Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

LAND OFF TONGUE LANE
RIDGEWAY, BROWN EDGE

OCTOBER 2017

Site Address:
Land off Tongue Lane, Ridgeway, Brown Edge, Staffordshire, ST6 8UH

Applicant:
A J Beaman Construction Ltd.

Proposal:
Re-development of former garage / workshop to from 2no. dwellings

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 9th October 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2017/168

Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by A J Beaman Construction Ltd. to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany an application prepared by CTD Architects for the re-development of a parcel of previously developed land off Tongue Lane, Brown Edge, to create 2no. detached dwellings.

1.2 The existing site comprises of a former commercial site that has been previously utilised for the parking and maintenance of vehicles and as a demolition yard. Within the site remain some structures associated with those former uses, including a garage building and a dilapidated shed. The application proposes to remove these structures and erect 2no. detached dwellings on the site.

1.3 Each of the proposed dwellings will encompass an open plan lounge / diner / kitchen, utility room, snug, w.c. and integral garage at ground floor, with four bedrooms (one ensuite) and family bathroom at first floor, with a further ensuite bedroom located within the roofspace. Access to the site will be taken off Tongue Lane via the established vehicular access, with parking for three vehicles and associated manouvering also provided.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a former commercial site located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, which is accessed from the north off Tongue Lane. The site is bordered to the northeast / east by the residential curtilage of Chapel House, with further residential development extending beyond that to the east. Residential development is also located to the west of the site, with the site bordered by the curtilage of no.30 Ridgeway. To the south

the site is bordered by agricultural fields. The site is enclosed by a variety of semi-mature and mature trees and has an overgrown / unkempt appearance. The site as a whole lies within the village of Ridgeway, but outside of a defined settlement boundary, with an aerial photograph of the site shown 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:

3.2 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy 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):

- *restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which is essential to local needs.*

3.4 Policy SS6c goes on to state that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.5 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that only the following forms of housing development will be permitted in the rural areas outside the settlement and infill boundaries of the towns and villages:

- *Affordable Housing;*

- *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;*

- *The conversion of non-residential rural buildings 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.*

3.6 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 in line with the Council's Design SPD. 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.*

3.7 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 sets out the Government's approach to development within the Green Belt, and identifies out a number of categories of appropriate development. It furthermore confirms that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved where very special circumstances can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The NPPF also sets out requirements in respect of housing delivery and securing high quality design. The content of this document is explored in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2017)

4.2 This document sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery up to March 2017. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.99 years supply.

Appeal Decision 3140510 – Endon Riding School, Stanley

4.3 Within the Planning Assessment below reference is made to the above appeal decision, which related to a proposal for the re-development of a riding school for residential development. The appeal decision is considered to represent a material consideration in the determination of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on the Green Belt

5.1 Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. In this regard, paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that Local Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF nevertheless goes on to list a number of exceptions, and these include, amongst others:

> *"limited infilling in villages"*

> *"limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield lane), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development"*

5.2 It is submitted that the proposed development accords with the provisions of paragraph 89 of the NPPF in that it amounts to limited infilling in a village. The site forms part of the settlement of Ridgeway which is a small village whose origins date from the late 19th Century when development became established around the junction of Bemersley Road and Tongue Lane, close to the former Ridgeway Colliery. By the time the colliery closed in 1937 the village had expanded to more or less its current size, and benefitted from its own Methodist Church and allotment gardens. The closure of the colliery meant further growth of the village did not occur.

5.3 Ridgway is a settlement of some substance and is considered to meet the definition of a village, rather than a hamlet. The Oxford Dictionary defines a hamlet as:

> *"a small settlement, generally one smaller than a village, and strictly (in Britain)* ***one without a Church****"* (my emphasis)

5.4 Historical Ordnance Survey Maps from 1937 show that a Methodist Church previously existed in the village (since replaced by a dwelling known as Chapel House – planning reference SMD/1989/1416), and it is therefore considered that the settlement can be regarded as a village. The submitted proposal seeks consent for the erection of two dwellings on a parcel of land which is sandwiched on either side by residential development and associated domestic curtilages, and is therefore considered to constitute limited infilling within the village. As a consequence, the proposal accords with the provisions of paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

5.5 Without prejudice to the applicant's case, if the Local Authority were to conclude that the proposed development does not amount to limited infilling within a village, it is considered that the exception listed in paragraph 89 of

the NPPF in respect of the limited infilling of previously developed sites would be met.

