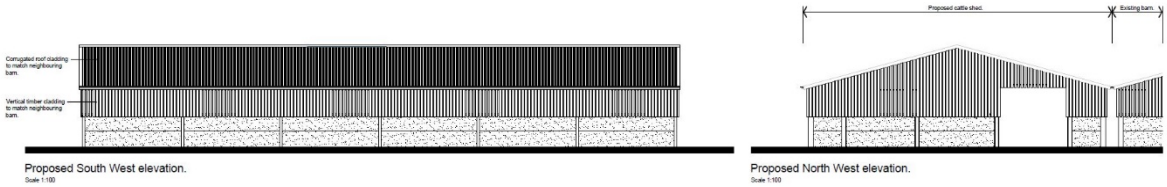
Hermitage Farm

Froghall Road, Ipstones Bank, Froghall, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 2HQ







Design & Access Statement for New Cattle Shed North of 'The Hermitage' Farm House

Mark Singlehurst, BA (Hons), DipTP

ALDER MILL

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1.0 Introduction and Description

1.1 The site that is the subject of this proposal lies at a minimum distance of some 79 metres to the north of the nearest part of the historic farm house at Hermitage Farm, 54.5 metres minimum from the associated holiday cottage range and minimum 128 metres from the listed barn to the north-west of the farm house. The farm is a 132-acre mixed livestock farm (102 acres owned, 30 acres leased) lying between Froghall and Ipstones and overlooking the wooded Churnet Valley in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Both the main farmyard complex and the isolated barn have 17th century origins, altered in the 19th and 20th centuries and built of coursed, dressed and dressed red sandstone.

1.2 The farm was once part of the Thomas Bolton copper mining estate. (Thomas Bolton & Sons were brass and copper manufacturers in nearby Cheadle from 1852 until 1961; they ran a Copper Wire Works at Froghall and another at Oakamoor, about two miles downstream. The company went into liquidation in 2014.) It would appear that the land was leased from the Beech family of The Shawe, Kingsley, which owned much of Froghall and the lower 'Mosey Moor' (Moseymoor) valley, along with Hermitage Farm and Ruelow Wood. Much of the Shawe Estate was sold from September 1919, upon the death of Rowland John Beech; the lots included Hermitage Farm and the woods (272 acres), as well as Booth Hall Farm (181 acres). The Beech family archives record that Captain Douglas C. M. Beech sold 'The Shawe' and all the tenanted farms soon after he inherited them from his father Rowland, preferring the family's other house at Brandon Hall, near Coventry.

1.3 In the early part of the 19th century the farm was occupied by Josiah Fernihough, who was also a timber merchant, until he was declared bankrupt in 1833. Interestingly, William White's Derbyshire Directory of 1834 has Josiah in charge of a 'beer house' at Froghall. His successor appears to have been William Scarratt: the Scarratt family were connected with the Fernihoughs by marriage. Richard and Thomas Scarratt were later occupiers, until at least 1901. By the time of the 1911 census, the farmer was Bennett Fallows, who was still there in 1921 but had moved to another farm (Booth's Hall) by 1928. He was already at the Hermitage by 1904 (Kelly's Directory). It has not proved possible to establish (from Internet sources) who occupied the farm between 1928 and 1980.

1.4 The Barlow family acquired Hermitage Farm in 1980, concentrating on beef, sheep and poultry production, with some arable crops. They began taking in bed and breakfast guests from 1985 and set up an agricultural contracting business in 1991. The hilltop barn had been redundant since 1984 but was listed, grade II, in December 1986, and was restored and converted to a residential property in 2005-06. The curtilage listed farm building range just north of the farm house has been in use as holiday cottages since permission was granted for this in 1999.

1.5 Up until at least 1988, Ordnance Survey maps showed no modern agricultural buildings on the site; however, during the 1990s a number of modern metal farm sheds were erected to the north of the stone building near the house that has been converted to holiday cottages. These sheds have all benefitted from agricultural exemptions under the General Permitted Development Order, although the last was granted approval of its siting and appearance under a Prior Notification in October 2006 (SMD/2006/0758, formerly 06/00833/NOT-AG).

1.6 The farmer has a herd of some 120 beef cattle at the Hermitage and now wishes to add another 40 cows, for which a new cattle-shed will be required. This will be of a generally similar character to that approved in 2006, but will be longer, projecting further to the west. Although its eastern end will be in line with the neighbouring shed, it will be closer to the main road (B5053), only about 14 metres from the carriageway at the nearest point, so therefore fails the test at Schedule 2, Part 6, Article A.1(h) of the General Permitted Development Order 2015, which does not permit development that is within 25 metres of a metalled part of a classified road. A full planning application is therefore being made on this occasion.

