

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2018/0262
Valid 01/05/2018

BENTLEY HOUSE
NEWTOWN ROAD
NEWTOWN
BIDDULPH

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF
BARN TO FORM ANCILLARY
LIVING ACCOMODATION

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle
- Impact on Green Belt
- Design
- Ecology
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site comprises a parcel of land to the south of Newtown Road, Biddulph, within the open countryside and the Green Belt.

The site contains Bentley House; a two storey detached residential dwelling with its associated curtilage, and other outbuildings which were part of the former Bentley House Farm complex. The site has two access points from Newtown Road. The main access serves the farm house, whilst a secondary access is also present to the north.

To the north west of the main dwelling is an agricultural building (former barn) and a single storey annex which both have a simple rectangular form and orientated so that the length of each building faces south eastwards towards the farm house and each gable faces north east and south west respectively.

The main barn has a dual pitched roof and constructed of a natural stone, spanning a length of some 9.6m and a width of 4.7m. The main barn has a height to eaves level of 4.7m with an overall ridge height of 6.4m. As shown on the existing floor plans, this main barn was used as a shippon and a store at ground floor level and hay storage at first floor level. To the west of the main barn is a modest lean-to structure.

The single storey annex was previously used as a utility/office and also has a dual pitched roof; connected to the south eastern gable of the main barn and constructed of similar materials with a matching width but a shorter length of approx. 5.5m. The annex has a height to eaves level of 2.3m and an overall ridge height of 3.8m.

PROPOSAL

Following the withdrawal of a prior approval application for a proposed Change of Use of the agricultural building to a dwellinghouse under DET/2017/0024 under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order 2015, this application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of this former agricultural building to form ancillary accommodation to the existing dwelling.

The proposed Block Plan shows that the proposed annex would be accessed from an existing secondary access further along Newtown Road to the north from the current access to Bentley House. An area of hard standing parking area is situated to the west of the building. An existing lean-to structure to the west of the main barn will be demolished to facilitate the conversion.

The submitted floor plans show that the proposed annex would make use of the existing building with no further external alterations. The ground floor is shown to comprise a lounge and kitchen area, with a stair case leading to the first floor which contains two equally sized bedrooms and a small shared bathroom.

The elevation plans highlights that the south eastern elevation would see the existing doors being taken out with three equally and proportioned sized opening being built up in timber frames with obscure glazed windows. At the rear south western elevation, a new purpose built door is shown to be incorporated with an existing door being taken out and built up with a timber frame in a similar fashion to the front elevation. Three velux roof lights are also shown to be incorporated into the rear elevation roofscape.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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 local development plan for this site comprises the Saved Policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998); Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (adopted 26th March 2014) and any relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in July 2018 sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. As stated in paragraph 2 of the NPPF, the document is a material consideration which must be taken into account in planning decisions.

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

- S01 Spatial Objectives
- SS1 Development Principles
- SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SS6 Rural Areas
- SS6c Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
- H1 New Housing Development
- DC1 Design Considerations

- R1 Rural Diversification
- R2 Rural Housing
- NE1 Biodiversity
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving Sustainable Development	Chapter 2
Delivering a sufficient supply of homes	Chapter 5
Achieving Well-Designed Places	Chapter 12
Protecting Green Belt Land	Chapter 13
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment	Chapter 15

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/1997/0233	Erection of Stable Block for part commercial livery use (5 stables) & part domestic use (3 stables) ancillary tack room & feedstore and associated access (Refused 08/01/98)
SMD/1998/0124	Stable Block and Vehicular Access (Refused 20/04/98)
SMD/1998/0233	Erection of Stable Block (Commercial) tack room & feedstore and new access (Approved 14/09/98)
SMD/2017/0185	Proposed two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, demolition of existing garage (Approved 23/06/17)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 7th June 2018
 Neighbour consultation period ends: 29th May 2018
 Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No comments received

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council

No Objections subject to no adverse impacts on neighbours. Should retain timber framed windows

Conservation Officer

No objection to proposal. The rooflights to the bedrooms can be omitted as these are both well served by existing windows. Rooflights are not a traditional feature of these

buildings. Rooflights should be low profile without large frames to replicate Victorian styles (Rooflight Company or similar). Shutters should be retained where practical to do so (e.g. first floor pitching holes). On the ground floor windows and doors should be in historic positions and no further forward.