5.6 The application site comprises previously developed land associated with a former vehicle storage use, and prior to that, a demolition yard. The site is well enclosed by existing landscaping and planting, and is bordered to the east and west by the residential curtilages of existing dwellings. There a furthermore a number of redundant former commercial structures on the site. The proposed development will see these redundant structures replaced by the proposed dwellings, and will not result in any encroachment of residential use beyond the confines of the existing site. The infilling nature of the proposed development will furthermore serve to limit the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt.

5.7 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF confirms that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.8 The submitted proposal, by virtue of the proposed residential development not encroaching beyond the existing confines of the site, and being bordered to the east and west by established residential development and associated curtilages, means it will safeguard the Green Belt from unrestricted sprawl and encroachment, and thus will assist in preventing neighbouring towns

from merging into one another and safeguarding their special character. The proposal will furthermore recycle previously developed, derelict land.

5.9 As a consequence it is the applicant's submission that the proposed development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development. As such the proposal would constitute an appropriate form of development in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

Rural Housing

5.10 The proposed development is acknowledged to conflict with the requirements of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy, in that the proposal does not fall within any of the categories of development listed in those policies. However, whilst this conflict is noted, it is considered that material considerations exist which serve to justify the proposed development.

5.11 Paragraph 47 (bullet 2) of the NPPF states that Local Authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements, with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, as is the case within the Staffordshire Moorlands, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20%.

5.12 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF goes on to state that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that:

> *"relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites"*

5.13 The latest housing land supply figures for Staffordshire Moorlands, as set out within the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement March 2017 confirms that the Local Authority is currently unable to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing (1.99 years supply).

5.14 The absence of a five-year deliverable supply of housing engages the titled balance in favour of approval, as set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF. This confirms that where the development plan is absent, silent or out-of-date (as is the case here), planning permission should be granted unless:

> *"any adverse impacts of doing so* ***would significantly and demonstrably*** *outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole"* (my emphasis).

5.15 It is considered that this proposal will derive a number of material benefits having regard to economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

5.16 The proposal will benefit the local economy, both to local tradespeople during the construction phase, and through the associated expenditure arising from the creation of two additional households. The proposal will also secure the delivery of two new dwellings that will contribute positively to the supply of housing within the District and in turn help the Local Authority to meet its chronic shortfall in housing land supply. Such economic and social benefits are considered to be worthy of significant weight, and this context I

would draw the Local Authority's attention to the appeal decisions enclosed as Appendices A and B.

5.17 The appeal decision enclosed as Appendix A (Appeal Reference: 2217581) related to the erection of a single dwelling in the Green Belt at Gillow Heath in the Staffordshire Moorlands. In allowing the appeal the Inspector concluded that:

> *"16. The Council have confirmed they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The proposal would add to the local housing stock and make a positive, albeit modest, contribution towards reducing the current deficit of housing in the area. This is a* ***clear economic and social benefit associated with the scheme to which I attach significant weight"*** *(my emphasis)*

5.18 The appeal decision enclosed as Appendix B (Appeal Reference: 2222484) related to the erection of a single dwelling in the Green Belt at Rookery, Newcastle-under-Lyme. In allowing the appeal the Planning Inspector concluded that:

> *"11. The development would provide a new house, which would be capable of providing accommodation for a family. This is a* ***significant benefit*** *of the scheme. The Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing". (my emphasis)*

5.19 These appeal decisions serve to demonstrate the weight that should be attributed to the social and economic benefits of new development such as that proposed, and lead me to conclude that the proposal will derive significant benefits from a social and economic perspective.

5.20 The proposal also involves the re-development of previously developed land, something that is explicitly encouraged by the NPPF, and such environmental benefits are also considered to weigh in favour of the proposed development.

5.21 In terms of locational considerations, the site lies a short distance from the village of Ball Green, where regular public transport connections throughout the day are available to Tunstall, Hanley and Newcastle-under-Lyme. The site furthermore lies a short distance to a number of local services, including schools and shops. It is recognised that the Bemersley Road is not particularly conducive to walking, but it does afford opportunities for cycling. It is furthermore considered that any necessary journeys by motor vehicle would not be particularly long.

