Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

LAND AT WETLEY ABBEY COTTAGE WETLEY ROCKS

OCTOBER 2018

Site Address:
Wetley Abbey Cottage, Abbey Road, Wetley Rocks, ST9 0AS

Applicant:
Mrs. R. Mason

Proposal:
Retention of Stable Block and Hardstanding

Planning & Heritage Statement:
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Report Prepared By:
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy has been instructed by Mrs. R. Mason to seek planning permission to retain a stable block and associated hardstanding that has been erected on a parcel of land to the southwest of Wetley Abbey Cottage, Abbey Road, Wetley Rocks.

1.2 The stable block was erected by the applicant in mid-late 2015 when they owned Wetley Abbey Cottage, and was used by them to keep their horses, with land rented nearby for exercising them. They have since relocated from the site, but propose to retain use of the stables for the over-wintering of their horses, when they are turned out less frequently.

1.3 The building occupies a footprint of 59.6m^2 and encompasses three stables, a tack room and small store. In front of the building is an area of hard standing enclosed by post and fence fencing. The building adopts a traditional stable design and stands to a ridge height of 3.1 metres.

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a stable block and hardstanding that is located to the south west of Wetley Abbey Farm and Wetley Abbey Cottage, and to the south east of the Grade II Listed Wetley Abbey. Immediately to the east of the site is a parcel of land which is currently the subject of a Lawful Development Certificate application to confirm its lawful use as residential. Further residential land is located east of that, encompassing the garden of Wetley Abbey Farm. The western boundary of the site comprises mature vegetation and trees which provide a strong visual barrier and enclosure to the site.

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 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. It 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.

3.4 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Diversification' and states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. It goes on to state that appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution. It furthermore states that wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement. Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of the policy will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

3.5 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. Proposals should also protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

3.6 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'The Historic Environment' and 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 by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018)

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of development in the Green Belt and safeguarding heritage assets. The content of this document is explored in more detail, where relevant, in the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on the Green Belt

5.1 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that areas within the countryside and green belt 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. It 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. Policy R1 of the Core Strategy states adds that proposals will be assessed according to the extent to which they, amongst others, meet a rural community need. The stable block erected on site meets a rural community need and facilitates outdoor recreation. It is therefore considered to be consistent with the provisions of these policies.

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework confirms in paragraph 145 that Local Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as being inappropriate in the Green Belt. It nevertheless go on to list a number of exceptions, which includes:

> *"provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"*

5.3 It is submitted that the stable block erected on this site constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. The modest

footprint of the building, its small-scale profile and limited ridge height ensure that it does not derive significant adverse harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The enclosure of the site by mature trees and vegetation furthermore serves to ensure that the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt is not significant. The modest area of hardstanding provided in front of the building is not considered to raise any fundamental Green Belt concerns owing to its open character and the allowance for engineering operations within paragraph 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.4 For these reasons the stable block and hardstanding is considered to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt which accords with the provisions of policies SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy, and the provisions of policies 145 and 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Impact on Heritage Assets

5.5 The stable block is located to the immediate south east of the Grade II Listed Wetley Abbey. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

5.6 The nearby Listed Building is considered to constitute a heritage asset of important significance, given its statutory listing. However, owing to the presence of mature landscaping and planting along the western boundary of the site, and along the boundary of the adjacent garden, no views of the stables are afforded from the grounds of Wetley Abbey. Similarly, the stable block does not impinge on any important vistas of the Listed Building when viewed from the surrounding area. The vegetative enclosure is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Photograph of Stable Block / Western Boundary



5.7 As a consequence of the above, the stable block erected on site is not considered to derive any material harm to the significance of the Listed Building as a heritage asset, and as a consequence the development is in accordance with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy, and paragraphs 192 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Residential Amenity

5.8 The stable block adopts a traditional design, and one which is commonplace throughout the rural areas of the District. It is small-scale in nature, and is constructed from a muted palette of materials which serve to soften its overall impact and assimilate it well with its surroundings. Consequentially the development does not derive any material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.9 The stable block does not lie in close proximity to any existing dwellings, the nearest lying some 49 metres to the southeast (Wetley Manor Care Home) and 55 metres to the northeast (Wetley Abbey Farm). The development is therefore sufficiently distant to avoid any adverse impact on the amenity of those properties by way of noise, general disturbance and loss of light / outlook. The development is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

6 Conclusion

6.1 As a consequence of the above considerations I submit that the development undertaken on site constitutes an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation that preserves the openness of the Green Belt. The development is also of a scale, character and design that is in-keeping with its predominantly rural surroundings, and owing to its strong degree of enclosure by existing vegetation, does not derive any material harm to the character of the area or the setting of the nearby Listed Building. The relationship of the development to surrounding residential developments is also considered to be acceptable.

6.2 The development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy SS6c, R1, DC1 and DC2 of the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.