Conditions

- Joinery details including position of windows and doors within aperture
- Rooflights (to be flush fitting)
- Pointing
- Rainwater Goods
- Vent and flues

Severn Trent Water

No objection and no drainage condition required

SMDC Ecology

Initial Response

I object to the planning application on the grounds that there is insufficient information to determine the impact on protected species, in particular bats

The building proposed for conversion may have the potential to support populations of bats or breeding birds. This building has the potential of supporting roosting bats. As the proposals include the modification of this building, any bat roosts present could be destroyed. This could result in death/injury of bats. A preliminary roost assessment bat survey by Arbtech dated October 2017 submitted with the application advised that '**one bat emergence/re-entry survey during the active bat season (May – September) to confirm the presence/likely-absence of a bat roost.**' The survey should be completed during the optimal survey period mid-May to August inclusive. This survey cannot be conditioned and the information is required in advance to design appropriate avoidance, mitigation or compensation. Bat surveys should follow best practice in: Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust.

Revised Response

The report address my objections. Mitigation and compensation can be addressed by following the methods and compensation advocated in the report. Details of the Low impact class licence holder need to be submitted to the Council. In addition to the proposed bat roost on adjacent trees I would like to see compensatory roost sites designed into the fabric of the converted building.

I would suggest the following condition:

Works must be carried out under a low impact class licence as advised in the statement in the Arbtech Bat activity and emergence survey report dated 1/9/18.

Details of the licence holder, and method statement to avoid, mitigate and compensate for the loss of the bat roost shall be submitted to the local Planning Authority for approval. This should include persons responsible for works, methods, timing of works, and monitoring. Full details shall be provided for the location of compensatory roost sites appropriate scale plans. The avoidance mitigation and compensation plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To avoid impacts on bats and compensate for the loss of a bats roost. To avoid offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 2018 and Habitat Regulations 2017.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objections

Note to Planning Officer:

Visibility at 'ex access to serve proposal' on drawing 1679/04 is acceptable. The access is surfaced and gates are set back from the highway. Visibility at 'ex access' between the proposed barn conversion and the existing dwelling, Bentley House Farm is poor and permanent closure of this access would benefit highway safety. This is not conditioned as this access is not proposed to be used to access this development.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application relates to the proposed conversion of a former agricultural building on land within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. As such, the application is subject to Core Strategy policies SS6, SS6c, R1 and R2 and restrictive policies relating to the Green Belt contained within Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

Policies SS6 and SS6c are the strategic policies which relate to the rural areas outside of the towns and villages. The policies allow for the conversion of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2.

Policy R1 states that wherever possible, development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism use where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and appearance.

Policy R2 refers to the types of housing that will be supported outside of the development boundary. It states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be supported 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. In such cases there will be a requirement for a marketing exercise to be carried out by a suitably qualified professional or other evidence that the building would be unsuitable for commercial use; or
- conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded

Chapter 13 of the NPPF contains the relevant restrictive policies relating to development proposals in the Green Belt. As set out at paragraph 143, development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 146 contain a list of the types of development which are exceptions (i.e. not inappropriate development and acceptable in principle) providing they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. One such exception at paragraph 146 is “the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction”

In light of the policy context set out above, the principle of development will only be considered to be acceptable where the application can demonstrate that the building is of permanent and substantial construction, would not harm the openness of the Green Belt, and can demonstrate compliance with Policy R2 of the Core Strategy, in addition to any other material considerations.

Impact on Green Belt

Paragraph 146 of the NPPF makes provision for the re-use of a building within the Green Belt providing the building is of permanent and substantial construction and would not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Whilst no structural survey has been submitted in support of this application, a site visit undertaken as part of the assessment of this application, which included an inspection of the external and internal architectural qualities of the barn. This inspection has led the case officer to conclude that the building is of a permanent and substantial construction that only requires relatively minor works to convert it to a residential use.

