3706 Cloud Wood End Farm

Design and Access Statement

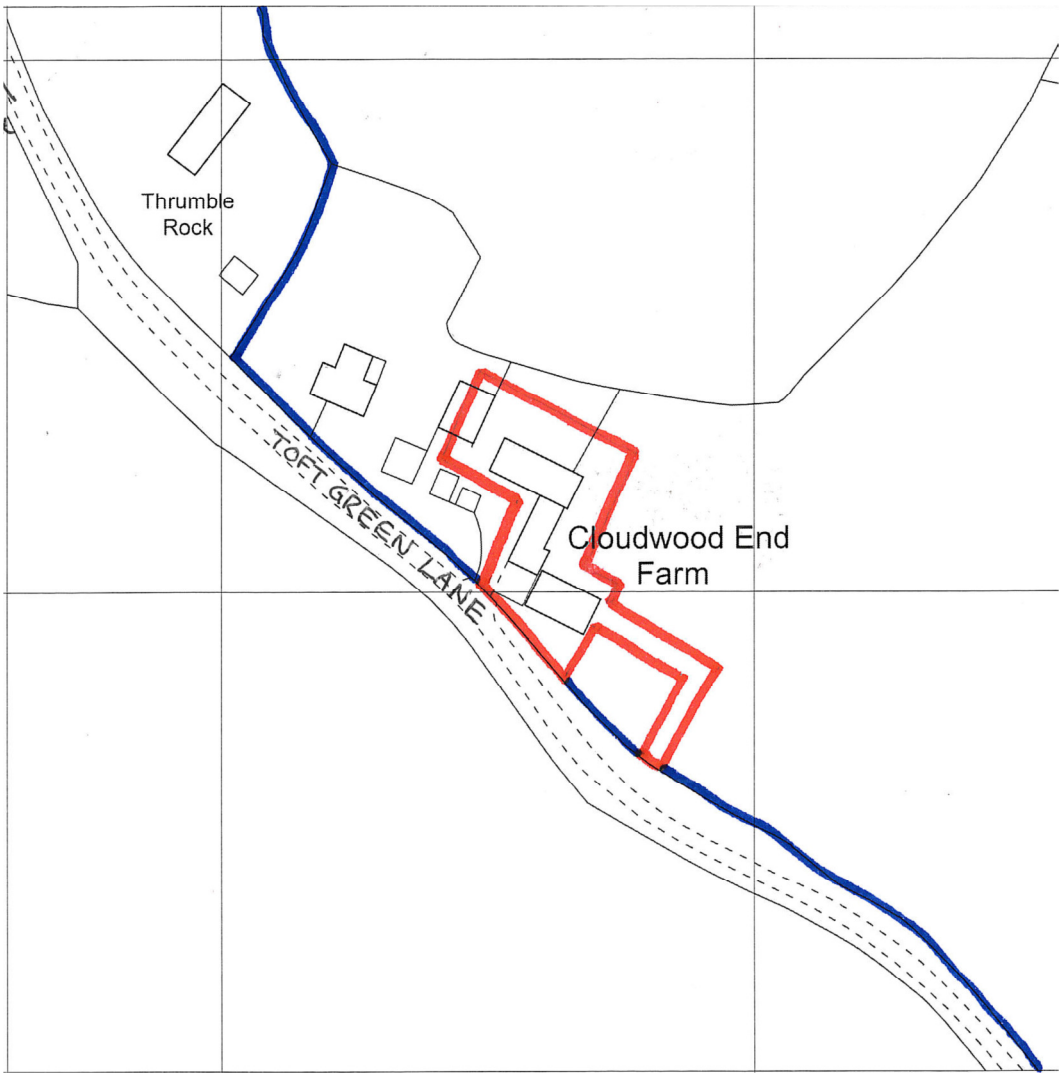
This report has been prepared in support of a planning application for a Change of Use of redundant farm buildings to form two new dwellings at Cloud Wood End Farm, Toft Green Lane, Toft Green, Congleton CW12 3QF.

This application is a resubmission of planning application ref. SMD/2016/0042.

Location

The site is in Toft Green, near the village of Bosley. The barn is part of the buildings associated with the established agricultural unit at Cloudwood Farm, which operated as a dairy farm, but latterly for arable farming.

The site is in green belt. The site is not in a conservation area or national park. There are no listed buildings on the site; however, the farm and courtyard buildings are detailed on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record and are considered to be non-designated heritage assets.



Site Location

Site - Context

The site is within a small group of dwellings comprising two farms and dwellings served by a single track road. There are a small number of passing places but Toft Green Lane is generally unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles and commercial traffic.

