Design & Access Statement (Rev B)

The Old Barn, Highfields Farm, Tean: Proposed change of use and extension of existing barn structure

PP-06181254

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Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Smytheman Architectural in support of an application for full planning consent submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, commissioned on behalf of the property owners; Mr & Mrs Allen. This document intends to demonstrate that the applicant has carefully considered the site, the building and the wider context when formulating the proposals.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following drawings:

- DA-SA-XX-XX-DR-A-PL01 Location Plan & Site Plan
- DA-SA-XX-XX-DR-A-PL02_revA Existing Drawings
- DA-SA-XX-XX-DR-A-PL03_revC Proposed Drawings

Location

National Grid Reference: **SJ 99915 38643**

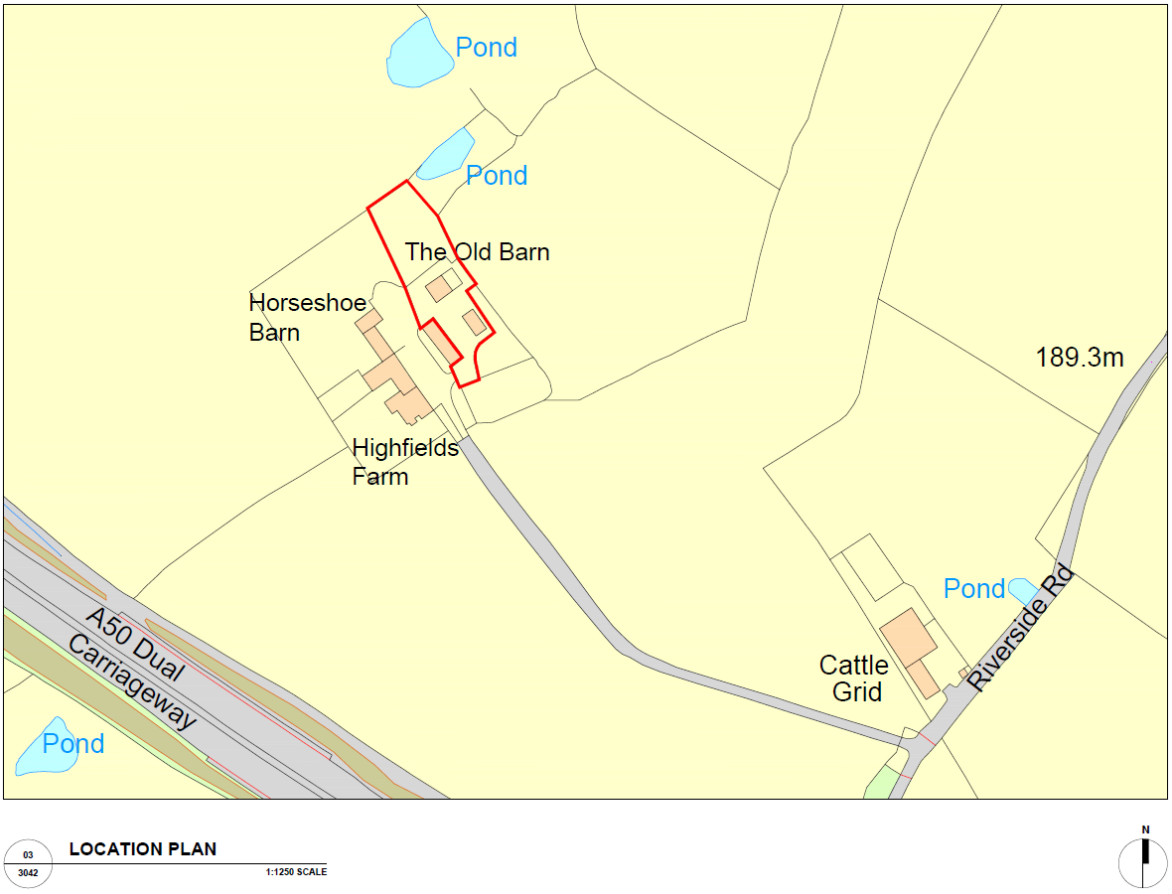

Figure 1: Site Location (edged in Red)

The proposal site is a traditional barn building that has been converted into a residential dwelling in 2005 by the applicants; Mr & Mrs Allen. Currently the property is two bedroom and has a Master Bedroom and a small children's Bedroom on the first floor.

