

PLANNING STATEMENT

Including Design and Access

Client: Mr. C Bridgett

Location: Rockfields Farm, Cheadle Road, Wetley Rocks, ST9 0AX

Proposal: The replacement of part of the existing house and the construction of a pitched roof on the flat roofed part of the house.



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for the demolition and replacement of a single-storey part of the house to the north of the flat roofed part of the existing house and the erection of a pitched roof over the flat roofed part. The photograph on the front cover shows the building which it is intended to replace with a similar dimension building. Photograph No. 1 below shows the flat roof part of the building where it is proposed to construct a pitched roof.

Photograph 1- view of flat roof from the east



- 1.2 Planning permission for the erection of a pitched roof over the flat roof to create a bedroom and the demolition of the building to the north was refused in January 2016. Discussions took place with Council after the refusal and the advice was to use permitted development rights to extend the building. The applicant does not wish to do this, although this would create more footprint and volume than proposed in this application, because the buildings would not be as attractive as the present proposal and would not harmonize with the existing building.

2 THE APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 Rockfields Farm is a smallholding located in the Green Belt on the eastern side of Cheadle Road leading out of Wetley Rocks. Rockfields Farm is attached to Rock Cottage which adjoins to the west and is a complicated building; a mixture different heights, roof types and materials.

2.2 Rockfields Farm consists of four distinct elements or parts:

- Two rooms and a very small cellar (marked as Building A on the plan on the next page) in the two storey stone fronted part of the house which appears as part of Rock Cottage. The two rooms are a floor higher than the ground floor of Rock Cottage although they form part of the ground-floor of Rockfields Farm. Beneath the northern of the two rooms is a ground floor room which is part of Rock Cottage (i.e. a flying freehold). The front (south) of this part of the house is built of stone and the other walls are brick with a rendered eastern wall. The roof is slate.

The L-shaped rendered brick building with a plain tile roof (Building B), shown on the front cover, forms the northern part of the house and is referred to in the Structural Report as the “Cowshed” for ease of reference although it is in residential/ancillary domestic use. This building consists of two parts – the southern part of the “L” is in residential use and has probably been in that use at least since the Second World War and, the northern part which whilst once a cow-shed has been used for domestic purposes, such as the storage of wood, fuel, garden equipment and domestic items for considerably more than ten years. Please see the submitted letter from Ms Helen Champeau. This building was the original Rockfields Farm, separate from Rock Cottage and in the 1950’s the two rooms in the adjoining Rock Cottage were used by the occupants of the original farm. The connection between the two rooms and the original farmhouse probably took place in the late 1960’s when the flat roofed part of the building and the bungalow-style building were built.

This part of the house has rendered brick walls and a plain clay tile roof.

- The flat roofed part of the house in the centre (Building C) shown in Photograph 1. There is only one external wall – to the east- and this is built of brick.
- The bungalow-style extension to the south. (Building D). The walls are modern brick and the roof modern tiles.

2.3 The above different parts of the existing house are referred to, for ease of reference, in the text as Buildings A, B, C and D although Building A is physically part of Rock Cottage, the adjoining house.

2.4 The Authority's website shows that there has been only one relatively recent planning application for this site in addition to the one mentioned in paragraph 1.2. This is SMD/2014/0162 – Demolition of existing bungalow and garage and erection of a replacement house. This application was refused.

2.5 A search back to 1948 through the Council's microfiche files revealed an application (Cheadle RDC 6007) but the only information on file was the description "extensions and alterations at Rockfields Farm" and the date permission was granted – 8 June 1965. There was no other information on the microfiche. It is possible that this is the permission for the extension for the bungalow-type extension (Building D) and for the flat roofed part of the house (Building C) given that no other permissions can be found.

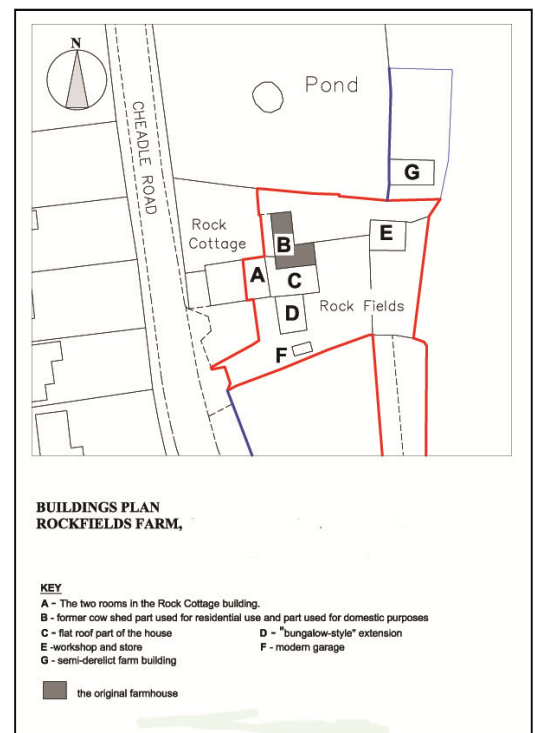
2.6 In addition to the house there some other buildings on the site. These are shown on the submitted plan no. 612-2 and on the adjoining plan which is not to scale. These buildings are :

- E – Workshop and store.
- F - Modern garage.
- G – Semi-derelict farm building.