2.0 Details of Proposed Development

2.1 The proposal is to erect a large, steel-framed cattle shed measuring 36.7 metres (120' 5") long by 18.5 metres (60' 8") wide; the roof ridge would reach 6.3 metres (20' 8") and the eaves 3.7 metres (12' 1⅔"). The cladding for the lower part of the walls (to a height of 1.8 metres) would be horizontally orientated concrete panels fixed between steel stanchions. The upper part of the walls would be clad in spaced vertical timber planks (with gaps in-between) and the roof in profiled fibre cement ('natural grey' colour) to match the neighbouring shed. All materials would be selected to blend with the adjacent multi-purpose agricultural building as closely as possible.

2.2 These buildings would join at the eaves with a common gutter, with a gap of about 0.8 metres at ground level. The neighbouring shed to the south is approximately 14.5 metres long, 6 metres wide and 2.6 metres high at the ridge line. The new shed would have three access openings 4.2 metres wide and 3.6 metres high: two on the south-east elevation and one on the north-west elevation. The internal floorspace would amount to nearly 646.2 square metres. This is well below the 1,000-square-metre allowance mentioned in Schedule 2, Part 6, Article A.1(e) of the GPDO 2015, as amended by SI 2018 No. 343, Article 12 – which would have made this building permitted development had it been further from the road.

3.0 Relevant Planning Policies

3.1 The relevant national and local planning policies and design guidance applicable to this proposal are as follows:

- *National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), paragraph 28*
- *Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2016-2031, Core Strategy, policies DC2 & DC3*
- *Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2016-2031, Submission Version (unadopted), policies DC2 & DC3*

3.2 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that, in order to promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

● support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

● promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

This building is for an agricultural purpose and is well designed to suit its purpose and match the neighbouring approved agricultural building which it will directly adjoin. It is therefore in harmony with the NPPF, which contains no other policy relating to the erection of buildings for agricultural purposes.

3.3 Policy DC2 of the new Local Plan 2016-2031 Core Strategy, as adopted in March 2014, states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. The proposed changes include more specific references to the NPPF, stating that the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting, in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment. Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.

3.4 Although there are three listed buildings on the Hermitage site, the proposed new building will be hidden from the house and holiday cottages by the other modern farm buildings that lie between them. The setting of the converted barn to the north-west will be protected by virtue of the new cattle shed being screened by 4 to 6-metre-high embankments to the north and west and because the barn itself nestles into the hillside and sits behind a row of tall trees that border the farm's northern access drive (see image on page 4 below). There would still be a substantial green buffer between the main farm building complex and the stone barn.