The existing barn is thought to date from around 1850, however, in 2005 the building was in a dilapidated state. The Barn is not listed, nationally, nor locally, it is not within a conservation area.

The application site is within a 'ribbon of development' in an open rural setting, however, the site is not within designated greenbelt as the following interactive map searches reveal.

The site is a Flood Risk Zone 1 site. Meaning there is low risk of flooding.

The site area (defined by the Red Boundary) is **1450m²**.

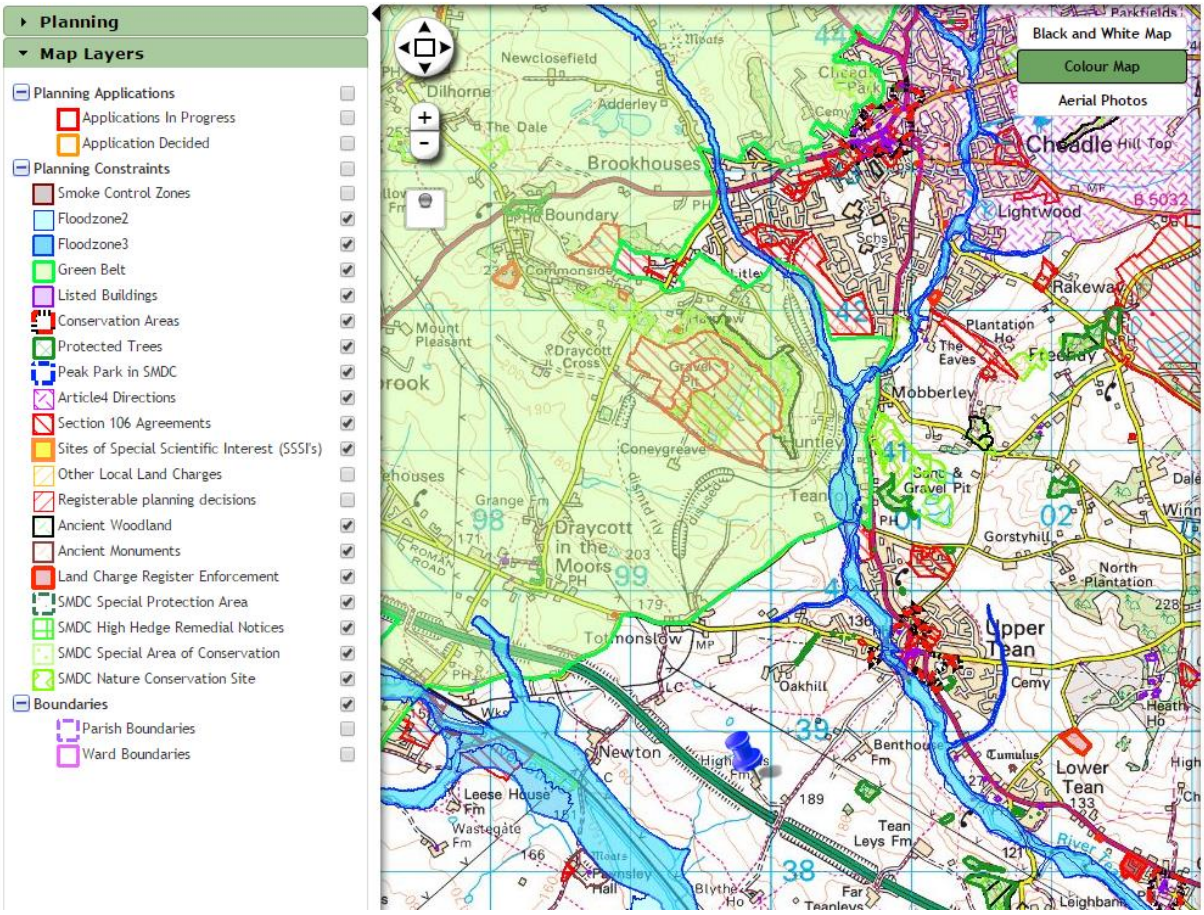

Figure 2: Interactive map extract from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council showing the site located under the 'Blue pin'. This demonstrates that the site is outside of the local authority's designated green belt areas.

