PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING DESIGN & ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Date Issued: February 2017

SITE ADDRESS:

- Cresswell Ford Farm, Dilhorne Road, Dilhorne, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, ST10 2PH

APPLICANT:

- Mr J & Mrs A Wagstaff

PROPOSAL:

- Alterations and improvements to existing agricultural access and track to serve the site and an approved residential conversion

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for alterations and improvements to an existing agricultural access and track to serve a former agricultural building recently granted planning permission by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to form two dwellings under a Class Q prior notification application. The application has been submitted by Ken Wainman Associates Ltd on behalf of Mr J & Mrs A Wagstaff and is accompanied by drawings numbered 614-1B 1564-100 PL53 (Site Plan), a preliminary ecological survey and detailed water testing report for Great Crested Newts.

1.2 This statement analyses the site, the proposal and the policy context within which it is made. Thereafter it provides justification for approval of the proposed development on the basis that the proposal would be in accordance with adopted Development Plan policies as it represents a sustainable form of development which would not detract from the character and area of the area, nor would it be detrimental to highway safety, adversely impact on residential amenity or any neighbouring land uses or harm any established ecological interests.

2 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

The application site comprises of an irregular shaped parcel of land which extends to some 250 sq. metres and lies on the south eastern side of the junction of Caverswall Road with Dilhorne Road and Tickhill Lane. Within the site lies a former agricultural building constructed from red facing brickwork under a plain clay tile roof. The building which has an 'L' shaped footprint is predominately single storey although a short section of the building is two storey. A tin and timber lean to structure is attached to the south eastern gable of the building. The application building is accessed via a short track which leads directly off Dilhorne Lane opposite its junction with Tickhill Lane. Two modest timber outbuildings lie on the opposite side of the access track. A pond and woodland lie to the east and open countryside leading to a railway embankment lies to the south. Immediately to the north west of the site lies Cresswell Ford Farm, a detached dwelling with associated outbuildings.

The following Google Earth image shows the location of the site and its context:-



3. **THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

3.1 The application proposes the alteration and improvement of an existing agricultural access and associated track to serve a former agricultural building which has recently been granted consent to 2 residential dwellings under Class Q permitted development allowances (ref: DET/2016/0024) and the rest of the field (1.06ha) in which the building stands.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.2 The existing agricultural building is currently served by an existing access which lies immediately to the east of Cresswell Ford Farm directly opposite the junction of Dilhorne Lane and Tickhill Lane. Whilst this access is not owned by the applicants they do have a right of way over it. A number of highway related planning conditions were attached to the permission granted under Class Q (copy attached) which required upgrading works to be completed. Unfortunately due to the ownership issues it is not possible for these works to the access to be carried out.

This application therefore seeks consent for a revised access and track to serve the proposed conversion. Approximately 16 metres to the east of the approved access lies a further agricultural access. This is off set from the junction of Dilhorne Road and Tickhill Lane and is provided with a five bar galvanised gate. The agricultural track has previously been formed although as the other access is more convenient to the applicant this access is little used and has consequently grown over. Notwithstanding this it will require some improvement works to enable it to be used for residential purposes.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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.

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan, which in this area comprises of the adopted Core Strategy Development Document (2014).

5.3 Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications (para 12). The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be:-
SO1
SS1 (Development Principles);
SS6c (Development in Rural Areas);
DC1 (Design Considerations) and
DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting).

National Planning Policy Framework

5.5 There is no overarching Green Belt policy in the Core Strategy and instead it relies on the Green Belt policies in the NPPF. Chapter 9 Protecting Green Belt Land is considered to be particularly relevant to this application. For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

6. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

6.1 The key issues in determining this proposal are considered to be:-

- The impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and wider valued characteristics of the countryside including the openness and visual amenity of the North Staffordshire Green Belt within which it is located;
- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact on biodiversity

Impact on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt

6.2 The main issue to assess is the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the application site and the wider valued characteristics of the area. Paragraph 61 of the NPPF advises that securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations and that planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. Paragraph 58 advises that decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings.

6.3 The NPPF confirms that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and confirms that their essential characteristics is their openness and permanence.

6.4 The track already exists and is stoned.The upgrading works to the access and track would constitute an engineering operation which is considered to be an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt. Essentially the works would comprise of the formation of a tarmac apron at the roadside edge bordered with stone setts/cobbles. The existing 3m wide track would be regraded with the existing vegetation removed down to firm strata upon which a compacted hardcore base layer would be

constructed before finally being top dressed with limestone chippings. The first 6 metres of the track rear of the public highway would be surfaced in a bound material and any access gate would open inwards only. The upgraded track would lead directly from the highway to a permeable parking area at the front of the approved dwellings.

6.5 The width and length of the track and has been kept to the minimum practically required to serve the dwellings and is considered to be appropriate in terms of its design and materials. The proposal will maintain the openness of the Green Belt and is not considered to adversely affect its visual amenity of the Green Belt or be detrimental to the character and appearance of this rural location Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development would therefore be compliant with adopted Development Plan policies.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Core Strategy Policy DC1 states that new development should protect residential amenity in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. The proposed development is not considered to have any adverse impact on any of the surrounding dwellings. In fact the use of this access to serve the two new dwellings, rather than that previously approved, would actually result in a net benefit to the occupiers of the adjoining Cresswellford Farm as it would move vehicle movements and any associated noise away from their shared boundary.

Impact on Highway Safety

5.15 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

The existing access, although not currently used, already exists and it is not considered that its proposed use to serve the two approved residential dwellings would result in an intensification which would be objectionable on highway safety grounds. The access currently proposed is better in terms of sight lines and visibility than the other access and the fact that that this is off set from the junction of Dilhorne Road and Tickhill Lane would also result in a net improvement to highway safety. If the Highway Authority require further improvements to the sight-lines there is opportunity to set the frontage hedge back as required. There would therefore be no conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF in this regard.

Impact on Biodiversity

5.17 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core principal of the NPPF where planning policies should promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and ecological networks. In determining planning applications permission should be refused if significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for. The ethos of this is provided for in CS Policy NE1.

There are a number of standing water bodies immediately adjacent to the east and western boundaries of the application site with good connectively to the wider landscape, which comprises of open agricultural farmland, additional water bodies and intermittent blocks of ancient woodland. An initial ecological survey has been carried out this has now been supplemented with a detailed report on Great Crested Newts. This concluded that those adjoining the boundary of the application site had a below average to average scoring for maintaining Great Crested Newts. Terrestrial habitat within the application site was also considered poor quality with more preferable terrestrial habitat being available in the wider landscape. Water samples from two of the closest water bodies to the proposed development were also undertaken with both testing negative for Great Crested Newts. As a consequence of the above considerations it is considered that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on any established biological interests within or surrounding the site and that subject to a number of precautionary measures the development accords with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 109) and CS Policy NE1.

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 The proposed development is required to facilitate the conversion of two residential dwellings already granted consent under Class Q of theGPDO. The proposed development is acceptable in principle and would not harm the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt or detract from the character and appearance of the wider surrounding landscape. Furthermore, the proposed development would not be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the surrounding dwellings or neighbouring land uses; would improve highway safety and would not adversely harm the established ecological interests of the site. The Local Planning Authority is therefore respectfully requested to approve this application without delay.