Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

SHRUBBERY COTTAGE, CHEADLE ROAD, CHEDDLETON

MAY 2016

Site Address:
Shrubbery Cottage, Cheadle Road, Cheddleton, Staffordshire, ST13 7BW

Applicant:
Mr. M. Leese

Proposal:
Retention of shed with biomass boiler

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 31st May 2016
Job Reference: RDP/2016/065

Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. M. Leese to prepare a planning application for the retention of an existing outbuilding that been erected within the domestic curtilage of Shrubbery Cottage, Cheadle Road, Cheddleton, and the erection of replacement extensions.

1.2 By way of background, planning permission has previously been granted under application SMD/2015/0611 for the retention and refurbishment of the existing dwelling and its associated outbuildings, along with the replacement of a dilapidated link block. The resultant accommodation comprises of a sitting room and snug, utility room, shower room, lounge, bedroom with dressing room and bathroom at ground floor, and a further ensuite bedroom at first floor with modest storeroom.

1.3 The applicant subsequently undertook works to erect the outbuilding, not appreciating the need for planning permission. This application seeks to regularise the works that have taken place. The building erected occupies a footprint of 12m^2 and stands to a maximum height of 2.5 metres. It is constructed from horizontal timber cladding (stained moorlands green) with corrugated metal roof and projecting flue which serves a biomass boiler and water tank that are located within the shed.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises an irregular shaped parcel of land that is located to the west of the Cheadle Road, Cheddleton and comprises within it a two storey dwelling and attached outbuildings that are used for domestic purposes. The site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, but is located a short walking and cycling distance from the numerous services and

facilities on offer within Cheddleton village. Access to the site is taken via an existing track that feeds off the Cheadle Road. The land to the east of the site lies at a much higher level to the application site, retained by gabion walls, whilst the land to the west lies at a lower level. The dwelling therefore sits within a narrow plateau of land between these two levels.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.3 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved

wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.4 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. Policy SS6c also confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.5 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Diversification' and states that development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will 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, 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. 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.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should 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 SPD (NB: Not yet published). It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

- *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;*

- *incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the local and global impact of the development, and to adapt to climate change;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out guidance in respect of development within the Green Belt, and furthermore seeks to promote the transition to renewable sources of energy. The content of this document is explored in more detail in the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

5.1 The application seeks planning permission to retain a timber shed that has been erected on a site that lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. These provisions are broadly reflected within policy R1 of the Core Strategy. Policy SS6c also confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

5.2 Paragraph 89 of the NPPF confirms that the erection of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It goes on to list a number of exceptions but this does not explicitly include the erection of domestic outbuildings. Accordingly the outbuilding erected on site amounts to an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

5.3 Paragraph 87 of the NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It goes on to state in paragraph 88 that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, noting that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.4 Before considering the applicant's case of very special circumstances, it is first necessary to consider the impact of this proposal on the Green Belt. The building itself occupies a very modest footprint, and at 2.5 metres to its ridge, is very small scale in nature. The presence of the steep embankment to the east of the outbuilding provides an effective visual screen to the development when viewed from the Cheadle Road, whilst at the same time it provides a backdrop to the building in longer distance views across the valley. The muted colours of the development and its materials of construction furthermore serve to minimise the impact of the development when viewed from such locations. This leads me to conclude that the development does not result in significant harm to the Green Belt over and above that of harm by inappropriateness.

5.5 In terms of very special circumstances, the outbuilding erected on this site accommodates a biomass boiler and a large water tank to provide a means of renewable heating for the dwelling. At present the property has very rudimentary stove heating to one room with portable electric heaters used to heat the rest of the house. Such heaters would also be required to heat the remainder of the house following the recent consent to extend and refurbish the whole building and its attached range of outbuildings (SMD/2015/0611 refers). The vast majority of the heating for the property therefore comes from non-renewable energy resources. The proposed biomass boiler by

contrast will provide a renewable source of heat generation that has been calculated to meet the needs of the whole of the dwelling, including the recently consented works to extend and refurbish it. This is a very significant material benefit of the proposal and one which should be afforded very substantial weight.

5.6 Paragraph 93 of the NPPF confirms that:

> *"Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development".*

5.7 These provisions are reflected within Core Planning Principle 6 and paragraph 98 of the NPPF which states that Local Planning Authorities should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also:

> *"recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions"*

5.8 The biomass boiler installed on this site will be fuelled by wood pellets sourced from sustainable woodlands and thus will deliver a renewable means of heat generation for the entire dwelling. Such benefits are capable of constituting very special circumstances, as reflected by paragraph 91 of the NPPF which states that:

> *"When located in he Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources". (my emphasis)*

5.9 I therefore submit that the renewable energy benefits of this development should be afforded very substantial weight in the determination of this application.

5.10 The outbuilding also provides a valuable area of storage of domestic items. The absence of any notable storage areas within the existing dwelling means that there is a latent demand for the storage of lawn mowers, garden furniture, bicycles etc. particularly give that this property benefits from a substantial area of domestic curtilage. Whilst there is a first floor storeroom approved as part of the recent planning permission for alterations to the dwelling, this is not suited to the storage of garden equipment etc. The outbuilding erected therefore represents a much more pleasant external appearance compared to that which would otherwise arise if the applicant's domestic paraphernalia were to be stored externally. This would not be visually attractive nor would it represent an appropriate solution in terms minimising opportunities for crime. For these reasons it is submitted that the proposal accords with the provisions of the NPPF in that it improves the conditions in which people live, and helps to support the social well-being of the community by designing out crime.

5.11 Overall, it is considered that the renewable heat generation benefits of the development, coupled with the building's role in providing a secure area of

storage for domestic paraphernalia, collectively amount to a demonstration of very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy and guidance contained within the NPPF.

5.12 In terms of other issues, the building is considered to be of an appropriate design that adopts materials of construction that are appropriate to the rural area, and is finished in a muted green colour that assimilates well with its surroundings. Its simple form and design serves to reinforce the dwelling as the main feature within the site, and helps to minimise its overall visual impact. The outbuilding is furthermore sited sufficiently far enough away from existing neighbouring occupiers so as not to adversely impact on their amenity. For these reasons the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is acknowledged that the application site lies within the Green Belt and that the outbuilding erected constitutes an inappropriate form of development. It is nevertheless submitted that the building does not result in substantial harm to the Green Belt, and that very special circumstances exist in the form of renewable heat generation benefits and provision of domestic storage, to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposal is accordingly considered to be acceptable in the context of Green Belt policy, and is furthermore of a scale, massing and design that is complementary to its surroundings and which does not adversely impact on neighbouring residential occupiers.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c, R1, and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy.