

PLANNING STATEMENT

OLD FURNACE FARM, OAKAMoor

OCTOBER 2016

Site Address:

Old Furnace Farm, Greendale, Oakamoor, Staffordshire, ST10 3AP

Applicant:

Mr. C. Mabey

Proposal:

Conversion and alteration of redundant agricultural building to form
1no. dwelling and erection of detached double garage

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 13th October 2016

Job Reference: RDP/2016/132

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Mabey to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany an application for the conversion and alteration of a redundant agricultural building into a dwelling at Old Furnace Farm, Greendale, Oakamoor.
- 1.2 The building proposed for conversion is of brick construction and has a shallow pitched, cladded roof. The application proposes the replacement of the existing roof of the brick building to increase its ridge height thereby facilitating the provision of a more traditional Staffordshire Blue plain tiled roof. Attached to the building is portal framed blockwork structure that runs the length of the building. It is proposed to demolish this structure, as well as demolishing a poor quality outbuilding located to the northwest of the building which is proposed to be replaced with a detached double garage. Access to the site will be taken from Stoney Dale to the north.
- 1.3 The accommodation proposed within the dwelling will encompass an open-plan kitchen/diner/living room, utility room, boot room, wet room, two bedrooms (one ensuite) and bathroom at ground floor, with a master bedroom, ensuite, dressing room and study/nursery at first floor.
- 1.4 Planning permission has previously been granted on the site for the conversion of the brick building to form three holiday cottages (SMD/2006/0887) but this was not implemented owing to concerns about the viability of the project, and has since lapsed.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The building proposed for conversion is located to the north of the existing farmhouse at Old Furnace Farm, and sits at a lower level to the adjacent highway (Stoney Dale) that runs along the western boundary of the site. The building is single storey in nature, with a shallow pitched roof and is attached at its southern end to two larger buildings which form part of an approved livery use. The livery use also extends into the portal framed structure that is attached to the eastern elevation of the brick building. The site benefits from two access points, one to the immediate north, and one to the west beyond the farmhouse, both connecting with Stoney Dale / Greendale. The landscape to the east slopes upwards towards Oak Cottage, whilst to the south the landscape gently down towards Dimmingsdale. The site is well enclosed by vegetation along its western and northern flanks. The location of the site in its surrounding context can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site



Source: Google Maps

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 (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.1 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.*

3.2 Policy SS6c of the adopted 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. The policy goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs by (amongst others):

- *Allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2.*

3.2 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable 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 through a marketing exercise, or its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

3.3 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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.

3.3 Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by, amongst others;

- *Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*
- *Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*
- *Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;*

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development, including the delivery of new housing and seeks to secure high quality design. The provisions of the NPPF are discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 The application proposes the conversion and alteration of a redundant agricultural building or brickwork and clad roof construction to create a single dwelling. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that within the rural areas, the Council will meet essential local needs by allowing the conversion of an existing rural building to residential use where it accords with policy R2 of the Core Strategy. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable 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 through a marketing exercise, or its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

5.2 It is submitted that the existing building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion given its brickwork construction and close physical association to the farmhouse. It is nevertheless proposed that the existing roof of the building is replaced with a steeper pitched roof in order to enable Staffordshire Blue plain clay tiles to be utilised. In doing so the appearance and setting of the building will be significantly enhanced, and will reinforce the traditional characteristics of the site, as exhibited by the farmhouse. The building will nevertheless retain a subordinate relationship to the existing farmhouse, and owing to its setting within the landscape and lower position in relation to the highway, will not have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the local area.

5.3 Such beneficial enhancements are considered to weigh in favour of the proposed development and are considered to be acceptable in planning terms. I reach this conclusion having regard to the provisions for development within the Green Belt (of which this site is acknowledged to not form part), which allows for the extension of existing buildings provided that the extensions do not result in disproportionate additions. The Government attaches significant weight to the Green Belt and yet permits such extensions. By contrast the Government does not attach significant weight to the open countryside. The works to the roof of the building are modest, and will beneficially enhance the appearance and character of the building to the benefit of the local area, and as such I consider them to be justified in planning terms.

- 5.4 It is furthermore submitted that agricultural or commercial / tourism use is not viable for this building. The accompanying spreadsheet prepared by the applicant is based on the holiday cottage scheme approved under application SMD/2006/0887. The figures set out the costings of operating the business against the projected income, taking into account the costs of conversion (estimated to be £100,000), maintenance, utilities, commission to the holiday let operator (two approached and both wanted 20%), insurance, advertising and labour. The figures show that the business would make a loss in year one, and turn a negligible profit from year 3 onwards. Evidently, this is therefore not a viable enterprise.
- 5.5 Discussions with the two holiday operators furthermore highlighted concerns about the attractiveness of the cottages to prospective customers, noting the following:
- *The property was not within walking distance of any amenities, in particular a public house or basic shop;*
 - *Possible food deliveries would be limited due to remoteness;*
 - *Although a very pleasant location, views from within the units were only of an elevated field opposite.*
- 5.6 These concerns serve to reinforce the conclusion that holiday use is not a viable option for this building, and that it will not deliver sufficient returns to warrant the investment requirement to convert the building in the first place. This is reflected in the fact that the applicant opted to let the planning permission lapse rather than implement it. There are no other uses which are considered to be more appropriate or viable, as office uses for example favour locations within easy reach of their customers and there are

numerous custom offices available in areas such as Leek and Cheadle. Residential use is therefore the only realistically viable option available. As a consequence the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of policy R2 of the Core Strategy.

