Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

MILL HOUSE, CLOUDSIDE

APRIL 2017

Site Address:
Mill House, Cloudside, Congleton, Staffordshire, CW12 3QQ

Applicant:
Mrs. K. Davies

Proposal:
Erection of single storey extension and conversion / alteration of outbuilding to form additional accommodation

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 3rd April 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2017/062

Report Prepared By:
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mrs. K. Davies to seek planning permission for the erection of a single storey extension to the existing property known as Mill House, Cloudside, near Congleton, along with the associated conversion and alteration of an adjacent brick outbuilding.

1.2 The proposed extension will occupy a footprint of 26.88sq.m. and along with the conversion of the adjacent outbuilding will encompass an open plan kitchen/dining room, w/c and shower utility/boot room and bedroom.

1.3 The application follows on from the recent grant of a Lawful Development Certificate for Proposed Development which confirmed that the erection of a single storey side extension to the dwelling in the same position as that proposed in this application, would not require planning permission (SMD/2016/0514).

2 Site Description

2.1 The application site comprises a detached two storey cottage set within a substantial area of domestic curtilage, located on the western side of Cloudside. To the north of the existing dwelling lies a 1½ storey brick outbuilding, with further outbuildings located beyond that. The site is bordered to the west by agricultural fields which slope upwards in a westerly direction, and by residential development to the south. The existing highway forms the eastern boundary to the site. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, and is shown in its surrounding context in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1 – Aerial Photograph of Site



Source: Google Earth

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

3.2 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.*

3.3 Policy SS6c of the 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. Policy SS6c also confirms that strict control will continue to be

exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that 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 town and the villages:

- *Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H2.*

- *A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.*

- *Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.*

- *Extensions to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area.*

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special

character and heritage of the area. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

- *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;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

- *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;*

4 Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development. It nevertheless goes on to list a number of exceptions, which includes the extension, or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Where inappropriate development is proposed, very special

circumstances need to be demonstrated to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The content of this document is explored in more detail in the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

5.1 The application proposes the erection of a single storey side, flat roofed extension to the existing dwelling on this site, along with the conversion of the adjacent brick built outbuilding to which the extension will attach. The reuse of existing buildings is regarded as an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt provided that the building is of a permanent and substantial construction (paragraph 90 of the NPPF refers).

5.2 The accompanying Structural Survey prepared by Opus Structural Surveys demonstrates that the outbuilding is capable of conversion without significant structural repairs, with only the provision of a replacement roof necessary. Such works do not amount to significant rebuilding works nor would they give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed conversion and alteration of the outbuilding is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of paragraph 90 of the NPPF, and constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

5.3 In terms of the proposed extension it is acknowledged that the existing property on the site was originally a two-up, two-down dwelling, orientated with its principal elevation facing south. The property was then subsequently extended in the late 1950s/early 1960s on its southern side to form a kitchen, hall and sitting room at ground floor, with bedroom, bathroom and landing at first floor. When the increase in volume of these previous extensions, along with the volume of the proposed extension is taken into account, it is

considered likely that the Local Authority will regard this part of the proposal as constituting an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

5.4 The NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, and that it should not be approved except in very special circumstances (paragraph 87 refers). It goes on to state that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In this particular case the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt will be fairly limited, owing to the extension being effectively sandwiched between the two-storey form of the existing cottage, and the 1½ storey brick outbuilding adjacent.

5.5 The proposed extension is considered to be justified in the context of Green Belt policy having regard to the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Under these provisions the applicant is entitled to erect a single storey extension in the same position as that shown on the submitted plans without the requirement to seek planning permission.

5.6 This material fall back position has recently been confirmed through the grant of a Lawful Development Certificate for Proposed Development (SMD/2016/0514), and leads me to conclude that the proposal will not have any greater impact on the Green Belt than that which could be undertaken as permitted development. This established fall back position is therefore considered to carry substantial weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.7 The proposed development also proposes the demolition of an existing, poor quality, timber lean-to garage structure attached to the existing outbuilding.

Its demolition will serve to enhance the setting of the existing buildings by removing a poor quality, incongruous feature, but will also result in a reduction in the amount of built development on the site.

5.8 The proposed removal of the existing timber garage, coupled with the material fall back position established by SMD/2016/0514 leads me to conclude that very special circumstances exist in this instance to outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposed extension is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design

5.9 The proposed extension adopts a simple, contemporary, flat roofed form, and will appear as a subservient link between the existing cottage, and the 1½ storey outbuilding adjacent. The extension will be sandwiched between the existing cottage and the outbuilding, and thus only its front elevation will be visible in views from Cloudside. The upward sloping nature of the land to the west means there will be no public views of the development from elsewhere.

5.10 This single storey nature of the proposal, along with its flat roof, means that the proposed extension will retain a vista of the sloping land to the rear of the site, whilst also maintaining a sense of spaciousness between the cottage and outbuilding. In doing so the existing character of the site, and in particular the presence of the existing cottage, will be preserved. The proposed development will therefore not result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.11 In considering this matter I would also draw the Local Authority's attention to the fall back position discussed in paragraph 5.5 above. The applicant has recently confirmed by way of a Lawful Development Certificate that a nigh identical extension to that now proposed could be undertaken on this site without the need for planning permission, and I submit that this established fall back position weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development when it comes to consideration of its design and impact on the area.

5.12 In terms of the alterations to the outbuilding, the existing front elevation facing Cloudside will retain its existing simple appearance, with ground floor window and small opening above, set centrally within the gable. One new opening is proposed in the northern elevation of this building but this will be of a size and form that reflects the size of windows elsewhere on the property. The appearance of the northern elevation will furthermore be enhanced in any event by the removal of the existing poor quality timber garage that is attached to the northern side of the building. Three rooflights are proposed within the south facing roofslope of the outbuilding, but these will not have a material impact on the character of the area given the screening this roofslope is afforded by the presence of the existing cottage.

5.13 Taking all of the above considerations into account, it is considered that the proposed extension of the existing dwelling and conversion of the adjacent outbuilding will result in a high quality form of development that will have a subservient relationship to the existing cottage, whilst maintaining a sense of spaciousness between the two respective buildings. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Having regard to the aforementioned commentary it is concluded that the proposed extension of the existing dwelling and associated conversion of the existing outbuilding is acceptable in the context of Green Belt policy, and that the proposal will derive a high quality design that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c, R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development.