2.7 The last three buildings are referred to in the text as Buildings E, F and G.

2.8 The land in the applicant's ownership consists of two fields – one to the south of the house next to Cheadle Road and a small second field containing the semi-derelict Building G to the north-east of the house. The applicant's partner and her father own the field to the east of the house. There are two existing accesses to the house; one to the west from Cheadle Road and the other from the south from Consall Lane.

2.9 The present accommodation consists of 2 bedrooms, a lounge, dining room, hall, shower room, kitchen, small rooms next to the kitchen and a boiler-room in the southern part of the "L" (Building B).



3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is to replace Building B (see the photograph on the front page) and put a pitched roof over the flat roofed part of the house (Building C). The proposed roof would be stepped so that stairs can be built to a new bedroom and bathroom in the roof-space of Building A.
- 3.2 The purpose of the proposed development is to provide an extra bedroom and sitting room with a new ground floor access door to the outside for the 90 year elderly father of the applicant's partner who suffers from severe dementia and is currently in a nursing home. A doctor's letter is submitted with the application as proof of the gentleman's condition. The intention is to care for him at home but this cannot be done with the present level of accommodation and layout in the existing house. It is considered that the need to make provision for the gentleman to live with his daughter and to be cared for by her amounts to very special circumstances and is a significant material consideration. This matter is explored in more detail later in this report.

4 DESIGN AND ACCESS MATTERS

Appearance

- 4.1 The proposed design is shown on drawings no. 1399-04 and 1399-05. The existing house is shown on drawing no. 1399-01A. This is a different design to that refused in the previous application where the proposal involved the demolition of Building B and the demolition of the flat-roofed part of the house and building a two storey extension on the site of the flat-roofed building.
- 4.2 The present proposal for Building C has a much lower ridge line than the previous proposal. The pitched roof over Building C is stepped; the western part is higher than eastern part but its ridge line is still much lower than the roof apex of Building A and Rock Cottage. The higher western part of the roof contains stairs to the first floor of Building A where a bedroom and a bathroom will be built. The ridge-line of the western part of the roof would still be much lower than the ridge of the proposed pitched roof in the previous proposal. The eastern part of the proposed roof is lower than the western part and would be barely seen from Cheadle Road to the south. The only part of the proposed roof over Building C that would be clearly visible is the western part adjoining Building A and Rock Cottage.
- 4.3 Unlike the previous application no garage and wood-store and balcony are proposed.

- 4.4 The proposal involves some alterations to the design of Building B. These are:
- The re-location of an existing door on the north side of the short arm of the L-shaped building (Building B).
 - New windows and the re-location of an existing door opening to form French windows on the eastern side of the Building B.
 - Blocking up an existing window on the northern gable of Building B.
 - Small Horizontal roof-light in the south western corner of the roof of Building B.
 - The continuation of the pitched roof to meet the proposed pitched roof over Building C.
- 4.5 Other proposed alterations include the introduction of a glazed door on the south-eastern side of Building C; a new window on the north-western side of Building C; a new tall window on the eastern gable of Building C; two horizontal roof-lights on Building C; and double French windows on the eastern side of Building D.
- Scale
- 4.6 The footprint of the existing house would remain unchanged. The applicant would be willing to demolish Building G to reduce the amount of buildings on the holding.
- 4.7 The volume of the existing house is 617 sq metres. The volume would increase by about 80 cubic metres; an increase of about 13%. The whole of this increase consists of the pitched roof over Building C and the new roof connection to Building B. It is appreciated that the original building has already been enlarged in the past and this is discussed in more detail in Section 5 “The Case for the Proposed Development”.
- 4.8 The dimensions of Building B (the probable original farmhouse) would remain the same as the existing building.
- 4.9 The possibility of using permitted development rights to demolish the long-arm of building B and build an 8m long extension along the whole of the rear (north) of the house has been considered. The extension would be 8 metres long by about 8 metres wide. This would increase the footprint by about 64 square metres; a percentage increase of about 30%. The volume of such an extension would be about 255 cubic metres, an increase of about 41% on the existing house volume.
- 4.10 In order to keep the roof height below 4 metres the permitted development extension would probably be constructed of profiled metal sheeting which would be out of character with the house. The scale of such an extension would harm the appearance of the house and impact a great deal more on the openness and the purposes of the Green Belt than the present proposal. For these reasons the applicant preferred the present proposal.