Planning Policy Context

The site is within a rural area of Staffordshire Moorlands and is within the greenbelt.

The following Staffordshire Moorlands' local plan policies are relevant to the proposals:

Policy SD1 – Sustainable Use of Resources

Policy SD1 notes that development no non-allocated greenfield lane will only be considered acceptable where the proposal:

Relates to the conversion or reuse of a rural building in accordance with policy R2, or;

Would secure the future conversion of a heritage assets through appropriate enabling development in accordance with policy DC2, or;

Policy R1 – Rural Diversification

All 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 and appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, … and sustains the historic environment.

Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion.

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.

Policy R2 – Rural Housing

Other than sites allocated for housing development in the Site Allocations DPD, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted in the rural areas outside the settlement and infill boundaries of the towns and the villages:

The conversion of ***non-residential*** *rural buildings for residential use where:*

- *the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; and*
- *it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable. In such cases there will be a requirement for a marketing exercise to be carried out by a suitably qualified professional or other evidence that the building would be unsuitable for a commercial use; or*
- ***conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.***

The policy also recognizes that there are circumstances where a rural building may be unsuitable for commercial use, i.e. if it is incompatible with an adjacent residential use; if the form, bulk or design of building does not lend itself to a commercial use; or if it would cause unacceptable traffic or environmental problems. If it can be successfully demonstrated that an agricultural or commercial use may not be financially viable or that a commercial use would be unsuitable, then conversion for residential use will only be acceptable where it enables a the provision of affordable housing or helps to meet an identified local need in a sustainable location which cannot be met elsewhere or where conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded. This is to ensure that, due to the large

number of rural buildings, residential conversion is not permitted where it would undermine the overall development approach for the District in terms of creating an oversupply of housing outside of existing settlements.

Planning History

Prior Notification for Change of Use Ref: DET/2015/0006 Determined 24/04/2015

A prior approval application for the conversion of the existing buildings to form new dwellings under Class Q was submitted in March 2015.

Prior Approval was deemed to be required on the grounds that it had not been demonstrated 'that the buildings have been used solely for agricultural purposes as part of an established agricultural unit.'

The case officer's assessment was that the buildings were not used for agricultural purposes but in domestic and automotive use. Therefore a full planning application was required for the conversion of the buildings to create new dwellings.

Planning Application Ref: SMD/2016/0042 Refused 05 April 2016

A planning application for the conversion of the existing buildings to residential use was refused. The reasons for refusal were as follows:

	Reasons For Refusal	Response
1	The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the buildings are physically capable of conversion	A structural engineer's report was prepared and submitted in support of the planning application, this concluded that the buildings were substantial and capable of conversion.
1	'And that a commercial use is not viable or suitable for the buildings contrary to Policy R2	The buildings were deemed by the planning authority ref: DET/2015/0006 to be in domestic use. Policy R2 should therefore not apply.
2	'The proposals consisting of partial redevelopment of a green field site….would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.'	No development outside existing building footprint or volume was proposed.
2	'It is not clear whether the buildings in question can be converted without the need for further demolition and rebuilding …which would cause further harm to the openness of the Green Belt…..'	The proposals did not comprise extensions of the existing buildings therefore there would be no greater impact on openness of the Green Belt. A structural engineer's report was submitted with the planning application.
3	'The proposed scheme of conversion contains inappropriate design features and excessive garden areas that would be harmful to the simple functional character of the rural buildings to which the proposal relates…'	Noted – these comments have been addressed in the current scheme. The replacement of an existing building is no longer included within the proposals.
4	'The application site does not contain all the land necessary to complete the development including the necessary vehicle access to the public highway for the proposed 'Unit 1'….'	The use of an existing farm access was proposed to reduce the impact on the highways. These comments have been addressed within the current scheme.
	Informatives Whilst the Council has sought to deal	Note: no contact was made with the

	with the proposals in a positive and proactive manner it is not considered that the applicant is able to overcome the principal concerns specified above.	applicant before the determination of this application, despite the agent's repeated requests for notification of any concerns, including an opportunity to withdraw the application.

Current Application

This application seeks planning approval for the change of use of the existing buildings to form two new dwellings within the shell of the existing building; no demolition and rebuilding is proposed.

The residential curtilage has been reduced to address the case officer's concerns and the existing and proposed vehicular access points are both contained within the red line boundary.

The current application addresses all of the principal concerns noted in SMD/2016/0042.



