

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0308
Valid 29/06/2026

ROCK END STABLES NEW
STREET
BIDDULPH MOOR

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING
STABLE BLOCK AND
CONSTRUCTION OF NEW
SELF-BUILD DETACHED
DWELLING AND ANCILLARY
PART SUBTERRANEAN
GARAGE.

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area
- Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is located within the rural area and designated as part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt. An existing range of stables is located on the site which are permanent structures that have existed on site since at least 2003. The stable block is set back from the carriageway of New Street behind a frontage hedgerow and vegetation. The stables are finished in stained timber with a profiled metal roof atop and benefit from existing water and electricity connections.

The stable block is located on the western side of New Street, approximately 260 metres north of its junction with Crowborough Road. The landscape rises up away from the site in a westerly direction towards a rocky outcrop from which the site gets its name.

Existing areas of paddock extend to the north and northwest of the site, with a polytunnel also in existence. A further equestrian paddock and small stable block are located to the south. The carriageway of New Street encloses the eastern site boundary beyond which lie open fields.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes to remove the existing stable block from the site and erect a detached single storey self-build dwelling in its place. The dwellinghouse will have a gross floor area of 141.5m² and a gross volume of 533m³. It is to be finished in coursed natural stone to its elevations, with its roof comprising of black standing seam roof sheets and a green 'sedum planted' roof.

The applicant is proposing to build the property to the AECB new-build

standards (Association for Environment Conscious Building). These high efficiency buildings reduce overall CO2 emissions by 70% compared to the average house built to current building regulations standards. To help meet this standard, it is proposed to provide integrated solar panels within the pitched roof parts of the building to provide a renewable source of electricity for the property. Solar panels mounted to the flat roof are also to be accommodated to provide solar heated hot water. An air source heat pump is proposed as the primary heating system.

The accommodation of the dwelling will comprise of an open plan lounge / kitchen / dining area, utility, master bedroom with walk-in-wardrobe and ensuite, two further bedrooms, home office / bedroom 4, bathroom, plant room and storage areas.

A detached garage / store is proposed to the southwest of the dwelling, occupying a floor area of 28.7m² and having a gross volume of 44m³. The existing land levels will be re-graded to accommodate the garage, with its walls finished in vertical cladding and a green sedum planted roof provided on top.

The site benefits from an existing means of vehicular access in the far southeast corner of the site. That access is to be modestly widened as part of the submitted proposal and repurposed to serve the new dwelling. Space will be provided on site for the parking of at least three vehicles, with turning space also to be accommodated.

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
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
- H1 New Housing Development
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

- DES1 Design
- NE1 Rural Landscape Character
- NE2 Boundary Treatments

National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

Landscape Character Assessment 2008

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

86/00938/OLD ERECTION OF STABLES FOR 2 PONIES AND FORMATION OF ACCESS. APPROVED.

SMD/2021/0230 Erection of a polytunnel for growing fruit and vegetables.

APPROVED.

SMD/2024/0154 Proposed new access, parking area and extension to existing stable for agricultural storage. REFUSED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 23rd August 2026

Neighbour consultation period ends: 23rd August 2026

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

Three objections have been submitted, the following comments are made:

- Replacing a single story wooden stable and equine land with a large 4 bedroomed dwelling is wholly out of character with the charming rural setting.
- Also, of note, is the plan to drill a large underground garage into the rock. Anyone familiar with this area respects that the Wicken Stone rocks / Rock End signifies the end of the Pennine chain. Drilling into this to create a private garage hardly seems respectful of part of our heritage.
- 4 cars will access this property, having a notable impact on an otherwise small stretch of rural road located between 2 bends with poor visibility. The increase of traffic with dangerous pullouts would also be unsafe and unwelcome.
- The development does not provide a residential mix in a sensitive site, being socially inaccessible and not of the type of housing stock identified as of the greatest need in rural settings within the local plan and neighbourhood plan.
- The proposals are for a dwelling of scale that represents overdevelopment of the site
- Displacement of stabling will lead to further application for stabling due to the unsustainable nature of the application.
- The proposed dwelling is outside of the development boundary and does not add provision for protected or representative rural workforces (eg workers/agricultural tied dwellings)
- The proposal is insensitive to the setting due to scale and impact of roofline on the landscape.

- To build any home here would be an act of vandalism on our own heritage destroying an area of outstanding natural beauty whilst incurring irreparable environmental damage.