Layout & Landscaping

- 4.11 A comparison of the floor plans on drawings 1399-01A (Existing) and drawing 1399-04 reveals that the footprint of the house would remain unchanged. There is an access to the rear garden and parking takes place here. As part of the proposal the rear (eastern) garden would be re-arranged –see drawing no. 1399-05. The north and southern parts of the garden would be grassed with flower and vegetable beds.

Access

- 4.12 The two existing accesses would remain and a new parking area provided in the rear garden as described in the section on Layout.

5 PLANNING POLICIES

- 5.1 The Development Plan for the District is the Moorlands Core Strategy, adopted 2014.

- 5.2 The application site is within the Green Belt.

- 5.3 The following Core Strategy policies have been considered when writing this report:

- SS1 – Development principles;
- SS1a – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- SS6c – Other Rural Areas Area Strategy;
- DC1 – Design Considerations;
- R2 – Rural Housing.

- 5.4 The content of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) together with the pertinent Development Plan policies are set out in more detail, where relevant, in the “Case for the Proposed Development” below. The Core Strategy does not contain a specific Green Belt policy and the Green Belt policies in the NPPF apply.

6. THE CASE FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 The key issues are;

- Whether the proposed development is appropriate in the Green Belt.
- Very Special Circumstances.
- Previous alterations to the house.
- Design considerations.
- Whether it is in accord with the relevant policies in the Development Plan.
- Whether protected species are affected.

These are addressed in turn below.

Whether the proposed development is appropriate in the Green Belt.

- 6.2 Whilst new buildings are generally inappropriate development in the Green Belt there are exceptions one of which the replacement of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the additional building. It is contended that the proposed replacement of Part B of the existing house is such a development and is appropriate development in the Green Belt. It is the original farmhouse and is shown on a 1945-51 OS map. The two rooms in Rock Cottage were not purchased until the 1950's (source: submitted letter from Helen Champeau). The external dimensions of the building would be unchanged apart from a continuation of the pitched roof to meet the proposed pitched roof over Building C. It is contended that with the latter addition to the roof the building would not be materially larger than the present building.
- 6.3 Originally the farmer lived in the short arm of the "L" shaped Building B and the long arm was used as a cattle shed. However, since at least the late 1990's (see the submitted letter from Helen Champeau) the long-arm of Building B has been used to store coal, wood, garden tools and some handicraft tools/equipment. Based on this evidence it is contended that the building use is residential – part lived in and part in ancillary domestic use. Therefore, the use of the building would remain unchanged and the proposed development would meet this requirement in the NPPF.
- 6.4 The proposed development could also be regarded as re-use of a building which the NPPF states is appropriate development in the Green Belt provided it is of permanent and substantial construction. However, as the structural report shows although the building is built of brick with a clay tile pitched roof considerable work is required to the building. It would be possible to retain 40% of the perimeter walls, however the report recommends re-building the building as the most cost effective option. Hence, the application for a replacement building. The visual impact and appearance of the

replacement building is addressed later in this statement.

Very Special Circumstances

- 6.5 One of the key reasons for the proposal is to provide specific accommodation at ground floor level for William Farrall, the father of the applicant's partner, who suffers from severe dementia. Submitted with the application is a copy of a certificate signed by a hospital doctor confirming that William Farrall suffers from mental impairment. The impairment is severe dementia. Mr. Farrell has been moved from the hospital to a care home to free bed-space as he needs all- day-round care. The intention is that the two ground-floor rooms in Building A would be used to provide dedicated accommodation for Mr. Farrall comprising a bedroom with en-suite and a lounge-cum-living area so that he can receive care at home rather than in a hospital or care home whilst having his own space.
- 6.6 It is contended that this constitutes very special circumstances as it would provide a clear and considerable social benefit in that Mr. Farrall would receive all-day-round care at home with his daughter and at a time when care budgets are being slashed this would reduce the care costs for the Health Service and the community generally. In contrast, the potential harm from the proposed development would not be significant and would be clearly outweighed by the community and social benefits.
- 6.7 The previous refusal and subsequent pre-application application response from the Council did not consider the need to care for Mr. Farrell at home amounted to special circumstances. It is contended that this incorrect. On occasions, including on appeal, circumstances such as in this case have been considered to be very special; sufficient to justify the grant of approval.

Previous Additions and alterations to the house.

- 6.8 The refusal reason on the previous application stated that the original dwelling had "been extended disproportionately previously" and that the proposed development would exacerbate the situation.
- 6.9 The original house (pre-1950's) consisted of the short arm of Building B; the accommodation was very small and basic. Even with the addition of the two rooms in Building A in the 1950's the accommodation was minimal and not up to twentieth century standards. Although no clear record can be found of permission for the construction of buildings C and D it seems likely that the permission mentioned in

paragraph 2.5 approved the erection of these two buildings. If this is the case then the additions were either considered not be disproportionate or justified by the circumstances.

