Malthouse Farm
New Road
Dilhorne
Staffordshire
ST10 2PQ
Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Building to form 2no. Dwellings (Class C3), and for Associated Operational Development
17/09/2016

Conversion of agricultural building at Malthouse Farm, New Road, Dilhorne, Staffordshire

Planning Statement



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant Mr and Mrs J Finney to accompany a submission for full planning permission seeking change of use of a redundant agricultural building in order to create 2no. dwellings (Class C3).

1.2 This statement supports the application and considers the planning issues associated with the proposal.

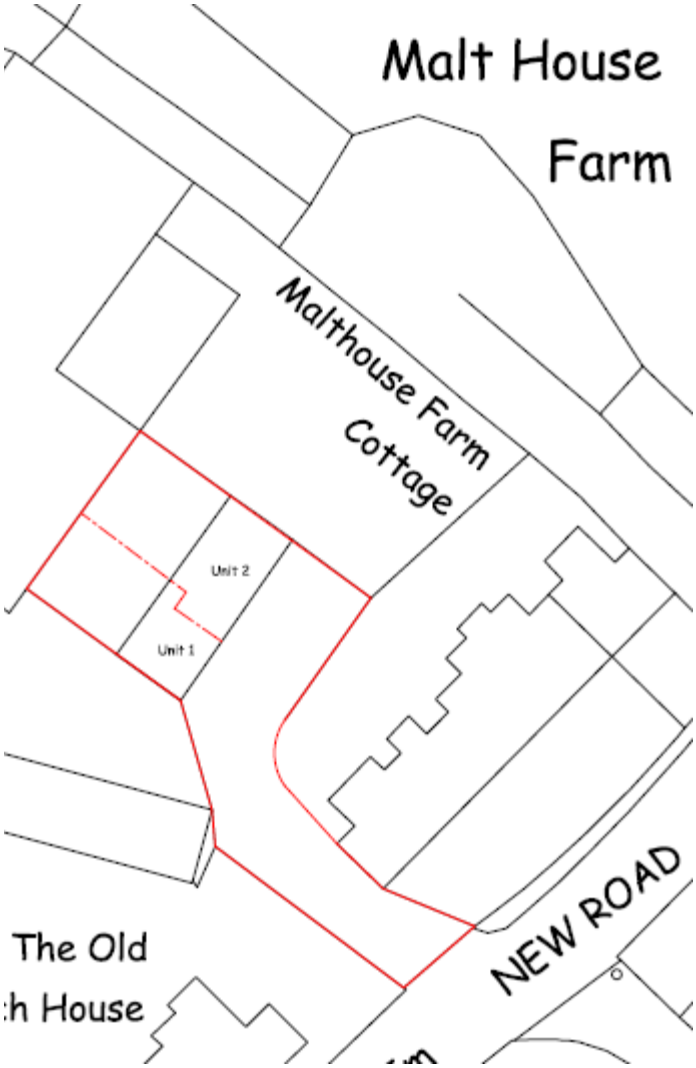
1.3 The structure of the statement is as follows:

- A description of the application site and its surroundings;
- A review of the planning history for the site and surroundings;
- A description of the proposal;
- A review of the national and local planning policies of relevance to the scheme; and
- An appraisal of the scheme against the relevant policy context

2.0 The Application Site and Surroundings

2.1 The application site is located within the farmstead known as Malthouse Farm, New Road, Dilhorne, Staffordshire Moorlands and is within the Green belt as defined in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998).

2.2 The agricultural unit contains a number of buildings including the farmhouse and the application building, which was in use solely for agriculture in association with dairy farming, until 28th May 2013 and there has been no material change to the use of this building since last in use.



Site Plan Extract (Not to Scale)

2.3 The application site consists of a brick built former threshing barn, which is double height and was previously extended over a period of time with single storey additions to assist with the dairy farming. The latter additions have now been removed and there is evidence of repair work on the outer brick skin of the building with the addition of window casements to ensure the building has remained weatherproof.

2.4 The form and plan of threshing barns remained comparatively unaltered between the 12th and early 19th Centuries; typically displaying blank exteriors, with provision for ventilation to the storage bays and doors opening into the threshing floor. This barn has clearly been used for the purpose of dairying in terms of last agricultural purpose. The barn interior is generally open and plain, which is likely a sign of latter conversions to allow the dairying process to operate, which is simply another layer in the morphology of the farm.



2.5 There are a series of agricultural sheds to the rear of the application building, which form the backdrop to the intended garden areas, which would offer private amenity for future occupants. The buildings situated on this boundary are in continued use for agricultural storage as opposed to any noisy activity associated with the operation of the rest of the unit.

3.0 Planning History

3.1 Acknowledged as some of the most ubiquitous of historic building types in the countryside, traditional barn buildings are of course important in providing a sense of place and local distinctiveness but also represent an economic asset in terms of capacity for accommodating new uses, as recognised within recent changes made by Government to permitted development rights.