An existing lean-to structure to the rear of the barn is to be demolished as part of the proposal, which would reduce the amount of volume of development on site and thereby improve openness. No other structures are proposed as part of this conversion, and as such, it is considered that the openness of the Green Belt will be preserved, if not enhanced as a result of the conversion, thereby demonstrating compliance with paragraph 146 of the NPPF. The application is therefore considered to constitute a sustainable form of development in this regard.

Design

Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy sets out a number of development principles which new development should adhere to in order to contribute positively to the social, economic, and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy sets out a list of design considerations that new development should incorporate into any new scheme. In particular new development 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.

The 'Design Principles' SPD provides further useful guidance with regards to the conversion of agricultural barns for residential use. In particular it states that conversions should be within the shell of the existing building, and that the use of a existing and blocked door and window openings should be maximised.

Paragraph 127 states that decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

The proposed barn conversion is shown to make good use of the shell of the existing building without adding any external features, aside for three modest sized roof lights. Existing openings are incorporated into the converted dwelling. The new door proposed on the rear elevation is shown to be purpose made and subject to appropriate conditions, will be in keeping with the traditional architectural features.

The removal of the unsympathetic lean-to extension at the rear will allow the original character and appearance of the main barn to be enhanced and is therefore regards as a positive design feature of the development.

It is considered appropriate that permitted development rights for households under Schedule 2, Part 1 Classes A-E and permitted development rights for minor development under Part 2 Classes A-C should be removed in order to preserve the character and appearance of the building.

For the reasons stated above, it is considered that subject to appropriate pre-commencement conditions, the design of the proposed conversion is of a suitable and high quality that retains the traditional character and appearance of the building, in accordance with policies SS1 and DC1 of the Core Strategy, the Staffordshire Moorlands 'Design Principles' SPD, and paragraph 127 of the NPPF.

Amenity

Policy DC1 of the adopted core strategy states that new development should protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, and privacy.

Paragraph 127 states that planning should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The windows on the front elevation on the side of Bentley House are shown to be obscure glazed. There is an appropriate amount of amenity space provided to the north of the proposed conversion. There are no other properties that could be impacted by the proposed conversion and given the ancillary relationship of the building to Bentley House it is considered that the proposed development would not result in any harm to the amenity of any neighbouring properties, in line with policy DC1 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 127 of the NPPF.

Highway Safety

Policy T1 of the Core Strategy requires new development to be located where it can be suitably accommodated without having any adverse impacts on the local highway network.

Paragraph 109 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The proposed converted building would be served by an existing access from Newtown Road, slightly further north than the main access serving Bentley House. The Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 1679-05 Rev A) shows that an area of hard standing parking provision has been included within the curtilage. There are no current adopted parking standards in the Staffordshire Moorlands however it is considered that an appropriate amount of provision has been provided.

The Highways Officer has visited the site and has formally comments stating that the Highways Authority has no objection to the proposed development.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed conversion of this agricultural building to ancillary accommodation will not result in any adverse impacts on highway safety in line with policy T1 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless:

- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

The application seeks permission to convert the former agricultural barn at Bentley House Farm to a two bedroom annex with associated curtilage which would remain ancillary to the existing dwelling.

The site is located within the open countryside and the Green Belt and is therefore subject to relevant policies relating to countryside development within the Core Strategy and restrictive NPPF policies relating to Green Belt development.

The building is clearly of a permanent and substantial construction. The proposed conversion works with the existing shell of the building with appropriate and sensitively designed fenestration. It has been found that the proposal would not result in any harm to residential amenity or highway safety.

In conclusion, the proposal has been found, subject to conditions, to accord with all relevant Core Strategy policies and other material considerations which include the Staffs Moorlands 'Design Principles' SPD and restrictive policies relating to Green Belt development contained within Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

In line with policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application is recommended for approval subject to appropriate conditions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions

Case Officer: James Stannard

Recommendation Date: 24th September 2018

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council