The barns are built in stone with tiled roofs

Existing Building

Site

The existing building comprises a run of joined barns, constructed in local stone with Staffordshire blue clay tile roofs, a timber framed shed and a pre-fabricated single storey shed.

The building is substantial and capable of conversion.

Existing Use

The site has been owned by the Coates family for generations. Active farming ceased in the 1980s on the retirement of Mr Coates (senior); the farm buildings are redundant. The applicant is the daughter of Mr Coates.

The buildings were agricultural comprising a tied shippon for dairy cows, milking parlour, feed store and a store for farm machinery. There is also a workshop which was used for the maintenance of the farm machinery and buildings.

The application for prior approval for the conversion of buildings to form new dwellings under Class Q established that the existing buildings are in domestic use.

The buildings are being used for domestic storage by Mr Coates and for car maintenance and storage for his son's hobby of rally car racing.

It is clear that the buildings in their current use are not well maintained. Although the buildings are sound, water ingress has resulted in rotting timbers and some structural movement. The buildings have been identified as non-designated heritage assets; it is important to find a viable use for these buildings to enable their repair and secure their future.

Design Process - Proposals

Objectives

The farm, comprising farmhouse, barns and outbuildings, has been inherited by three siblings. The conversion of the existing buildings to create two new dwellings would create easily apportioned and divisible accommodation.

The conversion of the barns to residential accommodation would release the farmhouse, which is also in poor repair, for renovation and refurbishment.

Design Principles

The accommodation will be contained within the shell of the existing building. Existing openings are to be reused to retain the agricultural character of the existing stone building.

The development will be balanced by the demolition of the hayloft and the removal of containers and vehicle storage from the site.

The conversion of the buildings would result in long term beneficial use for the buildings and would secure their future.

Proposals

Unit 1
The proposals comprise a three bedroomed house within the existing building. The accommodation is mostly single storey with split level sleeping accommodation where the levels of the existing building allow.

Unit 2
The proposals comprise a three bedroomed house within the footprint of the existing building. The accommodation is mostly two storey with a lean-to garden room to the east.

This unit will make use of the existing drive and outbuildings which comprise a garage and a garden store. This access will be shared with the farmhouse.

Amount of Development

The proposed accommodation is contained within the shell of the existing building; the amount of development is modest.

Layout

The new accommodation is contained within the existing building; the layout is unchanged.

Scale

The scale is defined by the existing building.

Landscaping

The landscape design will be modest to minimise the impact on the open countryside.

The boundaries between the two dwellings will be 1.8m brick walls, while the garden boundaries will be field boundary fences with indigenous hedgerow planting. All paving will be natural stone.

Appearance

The accommodation will be contained within the existing stone building, which will be repaired and renovated. The appearance of the building will be enhanced.

Use

The existing use is residential ancillary use associated with the farmhouse. The new use will comprise two new dwellings.

Impact on the Openness of the Greenbelt

The proposals are contained within the shell of the existing farm buildings and will be balanced by demolitions of other existing buildings and removal of storage containers and vehicles.

If implemented the proposals will comprise less volume than the existing buildings; therefore there will be a positive impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Sustainable Development

The following measures have been taken to introduce sustainable elements into the design:

- Orientation and use of natural solar gain
- Natural light to all internal areas using windows and rooflights
- Energy efficient lighting systems (including landscaping)
- Renewable energy sources/heating systems
- Drying area for clothing

Access

Existing Access

The existing house is served by Toft Green Lane, a single width road which makes it unsuitable for any commercial use. Toft Green Lane is an unclassified road which serves other residential properties and farms.

The farmhouse is served by an access leading from Toft Green Lane. The existing barns are accessed on both sides from the farmyard and an existing agricultural track beyond the barns.

Proposed Access

The converted dwellings will be accessed using the existing farmhouse drive and the existing farm access beyond the barns. No change to the existing entrances is proposed.

Any vehicle movements generated by the new dwellings should have very little impact on Toft Green Lane.

The proposals comply with the requirements set out in Part M of the building regulations.

Supporting Information

Planning Statement

A Planning Statement has been prepared by Emery Planning in support of this planning application and included with this submission.

Trees

There are no trees or hedges within the development area that would be affected by the proposals.

Protected Species

A Protected Species Survey has been carried out at the property by EVR Ecology and the Survey Report is included in this submission.

Planning Statement

A Planning Statement has been prepared by Jill Naylor of Emery Planning (to follow).

Structural Analysis

A Structural Survey has been carried out at the property by PKD Consulting Engineers and the Survey Report confirmed that **'the main fabric of the structure is considered satisfactory for conversion, without the need for major demolition or rebuilding works'**.