3.2 Government introduced permitted development rights in 2014 (Class MB) to allow for the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into residential dwellings without the need for planning permission; these rights were then confirmed in the consolidated GPDO 2015 (Part 3, Class Q). The Government's intention has been clear that these rights are to support increased housing supply in rural locations without the need to build in the countryside.

3.3 It is in this context in which the applicant sought to utilise this building for a positive purpose. However, the Local Planning Authority determined in 2016 that due to the nature of the repair work carried out to the barn

following the closure of the dairying use, that the rights offered under Part 3, Class Q could not be utilised. However, the case officer clearly noted the acceptance of a scheme in principle, which would see beneficial re-use for residential purposes subject to appropriate conversion.

3.4 Of material relevance to any future determination of this application are the previous approvals relating to conversion to residential use within the listed cottage attached the farmhouse (Grade II Listed Buildings) and associated Listed Building Consents for internal alterations and alterations to windows.

3.5 The search has revealed that a series of planning permissions have been granted in the surrounding vicinity which include the conversion of former agricultural buildings for residential purposes. Those of note are listed below:

- 11/01089/FUL – Old Engine Farm Birchenfields Lane, Dilhorne, Staffordshire ST10 2PX, The conversion of a former agricultural building to a single residential dwelling – Approved with conditions
- 11/00470/OUT – Royal Oak Inn High Street, Dilhorne, Staffordshire ST10 2PE, 3 new dwellings and associated car parking facilities (Outline)
- 10/00569/FUL - Day House Farm Sarver Lane, Dilhorne, Staffordshire Moorlands ST10 2PD, Change of use of former cowshed to ancillary residential accommodation

These applications are all of relevance to this planning submission given the location of these sites within the Green belt.

4.0 The Proposed Scheme

4.1 This is a full planning application for the conversion of a redundant agricultural building, together with minor rebuilding works in association with the creation of 2no. new dwellings with associated private amenity space.

4.2 The proposed conversion would involve modest but necessary additions in the form of window and entrance door insertions, which would not result in any material increase in the existing floorspace available. The work would have the result of enabling an efficient layout capable of accommodating 1no. two bedroom and 1no. three bedroom property.

4.3 The main aspirations for the conversion are to bring about the effective, sustainable re-use of a rural building. It would result in the continued stewardship of the building without detriment to the visual amenity or openness of the surroundings.

4.4 Internally, the dwelling would provide modest accommodation, consisting of open plan living/kitchen/dining space in the smaller unit with a physically partitioned living and kitchen/dining space in the larger of the two units.

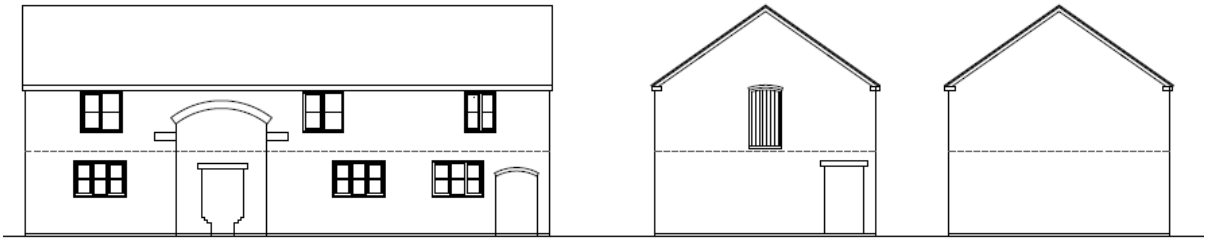
4.5 The residential curtilage of each unit is defined in plan form but the only physical signs externally of this will be in the form of a post and rail fence supplemented with hedgerow planting between the gardens to the rear and the insertion of two separate entrance doors. To ensure that the proposed use of the building has a minimal impact upon the landscape the applicant would expect the Local Planning Authority to remove all permitted development rights relating to extensions, improvements or alterations within the curtilage including the provision of any boundary treatments.

4.6 Access to the site for vehicles and pedestrians is to be maintained in its current location. All arrangements for refuse collection are to be consistent with those which exist for the site.