Four contributors have made the following main points in support of the application:

- The proposal makes use of previously developed land
- The existing hedgerow provides substantial screening, meaning that the proposed dwelling will largely be concealed
- The proposal incorporates features to improve biodiversity
- The proposal represents a positive investment in the site and in my view has the potential to make a worthwhile contribution to the local area whilst enhancing the existing site
- Applauds the applicants courage in undertaking a self build project
- The development will visually improve the site over the existing stable block and improve our view/outlook
- The size and scale is similar to the stable
- The applicant has chosen materials suitable to its rural location and the use of local Staffordshire stone, as well as the living roof to enhance biodiversity and nature.
- The building will not impact the prominent rock formation

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No response within consultation period

SMDC Waste Collection

No response within consultation period

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

No response within consultation period

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommendation Summary: Refusal

Site Visit Conducted on: 15-Jul-2026

1. It is impractical to provide the requisite visibility splay within land under the applicant's control. No visibility improvement is proposed. Change of use class or Intensification of use of this access with restricted visibility would be contrary to the interests of highway safety

REASON

In conflict with NPPF paragraph 115, 116; in conflict with SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1; contrary to the interests of highway safety.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

In the other rural areas of countryside that surround the settlements and include areas of Green Belt, Local Plan policies SS10 and H1 apply restrictive housing policy, only providing for housing development in certain circumstances. Where the

other rural area includes Green Belt land, both policies reiterate that strict control shall be applied over development in accordance with national government policy.

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it falls within one of the categories in policy GB7 at Chapter 13 of the NPPF (Aug 2026).

The applicant in their statement references the previous version of the NPPF, however, they point to, and seek to rely on the equivalent exception that now appears at GB7 e. and reads

“The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt”

Previously developed land is defined in the NPPF glossary as - *Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land.* The definition excludes land that was last occupied by agricultural buildings but does not explicitly exclude land occupied by stables or equestrian buildings.

The land, in this case, benefits from a planning permission to erect stables in 1986. The existing stable buildings are permanent structures and have occupied the land for decades. The land, therefore, is, for the purpose of the NPPF, previously developed. To fall within the exception category the proposed replacement of the stable building must amount to ‘redevelopment’ which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Chapter 13 of the NPPF sets out the objective of Green Belt policy, as set out in this chapter, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence.

Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;
- ☐ the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and
- ☐ the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

The site is positioned centrally within a significant swathe of open, largely undeveloped, Green Belt between the edge of Knypersley to the southwest (part of the Biddulph settlement designation in the Local Plan) and the ‘larger village’ of Biddulph Moor to the northeast. Within that context the origins of the very limited

development at the application site relate to the provision of a roadside stable building in the mid-1980s for the private enjoyment of the then applicant.

The existing building makes a modest stable provision on the site. It has the appearance of being light and functional in structure - timber construction and cladding, with open stalls beneath the shallow pitch of a sheet canopy roof. The building has a character and appearance that is typical of small-scale agricultural function or stabling provision. Accordingly, it has a relatively recessive appearance and presence in its rural, farmland setting, largely concealed behind a mature roadside hedge line and sitting down, with limited intrusion, below the gritstone edge of Wicken Stones rocks. The existing stable building has an existing footprint/gross floor area of some 80 sqm and a gross volume of 217.7 cubic metres.

The proposed dwellinghouse would replace the stables with a building that would be considerably larger in footprint and volume, would have a greater height profile/ridge height, and be of a more substantial construction with the presentation of stone elevations, pilasters and structural glazing.

The proposed dwelling would have a much larger footprint, mass and volume - almost double the size of the stable building with a footprint at 158 sqm and a volume of 533 cubic metres. While some of the footprint would be provided beneath a flat sedum roof, the main roof form would have a full pitch that would take the ridge height to 4m, a further metre above that of the stable. The dwelling would expand beyond the retaining wall to the west, that sits beneath the steeply rising ground toward the gritstone edge. The western edge of the dwelling would require the wall to be removed and the recontouring and further excavation of the land behind.

The redevelopment of the site would shift the building form further to the north where it would encroach to the edge of a planted paddock. The effect of this would be to increase the aperture of the roadside opening to the south with the removal of some of the roadside hedge – necessary to improve access and visibility. This would increase the exposure of the site and the visual presence of the development from public roadside vantage. This would expose to the public vantage of the roadside the larger building form, an area of parking, the only meaningful area of curtilage garden, the driveway access, and the addition of a flat roof garage that would add another 32sqm of floor space to the building layout and be dug into the rising land to the west that is beyond the curtilage of the stable.

