

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

PROPOSAL : Erection of farm workers dwelling

ADDRESS : Rushton Hall Farm, Macclesfield Road, Leek, ST13 8PT

APPLICANT : Mr and Mrs Robinson

DATE : December 2015 **JOB No.** : 2015-2108

DESIGN

Introduction

The site is a dairy farm located in the open countryside about 4km to the north west of Leek. The application proposes a farmworkers dwelling and is supported by an agricultural appraisal carried out by The Brown Rural Partnership of Macclesfield.

Assessment Area

The farm is set back about 600m from the Macclesfield Road and the combination of the distance and the rising land levels makes it difficult to see from the public realm. Rudyard Hall Farmhouse is a Grade II* listed building and its garden wall, gate and gate piers and one of the historic buildings around the farmyard are also listed Grade II. The farmhouse is set apart from the farmyard and farmyard buildings by its high stone garden wall. The farmyard itself is largely enclosed by late C19th brick and tiled roof long barns.

Planning Policy and Assessment

The application site is in open countryside designated as a Special Landscape Area. The site is not in the Green Belt. The development plan for the area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy adopted in March 2014.

The spatial objective for rural areas (**SO6**) is to “maintain and promote sustainable regenerated rural areas and communities”.

Policy R1 Rural Diversification requires that: -

- all development be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity and meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment.
- appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.
- wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.
- within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

- priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings.

Comment: The application proposes the erection of a farm workers dwelling. The proposal is supported by an agricultural assessment that supports the need for a further dwelling on the site. The proposal therefore meets the requirement for a proposal to facilitate economic activity and meet a rural need.

The applicants have examined whether the proposal for a further dwelling could be achieved through the conversion of an existing building on the site. The farm courtyard is surrounded by a variety of farm buildings. On the north and west sides is a range of two storey height brick farm buildings. These are in full use for agricultural purposes. They have all been extended at the rear with modern metal framed and sheeted additions and accommodate the dairy, cattle housing or storage. The buildings are therefore not available for conversion and their environment is not conducive to residential occupation.

To the north of the courtyard is a stone building. This is the building that is referred to in the Listing Description as "Outbuilding 20m north of Rudyard Hall- Outbuilding, used as stable, possibly not built as such. Mid-C17. Coursed and dressed stone; tiled roof. Single storey and attic. 2-window front; symmetrical layout of 2 cavetto labelled 4-light chamfer mullion windows to sides, gabled dormer with cavetto labelled 3-light chamfer mullion to centre over corniced central door". This building has been the subject of serious slippage resulting (it is thought) from the removal at some time in the past of structural roof timbers. It is currently secured by a series of steel trusses within the interior space of the building. The conversion of this building to a dwelling has been discounted for the reasons that: -

1. The conversion works would be prohibitively expensive given that it could only be successfully achieved by the removal of the inner steel frame that is holding the building up and adapting the building accordingly. This would put the listed status of the building in jeopardy.
2. The building is used as an isolation building. The Farm Assurance scheme requires the applicant to designate a building that can be used for isolation in the case of an outbreak of disease. The building has been used for this purpose and has a separate means of drainage to avoid contamination of the main herd.
3. The building is attached to buildings at the rear that are used to house cattle. This leaves the building subject to noise and it leaves it without a garden.

For these reasons the conversion of this listed building to a dwelling has been discounted. The only other buildings on the site that could be said to have potential for conversion is a small range of brick buildings on the eastern side of the courtyard. The two storey part of this range is used for housing calves; the single storey is used as a tool shed. The buildings are considered to carry out an important function on the farm that could not be lost. The building could only be provided with a garden by "breaking through" the listed wall to Rudyard Hall. In addition, the buildings are very close to the entrance to the courtyard so would be disturbed by tankers entering and leaving and very close to a slurry pit on the other side of the access track. For these reasons the conversion of this small range of buildings to a dwelling has been discounted.

Following a study of the potential for existing buildings on the site being able to accommodate the proposal, it has been concluded that none of the buildings or the areas that could be defined as their settings are suitable for residential development.

Rudyard Hall Farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building as are the garden wall and pillars and gate and the building referred to as the "outbuilding" in the Listing. These buildings and their areas of influence are required to be safeguarded. For this reason, any new building will need to be carefully sited to avoid harming the setting of the heritage assets on the site.