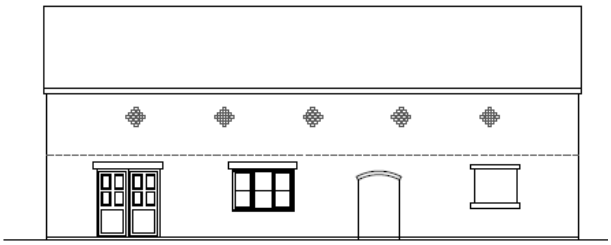


Private amenity space to be afforded to future dwellings

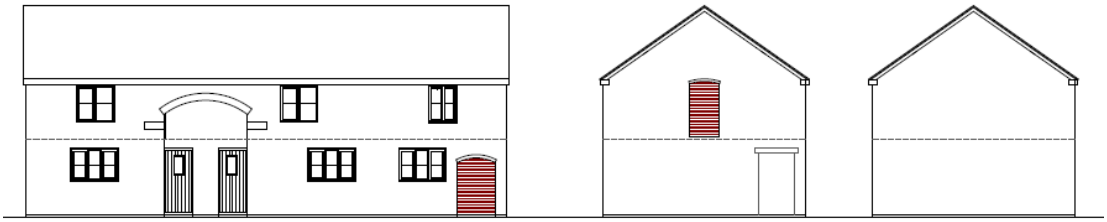
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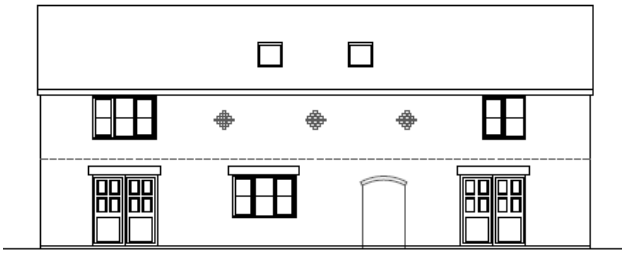
Existing Front Elevation | Existing Side Elevation | Existing Side Elevation



Existing Rear Elevation



Proposed Front Elevation | Proposed Side Elevation | Proposed Side Elevation



Proposed Rear Elevation

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposed scheme is set out within the following documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (26th March 2014)
- Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents

5.2 The proposals should be assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

5.3 Section 7 of the NPPF sets out the position regarding the design of the built environment. Planning policies and decisions are required to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

5.4 Section 9 of the NPPF 'Protecting Green Belt Land' sets out the position concerning Green belt land for the decision making authority. It is made clear that there are five main purposes for including land within the Green belt, amongst which is the aim to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. When considering planning applications within the Green belt it is clear that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development and such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances.

5.5 Section 11 of the NPPF highlights the need for the planning system to give consideration to the protection of biodiversity. The planning system should promote sustainable forms of development whilst minimising impacts upon biodiversity and providing net gains where possible.

5.6 The proposal will need to be considered against the statutory development plan, consisting of relevant policies contained within the Core Spatial Strategy as adopted in 2014.

5.7 The adopted proposals map identifies the site as being located within the Green belt, making adopted policies R1, R2, DC1, DC2 and SS6c of direct relevance.

5.8 Policy R1 sets out the approach with regards to Rural Diversification, which clearly states that development of this nature will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside. This policy makes clear that inappropriate development within the GreenBelt, which is otherwise acceptable within the context of this policy, will still require justification by very special circumstances.

5.9 Policy R2 sets out the position with respect of rural housing and the scenarios in which it will be accepted outside of settlement and infill boundaries. Within this context conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be accepted where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms and it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable.

5.10 Policies DC1 and DC2 are also of relevance to the scheme and highlight general design matters relevant to the consideration of development proposals, with Policy DC2 highlighting general level of protection, which will be afforded to the Historic Environment which is consistent with the general aims of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990).

5.11 Policy SS6c sets out the Rural Areas Area Strategy and again makes clear the position of continuing to exercise strict control over inappropriate development within the GreenBelt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government Policy.

5.12 It is deemed that SPG: Design Principles in the Staffordshire Moorlands is a material consideration.

6.0 Planning Appraisal

6.1 Having regard to the planning policy context as described, it is thought that the main issues to be considered are as follows:

- Principle of residential use
- Design Issues relevant to conversion of agricultural building
- Potential impact upon the surrounding landscape

6.2 **Principle of residential use**

6.3 The principle of the proposed conversion of this agricultural building should be assessed against the guidance contained within the NPPF and the relevant local plan policies.

6.4 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that:

"Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt… [this includes] the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction."

6.5 The adopted local policies contained within the Core Strategy ensure that any planning applications for inappropriate development would be refused unless special circumstances exist.

6.6 However, this submission seeks to re-use an existing rural building for residential purposes, the principle of which does comply with relevant development plan policies and importantly the NPPF as a material consideration.

6.7 It has been made clear in a previous submission, which attempted to utilise permitted development rights for such conversion (not qualifying due to the previous works carried out on the building for the purposes of general

maintenance) that the use of the agricultural building has now ceased to be viable (dairying) and that it is no longer required for the function of the agricultural unit. Given the site context i.e. proximity to listed farmhouse and attached cottage (within what is in effect a courtyard arrangement) it is deemed unsuitable for further commercial use given that any office/professional use would be in conflict with the general aims of the NPPF in respect of main town centre uses. Furthermore, the conflict between potential commercial activity (which is unrelated to the agricultural unit) and existing residential receptors would be deemed unsuitable.

