DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2018/0489 **Valid 31/07/2018**	**HEATH HOUSE FARM** **CAVERSWALL OLD ROAD** **FORSBROOK**	**PROPOSED OAK FRAMED PORCH AND LANDSCAPING** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the development amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- The design of the extension and its impact on the character and appearance of the rural area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside a short distance to the north-west of Forsbrook and comprises a shop and restaurant building linked to a surrounding garden centre, which was a former farm with farmhouse (to the north-west of the site), barns (to the north-east) along with the more modern glass houses to the south. The site access is off Caverswall Old Road to the south-west. The building is a red brick and grey tile building which was formerly two stand-alone farm buildings with extensions added to join them up and form a tea room and shop in 2003. A conservatory was added to extend the restaurant floorspace under a 2017 approval. The land surrounding the garden centre property is open land. The site is also in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a gable-fronted porch on the front wall of the restaurant and shop building. The porch would have a footprint of 2.7m (projection) x 3.5 metres and a height of 3.7 metres. This would cover the main entrance into the building and lead straight into the retail area. Also shown in the plans is an outdoor seating area next to the porch and to the front of the building and there are planters shown to mark the perimeter of the outdoor seating area with a height of 0.5 metres.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

SS6c Other Rural Areas
R1 – Rural Diversification
DC1 – Design Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised July 2018)

Sections 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

National Policy Guidance

Paragraph 48 of the newly adopted NPPF states that:

> *"…decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:*
> - *the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
> - *the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
> - *the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).*

Local Plan process

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was "sound". Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. An examination in public will now be held this Autumn in order to determine whether the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. Subject to the findings of the appointed inspector, the Local Plan is expected to be adopted in the Spring of 2019. At his point, it will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and become part of the statutory development plan for the District.

In this context, the Council's position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is as follows:

- The stage of preparation – the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the Council has submitted it to the SoS for examination
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies – this varies depending on the policy in question. The Officer Comments section of this report identifies the level of outstanding objections to each policy and recommends the amount of weight to be given to them at this stage in the process

- The degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF – given that the Council has submitted a Local Plan that it considers to be sound, all policies are deemed to be consistent with the NPPF.

Emerging Policies

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

SS10 Rural Areas strategy
DC1 – Design considerations

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2017/0018: Porch and conservatory for shop/restaurant building. Refused.
SMD/2017/0449: Conservatory for shop/restaurant. Approved and built.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 6.9.18
Neighbour consultation period ends: 6.9.18
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Support.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt and the NPPF only allows development in exceptional circumstances in order to protect the openness of the Green Belt. Paras 145 and 146 list the types of development which can exceptionally be allowed as forms of development which are not inappropriate development and therefore not harmful to its openness (as defined in the NPPF). Criterion (b) of para 145 allows:

"the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building."

In 2017 an application to add a conservatory and porch was refused as it was considered that this would lead to a disproportionate enlargement of the original buildings which had already been significantly extended in 2003 to form a tea room and shop and therefore was contrary to Green Belt policies due to it being deemed to be inappropriate and therefore harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. A resubmitted application later in the same year removed the porch from the scheme and retained the much larger conservatory extension. This was still deemed to

amount to a disproportionate enlargement and inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, it was considered that the business benefits of the structure in improving the restaurant and therefore adding viability to the overall garden centre business amounted to very special circumstances considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and therefore the conservatory was granted planning permission and has been built.

This new application proposes a further enlargement of the building, albeit small and around the same size as the porch put forward in 2017 which was refused (although has a different design and footprint). Although it is a small extension, when taken cumulatively with the previous extensions it would represent a disproportionate addition to the original building and is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The conservatory was only allowed under very special circumstances. There does not appear to be any very special circumstances that the porch would provide and it is not needed to support the business on site.

Furthermore, as a projection from the front elevation it arguably has a greater impact on openness than the conservatory extension which was enclosed on 3 sides by existing built form.

The 2017 porch was also refused on design grounds, considered to be out of keeping with the more simple forms of the form farm buildings. The revised porch, despite being a similar size would have less width and height and despite the larger projection, would appear when approaching the front of the building as being smaller. However, it would introduce a form of addition which would not respect the simple linear character of this traditional, agricultural style building. In terms of elevational detailing it would appear very “domestic” and would not again be in keeping with the similar agricultural, vernacular character of the building.

The proposal is therefore harmful in terms of design and appearance and does not provide any other significant social, economic or environmental benefits. Despite its small scale it would still add to a further disproportionate enlargement of the original buildings and there are no very special circumstances which would outweigh the added harm to the Green Belt or the operation of Green Belt policy and its aim of protecting the openness of the Green Belt.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed porch, despite its scale in relation to the current building, would still amount to a disproportionate enlargement of the original building which has been considerably extended before and therefore the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is harmful to it and does not comply with Section 13 of the NPPF or Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy which requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal also detracts from the simple agricultural character of the building and fails to comply with Policy DC1 in respect of the design and the Council adopted Design Guide and advice within the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 25.9.18

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council