Proposals

The applicants; Mr & Mrs Allen carried out the conversion and restoration of their barn-style family home in 2005-2006. At the time, the building was in a state of disrepair.



Figure 3: The condition of the barn pre-conversion.

The Allen's now have an increased need for floor area with a young family. They therefore seek consent to convert an adjoining single storey hay barn type structure that is attached to the main house which was not converted in 2005.

The proposal shall provide the following:

- Retain and further reveal the open plan ground floor footprint.
- Strengthen, insulate and waterproof the existing adjoining barn structure at ground floor level creating circa 28m^2 of new floor area. This will be subdivided to form a 'Living Room', 'Utility Room' and 'Wet Room' for cleaning family pets etc.
- Remove the existing failing roof structure and create a new second storey extension providing a 'Master Bedroom' and 'En-suite' at first floor level.
- The proposals shall be modern and 'authentic', easily distinguished in style so that the historic fabric of the building and modern additions can be easily read, they shall respect and 'conserve' the original barn walls as much as possible.
- The proposals shall be architecturally interesting in style, modern levels of insulation shall be used to conserve energy and the design style and cladding shall promote a quality of design that can be appreciated both now and in the future. This is a desire of policy when working with historic structures. However, it should be noted that there is no statutory protection in place on this building and site.



Figure 4: The principal elevations of the existing dwelling and the proposal by Smytheman Architectural retaining as much of the original fabric as possible in a contemporary manner.

The applicant seeks consent to create a lightweight timber frame “box” within the existing barn walls. This not only allows much of the original fabric to be interpreted against the new additions in an ‘authentic manner’ but it is also a very fast, simplistic method of construction, using a framed construction, modern levels of insulation and a standing seam metal cladding system.

Relevant planning policies

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council are currently working on 'The Local Plan 2016-2031', the Council intends to publish the Preferred Options Local Plan for public consultation during the Summer 2017.

Currently the Core Strategy 'Key Documents' set out the Council's town planning policies for guiding development and protecting the environment in Staffordshire Moorlands for the purposes of the 2004 Act. Additionally, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) notes have been used during the design development stages of the proposals, however, in some instances this guidance is contrary to current national policy and philosophies.

National planning policy guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for new development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.

Finally, as the existing barn has some historic value as a traditional agricultural building; 'Historic England' guidance and philosophies will be used to assess the proposals. The document: 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' will be referenced as this provides up-to-date guidance on development within the historic environment.

The proposals have been assessed against these policies in the following sections:

Local Plan

The Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy defines the strategy at the heart of the new plan making. This strategy sets out the overarching spatial planning framework for the long term regeneration. Relevant policies include:

Policy SO4, this specifies that the Local Authority (LA) will look favourably on housing development that is affordable, desirable, well-designed and meets the needs of residents of the Moorlands.

Response: Although the proposals are for adaptation of an existing building as opposed to new build, the development allows the building owners, who have been Moorlands residents (and work in the local area- JCB and William Amory School in Blythe Bridge) to adapt their family home to meet their needs.

Policy SO8, this states that the LA aim to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.

Response: The proposals seek to provide a high standard of design providing an unusual and architecturally challenging proposal alongside traditional historic structure. This is in full accordance with the national guidelines of Historic England and the proposals will regenerate new life into a decaying structure which stands alongside the recently converted dwelling. This sort of good 'conservation' style architecture preserves the future of the building and thus enhances a historic building.

Policy SO9, this requires positive development to conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources.

Response: Although not within designated greenbelt, the proposals have been designed to be subservient to the existing converted barn, retaining the attractive brick detailing on the gable end and much of the masonry walling. The demolished roof structure has no historic value. The second storey additions are closely knit with the existing barn and the barn itself is set within a farmstead type 'ribbon of development'. Other new structures have been constructed around this overall farmstead without detriment to the rural setting.