Policy R2 Rural Housing limits new housing in the countryside with certain exceptions. One of those is "A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an

agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere”.

Comment: The proposal represents a means of satisfying an essential agricultural need which can only be met on the site. The proposal is supported by an independent agricultural assessment.

Spatial Objective SO8 includes the promotion of the “protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets”.

Policy DC2 - The Historic Environment requires the Council to safeguard the historic environment, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register) and the settings of designated assets by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District.

Comment: The application has been prepared with a principal focus on the need to protect the Listed Buildings and the settings of the listed buildings.

Heritage Assessment

Rudyard Hall Farmhouse is described in the Listing Register as: -

“Manor house. Mid-C17 with mid-C19 additions. Rough-faced coursed stone with smooth dressed quoins and cavetto strings at floor levels and plinths. 'T'-shaped plan (with later additions) of hall range and parlour cross wing; side stack to rear of hall. Entrance front: 2-storey and attic; projecting gabled cross wing to right with single range of windows. 2-light chamfer mullion to attic over stone cross mullion windows to ground and first floors; set-back hall range with similar range of cross windows to left of centre; boarded door with segmental head under massive block lintel to right. Projecting, gabled, blind C19 wing part-attached to left and connected to further wings. Garden front: of 1 x 3 bays, 2-light cross-mullion windows, plain mullioned to attic with labels, 3-light range to centre of flanks, continuous label strings to ground and first floors. Interior: 3 principal rooms oak panelled”;
the gates and gate piers as: -

“Gates, gatepiers and garden walls. Mid-C19 and C20 re-using some C17 material. Ashlar. Walls run north and north-west of Hall (q.v.) enclosing a small lawn, approximately 1.8m high and with re-used C17 lintel to entrance immediately north-west of Hall; pitched coping; height of wall doubled circa 1960. Mid-C19 gatepiers approximately 2.5m high of cruciform plan run up to consoles and brought in square to frieze, moulded surbase and ball finials, wooden gates with curved upper rails”;

and the outbuilding as: -

“Outbuilding, used as stable, possibly not built as such. Mid-C17. Coursed and dressed stone; tiled roof. Single storey and attic. 2-window front; symmetrical layout of 2 cavetto labelled 4-light chamfer mullion windows to sides, gabled dormer with cavetto labelled 3-light chamfer mullion to centre over corniced central door”.

The application first examined the possibilities of using one of the existing farm buildings as a dwelling partly to avoid the need to erect a new building on the site and partly to introduce a long-term residential use to a building that would thereafter be maintained at a higher level. The analysis is set out above and has concluded that there is no scope to provide the accommodation in an existing building. The application then moved on to examine the areas of the site that are near enough to the farm buildings in terms of convenience and animal safety, and far enough away from the listed buildings to avoid harming their setting.

The farm has two crofts- the small croft on the other side of the garden wall to the Hall garden and the large croft further away. The application proposes the use of the large croft because of its limited impact on the heritage assets.

The application proposes a bungalow form for two reasons. Firstly, a lower form of development will have a lower impact on the landscape setting and on the heritage assets. Secondly, the proposed dwelling is likely to be occupied by Mr and Mrs Robinson as their future retirement home. At present Mr and Mrs Robinson play a large part in the running of the farm, and will continue to do so for many years to come. However, they have in mind that they will retire at some point and it makes sense at lots of different levels for them to occupy the proposed bungalow and for their son and family to occupy the Hall.

It is considered that the chosen location and design of the proposed dwelling will not harm the heritage assets.

DESIGN

Use

The application proposes the residential development of the site.

Amount

The application proposes the erection of a single dwelling.

Layout

The application proposes the erection of the dwelling in the large croft to avoid harming the heritage assets on the site. The building has been positioned within the large croft so as to maximise sunlight in the living rooms of the building.

Scale

The proposed dwelling is a family home and proposes three-bedroom accommodation.

Landscaping

The application is capable of accommodating landscaping on the site.

Appearance

The application proposes a single storey building of brick with stone quoins and a plain tile roof.

ACCESS

VEHICULAR AND TRANSPORT LINKS

The site is located close to the town of Leek. Consequently, local services are accessible by public transport that is available at the end of the farm track.

INCLUSIVE ACCESS

The development is capable of providing for occupation by less abled people through compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.