6.8 Given that the site is already accessible by vehicle it is considered that the re-use of this building for residential purposes would not be out of character or obtrusive within the landscape.

6.9 The NPPF seeks to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. In this case the proposal seeks conversion, with a limited number of building operations to a vacant structure. The applicant commissioned a bat and breeding bird survey in 2016, which concluded that no evidence of bats or their field signs or the presence of breeding birds was observed during the detailed external and internal inspection of the barn. The barn is deemed to be **of negligible to low suitability for bats.** The potential addition of hedgerow to the garden boundary treatment would result in net gain in terms of habitat thereby complying with the objectives of the NPPF.

6.10 **Design Issues relevant to conversion of agricultural building**

6.11 Design policies DC1 and DC2 are consistent with the aims of the NPPF in relation to design and the historic environment. Clearly whilst there is variation in design and materials used for farm buildings there are typical design considerations relevant to most conversion proposals.

6.12 After review of policies DC1 and DC2 the following matters are considered to be of key relevance to the proposal:

- incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- respect the site and surroundings
- enhance the setting of the designated assets
- provide for safe and satisfactory access
- protect amenity of the area, including residential amenity, outlook and privacy
- sustain and respect the building and features, which contribute to the character of the site

6.13 The retention of features within the barn has been carefully considered despite the apparent changes to the structure carried out over the latter phases of its operational life. In this case the retention of ventilation slits within the rear elevation of the barn have been considered within the scheme, which provide evidence of former use and contribute to significance; these can be glazed within the aperture or blocked on the

inner face, the detail of which can be controlled by condition. Whilst the proposals tabled indicate the locations of openings and style of casement the Local Planning Authority may impose planning conditions in respect of the recess, texture and format of the finish, for example, use of vertical boards within what was a previous cart door entrance.

6.14 The barn is located within the farmstead and specifically to the rear of the courtyard in which the main Farmhouse and adjoining cottage are located (both Grade II Listed Buildings fronting onto New Road). The barn forms part of this setting, and the proposal seeks to re-use this now redundant structure in a positive manner. The barn does have land to the rear, which can be utilised as private amenity space and is very much encompassed by existing storage buildings therefore the effect of such changes on the wider landscape character will be limited.

The boundary treatments within the garden areas can also be subject to condition together with conditions aligned to parking (i.e. provision of marked bays within the shared courtyard if deemed necessary, albeit the applicant would contend that such formality is not required given the shared space available for future occupants and the desire to maintain an informal character in this courtyard space).

6.15 Maximising daylight without compromising the character of the barn is a key consideration for not only the integrity of the building but also for the amenity of future occupants. Light was not typically important for many farmstead functions, such as storage of hay or accommodation of cattle

but clearly changes were made to the fabric of the buildings with insertion of openings as the use of the buildings developed.

In this case the barn has been adapted over time and there is clear evidence of the insertion of openings and repair of the external brick skin following the removal of redundant out-shut additions. The works of repair and maintenance of openings were clearly considered necessary to maintain the integrity of the building and whilst officers have indicated in the previous prior approval determination that these alterations have negatively affected the character of the barn there is an opportunity to condition the final detail in respect of the material finishes to the building.

6.16 In subdividing the barn to create the relevant residential units consideration has been given to the open interior and need to minimise compartmentalisation as far as possible whilst still allowing for functional conversion. Accordingly the retention of internal walls is evident within the proposed floor plans with the living space considered in this context. Clearly the conversion of buildings of this nature come with their difficulty but with sensitive interventions such as the use of conservation rooflights to upper floors allows both functional space and sensitive alteration.



6.17 **Potential Impact upon the surrounding landscape**

6.18 It is considered that in this case a residential conversion would be more appropriate in terms of the impact upon the openness of the GreenBelt. The use of the site for economic purposes would likely result in a more intensive use and detract from the character of the Green belt and also negatively impact upon the residential amenity of existing residents within the farmhouse and attached cottage.

6.19 The dwellings integration into the landscape will ensure minimal harm to the rural character and openness of the Green belt, due to the use of unobtrusive materials and limited alteration to the scale and mass of the structure.

6.20 The proposed scheme has been designed to respect the landscape character and maintain its distinctiveness, taking cues from the SPG with regards conversions. The limited alterations to the existing external fabric of the building have been designed with the intention that the natural landscape and associated habitats are maintained.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The proposed conversion scheme is of a high design quality and is sensitive to the character of the immediate surroundings and its wider setting. The proposal should not be viewed as inappropriate development within the Green belt and accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Development Plan where relevant.

7.2 Finally if there are any concerns or queries from officers, in the spirit of being proactive, the applicant requests that contact is made with their agent in advance of any formal determination.