As mentioned before, although not greenbelt it would still be undesirable to create 'urban sprawl' or a 'disproportionate development' that might affect views and or the 'openness' of the surrounding area. The proposals avoid creating any additional built footprint and do not increase the overall building height at either the eaves or ridge levels.

Core Strategy policy is DC1 - Design Considerations. Design is of course, a subjective matter, however, the following extracts have been selected as relevant to the aims of a good proposal:

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

  The proposals are of a high standard of design, materials specified are modern, the Brown Zinc cladding is a quality material that demonstrates the standard of architecture the applicant is committed to achieving. Additionally, Brown Zinc can sit alongside Red Brick in a very effective manner. As demonstrated in the below photograph of a previous project for a contemporary garage structure in Warrington Borough alongside a historic school building.



Figure 5: Example project using brown zinc alongside red brick in an effective manner.

- 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;

  The proposals result in a minor increase in scale of an existing building, this is not disproportionate to the area density and does not affect the sites openness.

- Incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the local and global impact of the development, and to adapt to climate change, in accordance with policy SD1;

  The proposals can be constructed in a quick, modern and sustainable method.

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

  The proposals do not overlook any residential properties. To the south-east elevation there are no neighbouring structures, to the rear (south-west) these are agricultural buildings which animals are kept in. Landscaping is not affected in any way other than the slight grading of levels in the immediate site vicinity to underpin and expose better the existing structure.

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) key message is that the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" is considered to be "the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision making" which should be applied by local planning authorities when assessing and determining planning applications.

The relevant sections of the NPPF would be:

Section 7: Requiring good design
Section 9: Protecting Green belt land
Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Section 7

Policy 56 of the NPPF relates to 'requiring good design', policy states: *'The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning'.*

Policy 58 states design should: *'respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.'* It also asks that designs are visually attractive as result of good architecture.

The proposals aspire to be of a high quality of design in response to Policy 56 and by utilising existing historic plan form in a contemporary manner, they respect the history and character of the farmstead but provide an innovative proposal.

Policy 60 states that *'Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.'*

Smytheman Architectural would accept that the design proposed is not 'safe' or 'traditional'. The design will divide opinion- as good architecture sometimes does. However, in terms or the design principles, (scale, massing, form) the proposals adhere to guidance. The materials selected also adhere to principles of conservation although the 'minimalist' architectural design style may not appeal to everyone. This is not an adequate reason to refuse the proposals.

Section 9

Although the site is not designated greenbelt, Smytheman Architectural feel that in its rural setting a good design should adhere to the principles of greenbelt policy and respect its rural setting. Relevant NPPF policies are as follows:

Policy 79 states *'The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.'*

The proposals result in no new building footprint preventing any sort of sprawl within the farmstead site.

Policy 89 states that the extension or alteration of a building is acceptable *'provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building'.*

The proposals are subservient to the existing two storey barn elements with reduced floor heights which consequently allows for lower eaves and ridge heights.

Policy 90 states that *'the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction'.*

The proposals respect original plan form and conserve this by creating a contemporary box within the existing structure.

Section 12

Like greenbelt policy, conservation policies do not strictly apply to this building, it is not a heritage asset per se, but it does have some heritage values as Historic England would identify:

Evidential Value: Evidence of plan form. The extended areas affected in the proposal may be more modern.
Historic Value: Parts of the building are historically old, possibly as early as 1850. Again, the affected area in the proposal may be less historic.
Aesthetic Value: It is an attractive barn.
Communal Value: No real value, it is not easily visible and has a private use.

For these reasons, the application site is not a heritage asset worthy of special statutory protection however, conservation policy will be assessed as it is still historic.

Policy 126 notes that heritage assets are 'most at risk through neglect' or decay. It also notes 'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'.

The proposals will regenerate a decaying element of the existing site. The proposal will also be innovative and will provide an authentic attractive structure alongside the existing.

Policy 131 states there is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'.