5.22 In this regard I would draw the Local Authority's attention to the conclusions of the Planning Inspector who conducted an appeal into the redevelopment of the Endon Riding School (Appeal Reference 3140510 – copy enclosed as Appendix C). In allowing the re-development of the site for residential use, the Inspector noted that a variety of local services were available within 2km distance of the site, with additional services available some 5km cycling distance away, adding that Manual for Streets suggests that walking offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly those under 2 kilometres. The Inspector went on to be critical of the nature of the journey from the site to the nearby settlement, noting in particular that:

> *"… the route is* ***not conducive to walking, given speed limits and the absence of footways / street lighting****. That said, the appeal site is reasonably close to Endon and* ***would be within a fairly short cycling distance of the settlement,*** *although the*

topography and route safety may discourage younger and less experienced cyclists" (my emphasis)

5.23 The Inspector went on to comment that:

> *"I recognise that the site is remote from some facilities, and therefore is not as accessible as a more central or urban location. Overall however, whilst it has some shortcomings, I am satisfied that the site does offer opportunities for walking, cycling or using public transport instead of future occupiers being wholly reliant on the private car,* ***with any such journeys being relatively short, given the location close to a sustainable settlement.*** *As such, I consider that, whilst not ideal, this previously-developed site is not in an unacceptably remote location, with future occupiers having what I consider to be reasonable access to shops and services". (my emphasis)*

5.24 I draw favourable conclusions between the aforementioned appeal site and the current application site in that the application site also lies close to a sustainable settlement (Ball Green / Norton), which are readily accessible by bicycle, and which have regular public transport connections available to the wider area of Stoke-on-Trent / Newcastle-under-Lyme. As a consequence, any necessary journeys by car to access local services and facilities would be of a similar length to those distances which have been found to be acceptable by the Planning Inspector in the aforementioned appeal. The proposed development is therefore considered to constitute an appropriate location for new housing in the context of paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Layout

5.25 The submitted proposal encompasses the erection of 2no. two storey dwellings, and the scale and height of these is considered to be in keeping with the character of the surrounding area, which is predominantly characterised by two storey dwellings. In terms of appearance, the surrounding area exhibits a widely varying character, and mixed palette of materials, with no strong prevailing vernacular. The submitted proposal encompasses a more contemporary form of development, but this is not considered objectionable given the variance in character already exhibited in the locality. Each of the proposed dwellings will benefit from an area of private amenity space which exceeds the minimum recommended standard of 65sq.m. and there will be no conflict with the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Landscape

5.26 Views of the site on approach along Tongue Lane will read the development as a continuation of the linear pattern of development that prevails along this part of the highway, with the development framed by existing landscaping / planting. There are no short distance public viewpoints to the south from which views of the development will be seen.

5.27 Owing to the previously developed nature of the site, the residential nature of the sites either side, the absence of any encroachment of development beyond the existing confines of the site, and the presence of mature vegetation to enclose the site, it is considered that the development will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, and is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC3 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.28 Vehicular access to the site is to be taken via the existing access off Tongue Lane. This benefits from reasonable visibility in both directions on egress and has been historically utilised for commercial purposes. Each of the proposed dwellings will benefit from parking for up to three vehicles, and will also benefit from associated manouvering space to enable vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear. In doing so the proposal will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety, and the proposal is therefore considered to accord with the relevant provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 32 of the NPPF in this regard.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is submitted that the proposed development constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal involves limited infilling within a village and thus constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt;

- Without prejudice, if the Local Authority concludes that the proposal does not amount to limited infilling, the proposal involves the limited infilling of a previously developed site and will have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than existing development;

- The site is considered to be located in an accessible location, and any necessary car journeys would be short in nature;

- The proposed dwellings are of an appropriate design which will be in keeping with the varied character of the surrounding area;

- The proposed development will not give rise to any harm to neighbouring residential amenity;

- The proposed development will not give rise to harm to the surrounding landscape;

- The proposed development will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety, and will provide adequate off-street parking and manouvering space;

- The proposal will derive a number of benefits in terms of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

- The proposed development will not result in significant and demonstrable adverse impacts to outweigh the benefits of the development.

6.2 The conflict of this proposal with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy is acknowledged, but is considered to be clearly outweighed by the provisions of the NPPF, in particular the Local Authority's inability to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing. It is furthermore considered that there are no adverse impacts that would arise to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully request to grant planning permission for the proposed development in accordance in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out within policy SS1a of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.