

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2016/0322
Valid 23/06/2016

HOME FARM BRADSHAW
LANE
IPSTONES

PROPOSED MIXED USE
DEVELOPEMENT
COMPRISING OF
CONVERSION OF
REDUNDANT AGRICULTURAL
BUILDINGS TO FORM THREE
OPEN MARKET DWELLINGS, 1
AGRICULTURAL DWELIING
AND A HOLIDAY COMPLEX
COMPRISING OF FOUR
LETTING UNITS. EXISTING
OUTBUILDINGS TO BE USED
FOR CAR PARKING AND
ANCILLARY
STORAGE/AMENITY
FACILITIES AND CONTINUED
AGRICULTURAL USE OF
PART OF STEEL FRAMED
BUILDING FOR ON SITE
FARMING OPERATIONS.
AMENITY SPACE AND
CARPARKING TO BE
CREATED THROUGHOUT THE
SITE BY MINOR
REPOSITIONING OF PART OF
THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY
CONCRETE BLOCK WALL TO
BE REPLACED BY A STEEL
PARKLAND STYLE FENCE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of conversion of farm buildings in this location into other uses.
- Impact on the character and appearance of the rural area and the landscape.
- The impact on residential amenity of current and future residents.
- The impact on the ecological value of the site.
- The impact on the highway network.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in an area of open countryside a couple of miles to the north-west of the village of Ipstones and lies near the end of a long track to the Sharpcliffe Hall (a listed residence). It comprises old farm buildings (dating back to Victorian area) including a large hay barn and a cattle building which are both redbrick and tile structures proposed to be converted. Farming is being re-introduced into the surrounding land and a modern farm building has recently been completed to the east of the old former farm buildings. Open farmland lies to the south, north and east of the site. There is a dwelling immediately to the west of the site and further to the west lies the Sharpcliffe Hall estate.

PROPOSAL

The application is for the conversion of the U-shaped cattle building (in the west part of the site) into three 2-bed dwellings and the conversion of the haybarn (in the central part of the site) into four 3-bed holiday lets (two on the ground floor and two above) and also a small 2-bed agricultural workers dwelling in the lean-to structure (an original part of the building) on the east elevation. Plans have been amended to show the re-cladding of an untidy modern farm building close to the site entrance to be re-used for fodder and implement storage for the farm operation and also (in around 25% of the building) cycle storage and general storage for the new uses in the converted buildings. There is an old brick-and-tile open fronted building also close to the site entrance which would be used for the parking of three cars for the new uses. There are eight further parking spaces allocated in the existing outdoor yard areas, two of which are suitable for disabled parking and two of which can be used for mini-bus parking (if needed).

The original plans showed the provision of new parking spaces beyond (to the south of) the former boundary of the farm building complex which is marked by a dilapidated stone wall. Amended plans show the re-building of the stone wall in the existing position and the removal of parking spaces to the north of the wall and therefore inside the farm building complex (in order to prevent development/hard-surfacing encroaching into open land and beyond the original confines of the old farmstead (which is a heritage asset). This was on the advice of the Conservation Officer. The number of parking spaces has reduced (it was considered the number originally provided was excessive for the size of units proposed). The amended plans also show alterations to the western elevation of the cattle (U-shaped) building on advice from the Conservation Officer.

The application includes a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Archaeology Report, Ecology Report and Structural Survey Report.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives

SS1 Development Principles

SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
SS7 Churnet Valley
DC2 Historic Environment
DC Landscape and Setting
E3 Tourism and Cultural Development
NE1 Biodiversity
R1 Rural Diversification
R2 Rural Housing

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 3 (Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy), 6 (Housing), 7 (Design), 10 (Climate Change), 11 (Natural Environment) and 12 (Historic Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2015/0309: Replacement of hay barn with new-build detached farm workers dwelling. Refused.

DET/2014/0026: Prior notification application for the conversion of the cow building into two dwellings. Refused. Appeal dismissed (on the grounds of lack of demonstration of previous agricultural usage and for ecology reasons).

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 16.8.16
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

Letters of objection have been received from five people, some of which live close to the site. The points raised are as follows:

- Would not retain the scenic and quiet character of the area and therefore would not attract tourists
- No mains drainage and inadequate water supply to area
- The private road is poor quality and cannot accommodate extra traffic
- Car parking will disrupt setting
- Harm to wildlife and woodland due to increase in visitors and traffic
- Isolated and unsustainable location leading to increased vehicle emissions
- Increase in noise and light pollution
- The application does not demonstrate that the buildings have a poor structural quality

- There have been recent commercial and agricultural uses of the buildings so these are therefore capable of continued use rather than a change of use
- An agricultural workers dwelling is not necessary on site.

Town / Parish Comments

Voted against the application on the grounds of overdevelopment, lack of a water supply, only one access, situated on a private road and loss of a unique barn.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objection.