- 5.7 The isolated nature of this site is acknowledged and in this regard consideration has been given to the provisions of paragraph 55 of the NPPF. Paragraph 55 states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- *Where the development would reuse redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting*

- 5.8 It is submitted that the proposed development accords with the above exception in that it will see the replacement of the existing poor quality roof, with a steeper pitched roof thus enabling the use of traditional Staffordshire Blue plain clay tiles. This will make the building more in keeping with the adjacent farmhouse. Further enhancements to the setting of the building will be derived from the proposed demolition of the blockwork structure that is attached to the eastern elevation of the building. This is of poor quality and contributes little to the character of the area, and its removal will open up views from the brick building and enhance its overall setting. The proposed demolition of the poor quality outbuilding to the north of the barn and its replacement with a high quality detached garage constitutes a further enhancement to the setting of the building, and taking these considerations into account I submit that the proposed development accords with the provisions of paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

- 5.9 It is also submitted that the proposed development would not result in unsustainable travel patterns having regard to the fact that the proposal involves the cessation of a significant proportion of the existing livery use, which generates visits from horse owners twice a day. These vehicles movements would far outweigh in number those which would be associated with the proposed residential use, and thus the proposal will represent a beneficial enhancement in terms the sustainable travel patterns.

Design & Layout

- 5.10 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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.
- 5.11 The submitted proposal has been designed to respect its surroundings and seeks to enhance the appearance of the existing building by virtue of its replacement roof, and will enhance the setting of the building by virtue of the demolition of the existing blockwork structures adjacent. The proposal makes beneficial reuse of existing openings in a manner which reflects the alterations that were approved under application SMD/2006/0887, and new openings are limited to the insertion of rooflights and alterations of existing openings. The rooflights will be of the flush fitting variety and will not result in any wider harm to the character of the area.
- 5.12 The proposed detached garage is also considered to be of a high quality design, and will represent a considerable visual enhancement compared to the poor quality built it will replace. The building will have a traditionally proportioned scale and will sit at a lower level to the highway thereby

avoiding any significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding. The resultant development as a whole is one of a high quality design that will derive benefits to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and as such the proposal accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on the Landscape

- 5.13 Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will protect and where possible, enhance the local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. It goes on to state that it will support development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement.
- 5.14 The application site is not appraised within the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessments for Cheadle or Alton as it lies midway between the two. It is nevertheless considered that the proposed development will not give rise to harm to character of the landscape, as it proposes the demolition of two poor quality blockwork structures on the site, and the reuse and alteration of an existing building. The proposed domestic curtilage is to be encompassed within the footprint of the blockwork structures being removed and the area of hardstanding in front, and subject to appropriate landscaping to enclose the curtilage, will not result in any adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the landscape. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC3 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

- 5.15 The proposed dwelling will be accessed via the existing driveway that feeds onto Stoney Dale to the north of the site. This road is lightly trafficked and it is considered that the proposed residential use will have no greater impact on highway safety than the uses that currently occupy the brick barn (agricultural) and its attached blockwork building (livery). Indeed traffic movements will be significantly less than the existing livery use where horse owners visit the site twice a day. To this end the proposal is considered unlikely to result in significant harm to highway safety in the locality.

Other Matters

- 5.16 In addition to the above matters, it is considered that there are a number of other material considerations which weigh in favour of the proposed development. The first of these is the Local Authority's inability to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing which means that this proposal has to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy, and paragraph 14 of the NPPF. As a consequence, this proposal should only be refused if any adverse impacts of doing so would *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development.
- 5.17 The conversion of the building to residential use is considered to be acceptable in the context of the NPPF as the proposal entails the reuse of a redundant building and will derive enhancements to its setting. Such environmental enhancements are considered to weigh in favour of the proposal. The application will furthermore deliver a number of social and economic benefits associated with helping the Local Authority to meet its housing needs, and the additional expenditure that would be derived from the creation of an additional household. These benefits are considered to

weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development and should be taken into consideration when the application is determined.

- 5.18 The application is also accompanied by a Bat Survey prepared by Charnia Ecology. This report identifies the presence a maternity bat roost in building B3 which adjoins the buildings proposed for demolition and alteration. It sets out a series of recommendations in order to avoid any adverse impact on bats during the development and these can be secured by way of appropriately worded planning condition.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- 6.2 It is considered that this proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan having regard to the following conclusions:

- *The building is considered suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion;*
- *The building is unsuitable for continued agricultural use or alternative commercial/tourism reuse as evidenced by the accompanying viability figures;*

- *The proposal entails the reuse of a redundant building and will derive a number of enhancements to its setting and thus accords with paragraph 55 of the NPPF;*
- *The replacement of the existing roof amounts to a limited alteration to the existing building that will derive a beneficial enhancement to the appearance of the building and the wider character of the site;*
- *The proposal makes beneficial reuse of existing openings in a manner which reflects the alterations approved in the previous planning consent on the site;*
- *The proposal will not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape;*
- *The proposal will not give rise to harm to highway safety in the locality, taking into account the existing uses within the buildings;*
- *The proposal will deliver a number of material planning benefits in the content of the three dimensions of sustainable development;*
- *The proposed development will not give rise to harm to protected species.*

6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS6c, R2, DC1, and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal will furthermore not result in any adverse impacts sufficient to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

- 6.4 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission accordingly in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.