be harm to the character and appearance of the rural area and the visual amenity of the landscape. There are no considerations that clearly outweigh the harm.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date:

X 

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