SCC Rights of Way Officer

No objection raised but advises of legal right concerning the public right of way running along the north boundary (where the access track is located).

SCC Historic Environment Advisor

No objection subject to a condition requiring archaeological work to be undertaken before works commence.

Severn Trent Water

No objection subject to standard conditions requiring methods of foul and surface water drainage.

Conservation Officer

The design of the conversion of both buildings is acceptable in terms of the impact on the historic character and appearance of the area, subject to further alterations and also a number of planning conditions.

Tree/Landscaping Officer

No objection in terms of the impact on existing mature trees subject to conditions requiring an arboricultural method statement and details of proposed service pipes/infrastructure.

Ecology Officer

A bat roost has been detected in the cattle building but no objection raised subject to conditions requiring building works method statements to ensure no works affect bats and also requiring possible nesting sites for swallows (another protected species).

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

With regard to the conversion of the “cow house” (the U-shaped building in the west part of the site), Policy R2 ‘Rural Housing’ allows the conversion of rural buildings if they are suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms. The building is a solid Victorian redbrick and tile farm building that formed part of a historic farmstead and for this reason is considered to be a “non-designated heritage asset” and therefore would be deemed suitable for conversion in this respect. The policy (and Policy R1 – Rural Diversification) prioritises the conversion of suitable rural buildings into commercial uses rather than residential uses if no longer needed for agriculture, unless the building is considered to be of ‘particular merit’ and the conversion would safeguard the building. Again, I consider the building would fall under this category. The structural survey reports show that due to age, the building is deteriorating and there are faults with the building. Although major re-building works would not be necessary, it is clear that the building would deteriorate further without some form of works which can feasibly be achieved by way of a residential conversion scheme.

It is clear that the site is not in a sustainable location. It is in a remote rural location near the end of a long badly maintained track and a private vehicle is required to access the nearest shops and services, which are located in the village of Ipstones, two miles away, which has a general store and a primary school. The building is not suitable for the re-introduction of farming due to modern farming methods and change in standards, so a residential conversion providing three dwellings, would generate an increase in vehicle movements and hence emissions. However, one advantage with the scheme is that the units would be small two-bedroom dwellings which as well as being particularly in demand in the District, would be likely to lead to a low level of car ownership per unit. The increase in vehicle movements would be slight and in any case would be lower than the conversion to many commercial uses (especially offices). I consider the benefits of the scheme in securing the future of a heritage asset (and providing small units of accommodation) would outweigh the unsustainable location.

With regard to the conversion of the hay barn into holiday lets, there is general encouragement for tourist related development in this part of the District within the Churnet Valley. Policy S7 encourages tourist accommodation in the Churnet Valley and the site is next to walking trails and very close to attractions such as the Coombs Valley Nature Reserve. It is also approx 3 miles from the edge of the Peak District. I consider holiday let accommodation is a suitable type of tourist accommodation for this area particularly as short break or long-stay tourists tend to be drawn to remote rural locations if visiting the District. Policy E3 aims for new tourist accommodation to be located close to settlements with a range of facilities such as shops or which are in places where such services can be easily reached by walking, cycling and public transport, in the interests of sustainability and lowering emissions. As stated above, the site is not in such a location. However, in more remote areas, the policy does allow the conversion of buildings into tourist accommodation.

An Agricultural workers dwelling is an appropriate use of the lean-to structure. An earlier planning application to demolish the hay barn and replace it with a new-build agricultural workers dwelling was refused permission due to the loss of a heritage asset and also because a need for a worker to be on the farm (which is not yet in full operation) had not been demonstrated. However, whilst it is still not demonstrated that a worker essentially needs to live on the site, the conversion of a part of an existing heritage asset building into such as use is not unacceptable and does have some sustainability benefits as the farmer currently has to travel a significant distance by car to reach the farm.

Livestock farming is proposed to be re-introduced to the site (and surrounding land) and a modern farm building (to be used for livestock) was approved on this basis and is nearing completion close to the east boundary of the site. The hay barn appears to still be in the right form for hay storage purposes. However, it is deemed to be structurally unsafe and the structural report outlines significant works to make this safe such as the replacement of the roof (currently leaking) and the insertion of ties to support a gable end wall which has experienced movement (instead of re-building). Although the building could be stabilised to be re-used as a hay barn, this is unlikely to be viable and I accept that a conversion to other uses (commercial or residential) appears to be the only feasible way to allow the stabilisation of the building and safeguard a heritage asset. Furthermore, in terms of demand for hay storage, although there are hay bales kept on the adjacent fields, according to the applicant, hay is being transported for storage on another farm elsewhere (via an agreement with a local farmer) and this arrangement is proposed to continue when livestock will be introduced to the farm. Despite the significant works necessary to stabilise the building, the brickwork is considered to be in a reasonable condition and re-building would not be necessary to convert the building into habitable uses. The report also states that the inclusion of two intermediate floors would help stabilise the building further in addition to the other works outlined.