Redevelopment of the site, the replacement of modest stable provision with a four bed dwellinghouse, would also bring with it an intensification of activity and use. This would result in an increase of impedimenta relative to the residential function, areas of manicured garden, and increased parking presence and demands. An intensified and more frequent use of the access arrangement is a concern of the highway authority who seek further visibility improvements which would require realignment of the hedge and, in turn, increased roadside exposure and opening beyond that indicated on plan.

Overall, and in all of these respects, the proposed development would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt in terms of both its spatial dimension (there would be a greater physical presence of building form that has a

considerably greater volume and footprint than the building it replaces) and its visual dimension (the building form would be more visually apparent and cause a greater degree of physical obstruction within a view from public vantage of otherwise open land). The proposed development therefore does not fall within the 'previously developed land' category at GB7e.

The application statement also points to the exception made for development that is carried out on Grey Belt land where there is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed. The equivalent exception in the updated version of the NPPF now appears at GB7 g. The land comprises previously developed land and as such, for the purposes of the NPPF, the land is 'grey belt'.

However, development will not fall within the 'grey belt' category unless it is provided in a 'sustainable location'. In this case, the development would not be in a sustainable location. With consideration and reference for NPPF policy TR3, the site is in a remote location some considerable distance from any services and amenities. New Street is a rural lane with grass verge and roadside hedgerow it does not provide a footway or safe pedestrian access in either direction. The nearest bus stop is 300m to the south, serving the cluster of dwellings around the Crowborough Road junction. The centre of Biddulph Moor village and the nearest shop is 1.5km to the north. The nearest shop in Biddulph is 2.5km to the south and west, at the bottom of the hill and western end of Park Lane. In these regards the development would not be located where it can support sustainable patterns of movement, enable good accessibility for different users or make the most of existing transport infrastructure. Inevitably intended occupants would be dependent on the car and the location would not limit the need to travel by private car or offer a genuine choice of transport modes for residents and users.

The proposed development, therefore, would not fall within the category of development at GB7g.

The proposed development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. There would be substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. Substantial weight is attached to the harm.

The updated NPPF introduces a new policy S5 relative to the principle of development outside settlements. The policy states that only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in a specified list. However, it is made clear that the policy does not apply to development proposals in the Green Belt, which should instead be determined in accordance with the NPPF Greenbelt policy at Chapter 13.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

The proposed redevelopment would impose significant change on the character and appearance of the land and considerable visual impact. All strands and elements of Local Plan policy converge to provide protection for the character and appearance of the locality and countryside.

To enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside the policy SS10 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.

Local Plan housing policy H1 states 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. Local Plan policy DC3 states that development which leads to a prominent intrusion into the countryside should be resisted.

Generally, these Local Plan policies are reflective and relatable to the national policy set out in the revised NPPF. At Chapter 19 of the revised NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the natural Environment) policy N2 'Improving the natural environment' states that to contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery, development proposals should: Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside.

The development of the site and the provision of a dwelling in this location would result in a prominent intrusion in an otherwise rural countryside setting and it would appear as a dominant form of development when viewed and experienced from the roadside.

The existing character and appearance of the area is locally distinct as a unique and high-quality landscape. The rural road passes between hedgerow or low drystone wall that provides the immediate field boundary on each side to a short highway verge and the carriageway edge. Beyond the highway, views are afforded to rolling farmland laid out to irregular field parcels enclosed by hedgerow and lines and groupings of deciduous trees. The application site is located to the north of the hamlet settlement of Rock End. Dramatically the road passes beneath the gritstone edge of Wicken Stones behind and above the site to the west. There are particular sensitivities of this unique high-quality landscape, the large prominent rocks and boulders within the gritstone edge, iconic to local distinctiveness, giving the hamlet of Rock End its name.

In that setting, the simple form of the existing stable building sits below the rocks in the foreground. The stable has a recessive presence and appearance, it has a simple roof shape and shallow profile that is largely screened by the established hedgerow.

The proposed dwelling would be much larger than the stable, particularly in terms of the width of roadside elevation, and it would have a greater height profile with a greater ridge height and roof mass. The physical presence and structure of the building would be more imposing because it would be built from construction materials that are more substantial and robust in appearance and properties – stone elevations and architectural glazing. The building's curtilage would be expanded with excavations into the bank side behind the existing retaining wall and within that space, exposed to the roadside, there would be the visual imposition of parking, walled ornamental garden, a substantial flat roof garage, and residential impedimenta.