6.10 Whilst these later additions considerably enlarged the house they were presumably considered to be justifiable and on balance not harmful to the Green Belt when permission was granted.

6.11 The present proposal does not increase the footprint of the house and whilst there is some increase in volume it is contended that the social and community benefits and the improvement in the appearance of the house (please see below) are such that they significantly outweigh harm, if any, that would be caused by the proposed development.

Design Considerations

6.12 It is contended that the proposed development would improve the appearance of the existing buildings considerably. At the moment particularly when viewed from the south on Cheadle Road Rock Cottage appears truncated and Building D appears incongruous and unrelated to Rock Cottage (see photograph 1 below). There appears to be little visual connection between the two buildings.

Photograph 1 – view from south



- 6.13 In contrast, the proposed pitched roof on Building C would provide a clear visual link between Rock Cottage and Building D and would continue the “line” of Rock Cottage whilst at the same time being visually subservient to Rock Cottage.
- 6.14 The East Elevation on Drawing no. 1399-05 shows that the proposed roof changes would visually better link Buildings B, C and D creating a unified and more attractive appearance.

Development Plan Policies

- 6.15 Policy SS6c (other Rural Areas) allows the replacement of rural buildings (in this case part of a building) in accordance with policy R2 which allows for the replacement of rural dwellings provided that they do not have a greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the existing building. Here the proposed development would look better than the existing buildings; as a result the proposed development would enhance rather than be detrimental to the existing character of the area.

Protected species

- 6.16 Because the previous proposal involved demolition and work to the roof and because of the age of the main building and adjoining house a bat survey was carried out. The survey report is submitted with the application. The report concluded that no high impact bat roost (maternity or hibernation) is present and that the survey did not find any evidence of current bat use but that there was minor historic evidence of bat droppings and that for this reason and in the interests of sustainability it is recommended that provision be made for crevice –dwelling bats, such as Pipistrelles, in the roof and that bat-boxes are fixed to the nearby mature trees. Provision for bats in the roof would consist of two ridge tile roosts on the two storey part of the building and two bat boxes on nearby trees. The report also concludes that a Natural England Licence to disturb bats was not required.
- 6.17 The bat report is submitted for the sake of completeness. The present proposal would potentially have less impact on bats than the previous proposal. Both involve the demolition of Building C but the present proposal would not affect the roof of Rock Cottage as the proposed new pitched roof is much lower than the previously proposed roof. It is now proposed that provision for bats would consist of two ridge tile roosts on the Building C and one on the replacement building.

7. OTHER SUPPORTING MATERIAL

- 7.1 The provision of granny annexes and ancillary accommodation for elderly people is supported by Central Government, *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (2011)*, which states:

“Planning homes and communities that enable older people to remain economically active, involved with their families, friends and community and able to choose where and how they live not only makes financial sense but also results in a better, more inclusive society.”

- 7.2 **The NPPF** states that there should be an automatic presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF puts great weight on considering local needs, and approving sustainable proposals without delay. The NPPF defines three dimensions to sustainable development:

- An Economic Role
- A Social Role
- An Environmental Role.

- 7.3 Each dimension to sustainable development is below tested against the proposal:

- *An economic role*

This proposal provides ancillary accommodation for an elderly family member. It also ensures that the site is being used efficiently, reduces Health Service costs, and, in its own small way, bolsters the construction industry.

- *A social role*

The provision of accommodation for Mr. Farrall creates a long-term and sustainable solution to his needs. The benefits include:

- Family members can provide the care and support needed.
- Reduces the stress on local services.
- Cost effective solution to supported living.
- Provides a measure of independence, while still being close to support.
- Provides for the needs of an elderly relative NPPF paragraphs 50 and 159)

- *An Environmental Role*

The proposed accommodation would be contained in an existing building and the proposal would improve the appearance of the house at the same time minimizing impact on the countryside and the Green Belt. It also avoids the creation of a separate ancillary building in the garden which could be built in the garden. The proposal, if approved, would allow the Council to control residential permitted development on the site.

- 7.4 Lord Scarman in Westminster City Council v Great Portland Estates plc (1985) commented that:

"Personal circumstances of the occupier [and] personal hardship...are not to be ignored in the administration of planning control. It would be inhuman pedantry to exclude from the control of our environment the human factor".

8. CONCLUSION

Very special circumstances apply in terms of the provision of accommodation for Mr. Farrell. Further, the proposed development would create a better looking building more in keeping with the existing house and would link the present discordant elements together, particularly visually, in addition to providing sufficient accommodation for the applicant and his partner.

For these reasons the Council is asked to approve the application.