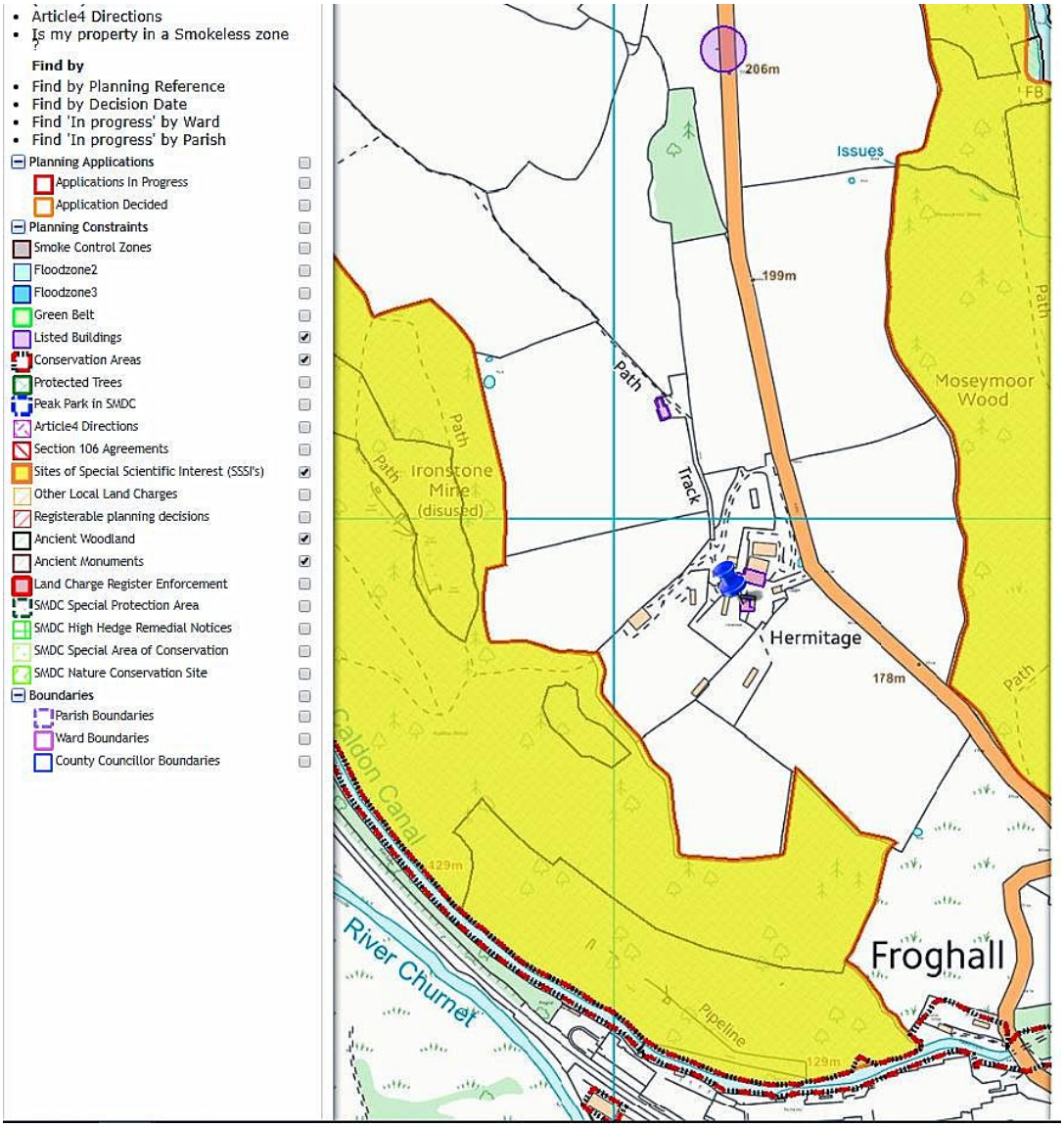
3.5 Policy DC3 adds that it will also protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement, as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. It will also support opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape. The proposed rewording includes a reference to resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have an adverse impact of significance to the character of the countryside. It also adds a clause in favour of development which maintains the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds. In this case, the proposed location for the new building is already within the developed farmyard area and will be immediately adjoining the existing building group. The semi-sunken site will reduce visibility from beyond the yard itself and the construction will not involve the loss of any existing woodland, hedgerows, waterfalls, walls or ponds.

3.6 The District Council's interactive planning map indicates that the farm has three listed buildings, but does not fall within the Green Belt, Peak Park or a Conservation Area. Ruelow and Moseymoor Woods, to the west and east, have SSSI status and contain areas of Ancient Woodland, but the farm itself lies outside of any protected areas (see extract below, next page). It is also in Flood Zone 1, with a low risk of flooding.

3.7 The District Council's Design Principles for Agricultural Buildings have several relevant guidelines:

- Blend the new building into the landscape as far as possible, taking account of the contours of the land, views from roads and footpaths and existing woodland.
- Avoid a skyline setting; set into the slope…
- Consider end views…so that a bland side elevation is the least visible.

- Align the building to form a group with existing buildings…
- The principal view of the farmhouse should not be blocked.
- …retain existing trees…Retain existing hedges and walls…
- Avoid unnecessary new accesses…
- Avoid flat roofs and detached Monopitch roofs…
- Use contrasting materials for the roof, side cladding and walls…side cladding in vertically boarded timber. Consider the use of ribbed [roofing] sheets which add texture and strength and reduce 'glare'.



3.8 Again, the proposal meets all of these requirements, insofar as the building will be cut into the hillside and flanked by embankments on two sides, as well as screened from the road by an existing tall hedgerow and mature hedgerow trees (see image on page 6 below). The gabled end will be nearest the road; the building will sit immediately alongside the other existing farm buildings at the bottom of the hill. It will not affect existing principal views of the listed farm house and will not involve the loss of existing hedgerows, trees or walls. The existing north access drive will be used. The shed will have a double pitched roof with centre ridgeline. It will have vertical timber boarding on its side walls and profiled (ribbed) fibre cement sheeting on the roof. It does not use traditional materials and styling, as recommended elsewhere in the guidelines, but as it will relate to other modern farm buildings rather than to the older stone buildings at the southern end of the building group (see second image on page 6), the adopted design would seem appropriate.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The proposal has been sensitively designed to meet the local planning authority's guidelines and preserve the open character of the surrounding landscape and the setting of the farm's three listed stone buildings; it will also aid the expansion and continued viability of the working farm, whilst having no detrimental impact on the historic elements (which are now used for other purposes). In all respects other than its proximity to the road, it would meet the criteria for permitted agricultural development. I therefore respectfully request that planning permission be granted to this proposal forthwith.





Above: the stone farm buildings near the farm house, now converted as holiday cottages (Trip Advisor)