Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

UNDERWOOD HALL FARM
GILLOW HEATH

NOVEMBER 2017

Site Address:
Underwood Hall Farm, 134 Mow Lane, Gillow Heath, Staffordshire, ST8 6RJ

Applicant:
Mr. & Mrs. Heathcote

Proposal:
Conversion of shippon into additional living accommodation

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 30th November 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2017/035

Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. & Mrs. Heathcote to seek planning permission for the conversion and alteration of an existing agricultural shippon at Underwood Hall Farm, 134 Mow Lane, Gillow Heath, to form additional living accommodation.

1.2 The building is attached to the northern end of the applicant's existing dwelling, and currently lies vacant. It is proposed to convert the building to create a boot room, shower room, lounge and craft room to serve the existing dwelling, linked to it via a new doorway leading off the study. The proposal does not entail any extensions to the existing building, and seeks to make beneficial reuse of existing openings. Externally there are no changes proposed in terms of the extent of the domestic curtilage or the parking / access arrangements.

1.3 The application is accompanied by the following documentation which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement:

- Structural Survey (CVM Projects Ltd)
- Bat Survey (Anna Davies)

2 Site Location

2.1 The application site comprises a stone and tile agricultural shippon that is attached at its southern end to an existing two storey, white rendered farmhouse. It is enclosed to its east by the existing domestic curtilage of the farmhouse, with an attached agricultural building located to its north. Further outbuildings are located to the west of the building, separated by an area of hardstanding. Vehicular access to the site is taken via an existing

track that leads up from Mow Lane to the south. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, on the fringe of Gillow Heath.

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:

3.1 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

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 adopted 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.*

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.

3.2 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable 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 through a marketing exercise, *or* its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

3.3 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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.

3.4 Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and states that development should ensure that it produces a net gain in biodiversity, and ensure that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for. Proposals should also protect and enhance habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out policies in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt, supporting the delivery of sustainable development, and securing a net gain in biodiversity (amongst others). The content of the NPPF has been taken into account in the preparation of this Planning Statement and is referred to in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The application proposes the conversion and alteration of an existing agricultural shippon to create additional living accommodation to serve the existing farmhouse to which it is attached. Paragraph 90 of the NPPF confirms that the reuse of buildings is appropriate within the Green Belt provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction. The application is accompanied by a Structural Survey which confirms that the building is suitable for conversion, and recommends only minor works to safeguard against future movement of existing walls. To this end, the building can be regarded as being of a permanent and substantial construction, and thus accords with the provisions of paragraph 90 of the NPPF.

5.2 At a local level, policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy allow for the conversion of non-residential rural buildings to residential use, 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 through a marketing exercise, *or* its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

5.3 In this particular case, the application is not proposing the conversion of the building to form a new dwelling, but merely to provide additional living accommodation associated with the existing attached farmhouse. The building is evidently worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion, and owing to its attachment to the existing dwelling and the narrow nature of the existing access track, is unlikely to be suitable for an alterative commercial / tourism use. The reuse of the building to provide additional living accommodation is therefore considered to be acceptable in

principle, and accords with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy.

Design & Amenity

5.4 The submitted proposal adopts a sensitive approach to the conversion of the building, and seeks to make beneficial reuse of existing openings in order to provide natural light to the interior of the building. No new openings are proposed within the elevations of the building, with new openings restricted to the insertion of rooflights within the roofslope. The existing roofslope of the shippon already has rooflights within it, and it is considered that the insertion of additional rooflights would not be out of character with the building. The rooflights will furthermore enable maximum levels of natural light to flood the interior accommodation, thereby minimising reliance upon artificial sources of light. The overall level of alteration is such that it will preserve the agrarian appearance of the existing building, in accordance with the aims of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

5.5 No changes are proposed to the exterior layout of the site or its associated access arrangements, and as a consequence the existing external character of the complex of buildings will be unaltered from that which currently exists. The proposal will furthermore not derive any adverse impact to neighbouring residential amenity, as there are no immediate residential properties who would be affected by the proposed development. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Biodiversity

5.6 The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey, which has assessed the suitability of the buildings for roosting bats. It confirms that during the survey no bats or evidence of bats was found, and an internal inspection of

the loft space found no evidence of droppings. The survey notes the presence of dust and cobwebs which also indicates that bats are not using the building. It was also noted that the external stonework of the building is generally in good condition and there are no roosting opportunities for bats. For these reasons the submitted proposal will not give rise to any harm to protected species, and thus accords with the provisions of policy NE1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Highway Safety

5.7 The application site is accessed via a track which leads up from Mow Lane to the south. This track is quite narrow and does not readily allow for two vehicles to pass one another. However, in this particular case, the proposed development will not result in a material intensification of the use of this access, as it proposes the creation of additional living accommodation to serve the existing farmhouse. The existing vehicular access arrangements are therefore considered to be acceptable and accord with the provisions of paragraph 32 of the NPPF.

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 It is considered that this proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development that accords with the Development Plan having regard to the following conclusions:

- The existing building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion;

- The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction;

- The proposed use of the building to provide additional living accommodation to serve the existing dwelling is acceptable in this location;

- The proposal makes beneficial reuse of existing openings and will preserve the agrarian character of the building;

- The proposal will not give rise to any impacts to neighbouring residential amenity;

- The proposal will not give rise to any harm to protected species;

- The proposal will not derive any adverse impact to highway safety as it does not entail any intensification of the existing vehicular access.

6.3 It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6c, R2, DC1 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

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