In terms of the architectural quality of the building, and heritage value, it is considered that the hay barn, like the U-shaped cow house, is a heritage asset and an integral part of the historic farmstead. I consider the benefits of securing the future of this heritage asset via the conversion to tourist accommodation (as encouraged in the Churnet Valley) outweigh both the unsustainable location of the site and the increase in emissions (from visitors cars) and also any likely need for the re-use of the building for future hay storage or any future demand for a new hay building in the future (although the current unsafe state of the hay barn and the current hay storage arrangement with a local farmer may alleviate the need for a new building in the future).

Design

There are no new buildings or extensions proposed. The scheme would help to improve two attractive heritage asset buildings which contribute positively to the character of the area. The cow house would not need any significant external alteration other than replacement windows (no new openings are needed). The hay barn would require more work as detailed in the Design and Access Statement. The most significant works would include a replacement Staffordshire blue tile roof, the vertical timber boarding-up of the large cart openings and the re-building of the west

elevation with matching brick. These alterations are supported by the Conservation Officer. The scheme would also tidy up the site.

Amended plans have been received with further enhancements which include the re-use of existing openings in the west elevation of the cow house, the reduction in parking spaces (the number originally proposed was in any case excessive), the re-building of an original stone boundary wall and the re-cladding and re-roofing of an untidy modern farm storage building (for continued agricultural use) next to the main entrance to the site, which currently detracts from the character and appearance of the area. Three of the parking spaces will be within an old brick-and-tile open fronted structure which is in keeping with the area and helps to screen vehicle. The other parking spaces are kept away from the north and south elevations of the two heritage asset buildings, allowing unobstructed views of the buildings, most essentially, from across the open landscapes to the south and from the public right of way (the main track to Sharpcliffe) to the north.

With regard to the existing trees, particularly the attractive mature trees which line the access road to the north (and which overhang the site) and the one significant tree within the site (an oak to the west of the implement store), the trees would not be harmed by the scheme but some crown lifting would be required and this is possible without harming the trees. A condition can be added requiring a method statement for this and its implementation. The oak next to the store is in a poor and unsafe condition and its loss would not be objectionable. A landscaping scheme for the whole site, which can include some replacement planting, will be necessary and can be achieved by way of a planning condition.

Amenity

There is one dwelling adjacent to the site (to the west). This would not be affected by the conversion of the nearby cow house and although amended plans show some re-openings on the west elevation, obscured glazing would be inserted into those windows. This can be achieved by way of a condition.

The re-use of the buildings as small dwellings and holiday lets would not lead to any significant noise concerns over and above the noise expected on a working farm. There are no details of proposed lighting but a condition can be added requiring these details to be assessed and approved before works commence.

Highway Safety

The long access track to Sharpcliffe is in a very poor condition with large potholes. However, this is a private road and its maintenance is the responsibility of a number of site owners in the Sharpcliffe area. It is still possible to reach the site via a car and the predicted increase in vehicle movements would not cause any traffic or highway safety issues on the nearest public highway.

Ecological Considerations

The Ecology Survey Reports submitted with the application reveal one bat roost, in the north-east (two-storey part) of the cow house. However, harm to bats can be

avoided via appropriate conversion methods including the timing of works. A condition shall be added requiring a method statement to be assessed by the Council before works commence. The elevation drawings show proposed alternative bat roosts. The condition will ensure these are provided. A separate Natural England Protected Species Licence will be required.

Other Points

Amongst the points raised by the objectors (most of which relating to issues which are addressed above in this report) was drainage, which for the Sharpcliffe area is considered to be poor quality. The site is not in a flood plain and no objection has been raised by Severn Trent Water in relation to surface water and foul water drainage. A condition can be added requiring the methods of drainage and details of drainage runs (also to ensure that any new trenches do not harm the trees to the north of the site).

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The conversion scheme complies with the policies in the Council's Core Strategy including SS6c 'Other Rural Areas Area Strategy', E3 'Tourism and Cultural Development', DC2 'The Historic Environment' and SS7 'Churnet Valley Strategy' and is in line with government guidance in the NPPF. The proposal would safeguard heritage assets and would not harm the character and amenities of the area and the design and layout would enhance the appearance of the area. These are factors considered to outweigh the unsustainable location of the site. The NPPF requires all development to have an 'environmental, economic and social role' (para. 7) as this is what constitutes sustainable development, the main aim of the NPPF. Despite the unsustainable location, an environmental role has been achieved by safeguarding heritage assets and enhancing the appearance of the site. An economic role has been achieved via the creation of tourist facilities and new dwellings. A social role has been achieved via the creation of new homes in a District which currently has a very low housing land supply (and also small units which are particularly in demand in the District).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 28.11.16

X *Jane Curley*

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council