DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2018/0579 **Valid 21/11/2018**	**OLD FAR ROWNALL FARM** **THORNYEDGE ROAD** **BAGNALL**	**PROPOSED CONVERSION OF OUTBUILDING TO FORM ANCILLARY LIVING ACCOMODATION** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity.
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site lies in the open countryside between Bagnall to the west and Cheddleton to the east and is within the Green Belt. It lies on the east side of Thorneyedge Road. It comprises part of a former farm including a traditional farmhouse, a stables building (a former farm building, possibly for cattle milking), horse exercise arena and a number of random concrete and timber farm buildings. Commercial farming appears to have ceased and the site and adjacent field within the property (at the rear of the site) are used for residential, equestrian (two horses) and low-key/hobby sheep farming purposes. The property appears to have been part of a much larger farm before being subdivided. To the north exists a farm-workers dwelling but other than that, the site is surrounded by open land and fields, including to the other side of the road to the west.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application to convert a single-storey brick and tile stables building to the east of the farmhouse, into a family annex with kitchen, lounge, bedroom and bathroom. There would be no extensions and the external works are limited to replacement windows (which would be slightly larger than existing and made of woodgrain uPVC) and a replacement entrance door. An existing timber farm building to the north of it would become the replacement stabling for the two horses, as shown on an amended site plan. There are no other works at the site associated with the change of use. A Design and Access Statement and a Building Survey Report has been submitted which concludes that the building is structurally sound and stable and suitable for conversion to habitable accommodation.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Core Strategy

SS6c Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
R2 Rural Housing

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 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 has recently been held. Subject to the findings of the appointed inspector, the Local Plan is expected to be adopted in the Spring of 2019. At this 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 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

10/01136 – conversion of farm buildings to ancillary residential use and re-instatement of the residential use of the farmhouse (following a change of use to farm storage). Refused (as no marketing exercise had been submitted)

13/00642 – Re-submission of the above. Approved.

The approved use of the outbuilding under the above application was for storage and workshop purposes ancillary to the residential use of the site.

SMD 2014 0140: Variation of condition (relating to access/highways works) attached to above approval. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 9.1.19
Neighbour letters expiry date: 9.1.19
Press Notice: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Strong objection due to overdevelopment.

Ecology Officer

The building has low or negligible probability of bats being present. The survey supporting the 2013 application found little likelihood of bat usage of the outbuildings and if anything it appears to me that the building is now even less suited. It would not be proportionate to require an up-dated bat survey for this building.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Green Belt policy in the NPPF allows the conversion of buildings into other uses providing they are of permanent and substantial construction. I consider that due to the brick and tile form of the building and the good structural stability of it as assessed in the structural report, the building would be suitable in respect of being a conversion in the Green Belt. Policy R2 requires rural buildings to be suitable in physical, architectural and character terms. The building is physically sound and although it does not have much character or architectural merit, the building form and materials are not out of keeping with the surrounding rural area.

The policy also requires demonstration that the building cannot be re-used for commercial purposes which are prioritised in the Core Strategy, over residential uses. However, this had been tested under a 2013 application which included a marketing report and on granting approval it was deemed that commercial uses were unsuitable for the farm buildings. The 2013 permission approved the ancillary residential storage and workshop uses for this particular building although this does not appear to have occurred. Had the 2013 permission been implemented this would have allowed ancillary residential uses for the building without any further approval. The current proposal is for ancillary residential uses albeit in the form of an annex. I am satisfied that the site remains unsuitable for commercial uses as the focus of offices is the town centres, industrial uses would cause noise disturbance affecting nearby residents and the building would appear to be too small for storage and distribution uses and the site is not well connected to adequate roads. This part of the District is also not a focus for tourism.

I consider ancillary residential uses for the building to be the most suitable and sustainable uses and this would include a family annex. This would not generate a significant increase in vehicle movements, the building is close to the main house and there would be no requirement for parking areas or a curtilage or garden as such amenities would be shared with the main house. There appears to be an oversupply of outbuildings for the current site and its uses, probably due to previous commercial farming on a larger property but now the property is smaller and the uses restricted to residential, small-scale equestrian and low-key sheep farming and the current stock of buildings appears more than adequate for these uses to operate. One of the outbuildings would become the replacement stables for the horses displaced by the proposed annex. This would relieve the need for further new buildings at the property and avoids the potential for overdevelopment of the site (in response to the concerns of the Parish Council).

The roof of the building has recently been replaced with appropriate tiles and the only further external works would be the replacement windows and doors. The

proposal would therefore not lead to any significant impact on the character and appearance of the area and its use would not lead to any significant further noise nuisance affecting neighbours, in relation to the current mixed-use operation of the site.

With regard to ecology and the possible use of the building by bats, a protected species, in 2013 a bat survey report submitted with the application deemed the building to be unsuitable as a bat roost and the Council Ecology Officer raised no objection to the proposal. The form of the building has not significantly changed (and the re-roofing could make it even less suitable). However, an informative should be added as appropriate in case any evidence of bat usage is encountered during conversion works. The Ecology Officer has again raised no objection to the proposal and does not consider an updated survey to be necessary.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the proposed annex would appear to be the most sustainable use of the building and the most suitable in terms of the visual and residential amenities of the area which would not be affected. It would comply with the Core Strategy policies, emerging Local Plan policies and the government guidance contained in the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 18.1.19

X

Signed by: Jane Colley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council