The application building is no longer part of a viable farmstead but it remains in viable use as a dwelling. The structure where adaptation is proposed has no viable use as a barn but by adaptation it will become viable domestic floor space. This is positive conservation.

Historic England Guidance

Historic England have adopted the guidance document 'Conservation Principles policies and Guidance'.

When dealing with historic buildings guidance seeks to 'conserve' a buildings 'significance'. Significance relates to the buildings special interest and is likely to be the reason for protection if there is any. It should be noted that policy relates to 'conservation' and not 'preservation'.

Conservation is *'The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations'.* In other words, change is not something that should be avoided. In many cases change is what is required to ensure a buildings future, as is the case with the proposals.

Key areas of guidance include **'Integrity'**, by retaining much of the structures original fabric the integrity of the structure will remain within the proposals. **'Reversibilty'** is also a consideration, much of the adaptation that is occurring within the proposals would be reversible; not that it would ever be desirable to do so. Finally, **'Authenticity'** is a particularly poignant consideration. By this, guidance suggests that new work should be easily distinguished. A modern design alongside historic fabric can easily be read within its context and this is preferred over 'pastiche' replication.

Historic England also mention **'good design'** but state *'There are no simple rules for achieving quality of design in new work, although a clear and coherent relationship of all the parts to the whole, as well as to the setting into which the new work is introduced, is essential.'* By following the above design guidance Smytheman Architectural feel that the proposals adhere to this.



Figure 6: Dovecote Studio by London architects Haworth Tompkins is a coreten steel clad structure within a historic Victorian dovecote. Located in Suffolk and constructed in 2009, it is highly innovated and the design is respected as a published example of good design.

Design

Use

The existing two storey house is a dwelling. (C3 use class) the attached barn structure will be converted to become part of this single dwelling.

Amount

The proposals shall result in no new built footprint on the site. However, they result in a 28m^2 floor area increase at the ground floor and a first floor increase of 24m^2. This is considered an efficient use of space which is appropriate in a rural location.

Layout

The layout of the proposal is determined by the existing structure on site. Internally limited layout alteration is proposed to the existing building. The proposals are open plan with studwork dividing walls.

Scale & Massing

The building shall have a scale and mass that is subservient to the surrounding site structures. The eaves height shall be circa 500mm below the existing building whilst the ridge height is circa 800mm lower. The roof pitch shall match the existing.

Appearance and Materials

The building shall be cladded in a modern standing seam zinc finish in a Brown/Grey colour shade which will sit harmoniously alongside the Red/Brown brick of the existing. The structure shall be highly insulated and will use a modern framed construction which is a faster more sustainable method of construction.

Landscaping

There are no proposed landscaping alterations.

Sustainability

The proposals retain existing building fabric and create a lightweight structure within the existing building extents. As mentioned above, this means that high levels of insulation can be achieved, fewer wet trades are needed on site and the construction process can be condensed. All these factors add to the sustainability of the proposals.

Traffic Generation, Access and Car Parking

The proposals will not result in any alteration to the total number of parking spaces required and the site will remain as a single family dwelling, albeit with additional floor space. The proposals will not result in an increase in visitors to and from the site.

The access into the building shall feature a level threshold complying with Approved Document Part M access requirements.

Conclusion

To conclude, the proposal fully accords with planning policy, best practise design guidance and conservation philosophy.

The proposals aspire to be high quality architecture that can be appreciated both now and in the future, and in doing so, the degradation of the existing attached barn structure will be halted and its future life expectancy enhanced by a viable function being provided.

The proposals will help the existing building to 'meets the needs of residents of the Moorlands' as policy promotes. The proposals result in a 28m^2 floor area increase at the ground floor and a 24m^2 first floor increase. This will allow a growing family to remain in their family home and at first floor the space will provide an extra bedroom or office accommodation for the applicant who works at the local William Amory School in Blythe Bridge, this office will allow for lesson preparation etc.

To reiterate, the lack of footprint increase and the appropriately scaled extension mass does not result in an adverse effect on the existing barn or the openness of the rural site. There is also no effect on neighbouring dwellings where amenity could be an issue.

For these reasons rehearsed it is considered that the application should be **approved.**