The exposure and presence of this development would be even more apparent and striking with increased roadside aperture to the south and the removal and/or realignment of some of the hedgerow (necessary to improve visibility).

The development would be imposing and obstruct, appearing as a dominant distraction within, public views toward the quality landscape provided by the Wicken Stones gritstone edge. The proposed dwelling and its curtilage would appear as an oddly appointed and prominently intrusive form of development within that setting and context.

In all of these regards the development would be harmful to the character, visual amenities, and quality of the rural area and the beauty of the countryside. The harm would be significant and long-lasting. There would be conflict with policies SS10, H1, DC1 and DC3 of the SMDC Local Plan and the terms of the revised NPPF.

Highway Safety

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that development provides for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

The NPPF states that in assessing applications for development, it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

The Highway Authority have expressed concerns that the proposal would not provide a safe and suitable access with adequate visibility. The proposal would increase the use of the existing access arrangement with the vehicle movements associated with a four-bedroom dwelling materially greater than those associated with the daily visits of a single owner to attend to their horse.

The highway authority requires greater access visibility. They consider it impractical to provide the proposed access arrangement with the requisite visibility splay within land under the applicant's control. Change of use of the land or the intensification of the access with restricted visibility would be contrary to the interests of highway safety.

Whether or not the applicant is able to improve visibility by making revisions to land within his control, such changes and visibility improvements would result, to some degree, in the removal or realignment of the roadside hedge and in turn remove features that contribute to landscape quality and increase the exposure of the site and the development to views from the roadside. Necessary adaptations to the highway verge and roadside hedgerow to provide required visibility and achieve an acceptable impact on highway safety, would exacerbate the presence and intrusion of the development and its adverse impacts in these regards.

Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

At Policy DES1 the Neighbourhood Plan states that new development must complement the local context and be sustainable and complement the existing character and townscape in terms of scale and massing. As discussed above the development would be at odds with these elements of the policy.

At NE1 new development should preserve and take opportunities to enhance the rural character of the area, taking account of features which have particular significance for landscape character including, inter alia, “veteran trees, mature trees and hedgerows”.

Rather than preserve features which have significance for landscape character, the development would result in the loss of mature hedgerow that has significant contribution to the rural character of the road and the character of the landscape, and which provide transition and screening between the edge of the road and the landscape beyond and screen the existing polytunnel in the foreground.

At NE2 new development on the edge of the Biddulph Moor rural settlement must incorporate sensitively designed boundary treatments and landscaping to create transition to the rural environment. Conversely, the proposed development would result in the loss and removal of matured boundary hedgerow from a site outside the edge of Biddulph Moor. Replacement planting would be set back from the roadside behind visibility splays.

Rather than follow the natural line of the roadside and the organic establishment of the traditional field boundary, it would appear contrived as deliberate landscape manipulation to obviously make way for intrusive development and the newly planted plants would take years to establish or approach the height and density of the existing hedgerow.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed redevelopment of the site would be inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The development would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt and would be in an unsustainable location. There are no considerations that clearly outweigh the substantial weight that is attached to that harm including the fact that this is described as a self-build dwelling. There would be conflict with SMDC Local Plan Policies SS10 and H1 and the terms of the revised NPPF.

The proposed redevelopment would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside and an obstruction of public views to the quality landscape provided by the Wicken Stones gritstone edge. The proposed dwelling and its curtilage would appear as an oddly appointed and prominently intrusive form of development. There would be significant harm to the character, appearance and visual amenities of the rural area. There would be harm to landscape character and the beauty of the countryside. The development would be contrary to policies SS10, H1, DC1, and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020, policies DES1, NE1, and NE2 of the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan and the terms of the revised NPPF. The harm to the rural character and appearance of the area would, itself, be an adverse impact that would result from the development that would significantly and demonstrably

outweigh any benefits associated with the proposed development, which, given it would relate to a single dwelling in an unsustainable location, would be very limited.

The proposed access arrangements would not provide requisite visibility splays, and this would result in a dangerous access arrangement where the use of the land intensifies, and vehicle movements increase. That would have a detrimental impact on highway safety. It is impractical to improve visibility because land to the south is outside of the applicant's control and removing hedgerow would be harmful to the character and appearance of the locality and increase the visual impact of the development. In these regards, the proposal conflicts with the terms of the revised NPPF and SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date:

X 

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council