It should be noted that any demolition and rebuilding of the existing building is recommended rather than obligatory; the structure could be braced in situ. Any remedial work to the existing building recommended by the structural engineer could be undertaken without planning consent.

This report is included in this submission.

Viability Commercial Use

As the existing buildings have been deemed by the planning authority to be in residential use, planning policy R2 should not apply. However, for avoidance of doubt, the viability of the existing buildings and their location for commercial use have been assessed by John Robinson of Whittaker & Biggs.

The report noted that there is a good supply of commercial property in primary locations, Congleton, Macclesfield and Leek, this has led to empty units in secondary areas outside the service centres.

The distance from the town centres, combined with the single width road, lack of parking and turning space, and poor broadband and mobile phone coverage means that if converted the space is likely to remain unlet.

The site is outside the main tourist area, although some lettings may be achievable in peak holiday periods, it is unlikely to achieve sufficient lets to offset the conversion costs.

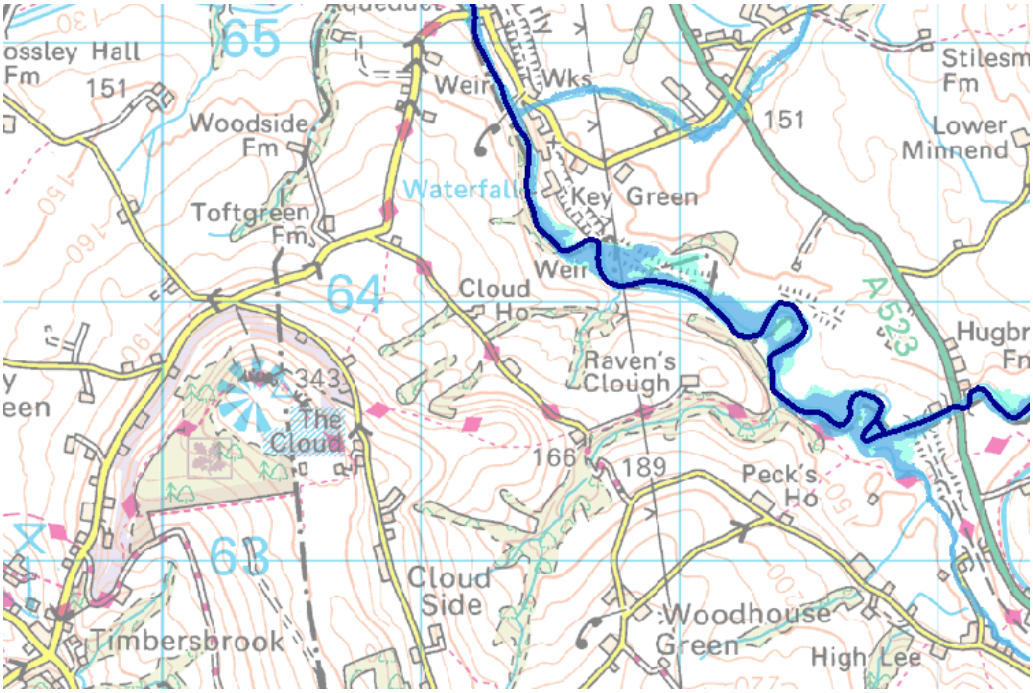
The buildings are in poor repair, the renovation and conversion costs, outweigh the potential rental return.

Conversion to residential use as separate dwellings is therefore the only viable way to secure the future of these non-designated heritage assets.

Flood Risk

The site is not in a flood zone or in an area identified as at risk of flooding.

The Flood Risk is noted as 'Very Low' which means that each year, this area has a chance of flooding of less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%).



Consultation

Local Planning Authority

A pre-application enquiry was made in 2013, reference 13/00169/PREAPP. The case officer, Wayne Johnson, confirmed that the proposals to convert the buildings present on site to residential accommodation were acceptable in principle.

The case officer recommended a marketing exercise to establish the principle of the development. A viability report for the site was therefore prepared by Whittaker & Biggs, confirming that no suitable commercial or tourism use was viable.

The case officer noted that a structural report was required to demonstrate that the building could be converted without significant rebuilding. A structural report has been prepared and is included with this submission.

The case officer noted that a protected species survey was required to determine whether the existing building contained any protected species. A Protected Species Survey has been carried out and a report prepared which is included with this submission.

The case officer advised that the proposals should be contained within the existing shell of the building, with minimal alterations undertaken in order to protect the agricultural appearance of the building.