Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

EAVES FARM, EAVES LANE, ARMSHEAD

JUNE 2019

Site Address:
Eaves Farm, Eaves Lane, Armshead, Werrington, Staffordshire, ST2 8LY

Applicant:
Mr. M. Shuker

Proposal:
Alteration and change of use of portal framed agricultural buildings to form livery stables, and creation of manege

Planning & Heritage Statement:
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Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. M. Shuker to seek full planning permission for the change of use and alteration of two portal framed agricultural buildings to equestrian use at Eaves Farm, Eaves Lane, Armshead.

1.2 The two buildings identified for conversion are located to the north and west of the existing courtyard of buildings on the site. Building A is the northernmost building, and is proposed for conversion into eight stables, with tack room and store. Building B is located on the western side of the existing courtyard, and is also proposed for conversion into eight stables, with tack room and store. As part of the application the applicant also proposes to remove the existing poor quality metal cladding to the existing buildings and replace it with vertical Yorkshire boarding. The resultant stabling is to be used for both full and part-time livery. The application also encompasses the creation of an equestrian manege to the rear of Building A, which will measure 40m x 20m, and be enclosed by 1.5m post and rail fencing.

1.3 Vehicular access to the site already exists direct off Eaves Lane, and runs to the west of the existing farmhouse. There is a large central yard area wherein it is proposed to accommodate 11 parking spaces and associated manouvering space for visiting customers.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a range of portal framed agricultural buildings that lie to the northwest of the Grade II Listed Farmhouse (Eaves Farm). Building A lies at the northernmost end of the existing yard, with Building B

running along the western boundary. Two further outbuildings complete the courtyard, with Building C located along the eastern boundary of the yard, abutting up to the domestic curtilage of the farmhouse, and Building D which adjoins the southern elevation of Building B. The site is surrounding by agricultural land, with Eaves Lane forming its southern boundary. Sporadic residential development exists to the east and southwest along Eaves Lane. The site as whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, and a short distance to the east of Abbey Hulton and Bucknall.

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 Area 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 the rural economy will be sustained by:

- *Enabling the limited expansion or redevelopment of an existing authorised business for employment uses;*

- *Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises (in accordance with policy R1);*

3.4 Policy SS6c goes on to state that strict control will continue to be exercise over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.5 **Policy E1** of the Core Strategy relates to 'New Employment Development' and states that such schemes will be assessed according to the extent to which they support and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs, having regard to the Area Strategies in SS5

and SS6. In addition, all proposals should help maintain or enhance an appropriate range of employment premises and sites across the District in terms of their scale, location and type.

3.6 **Policy R1** of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Diversification' and states that 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. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest 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. 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 this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances. Priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings.

3.7 **Policy DC1** of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*
- *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;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

- *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available.*

3.8 **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.*

- *Promoting development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of conservation area appraisals, design statements, archaeological assessments, characterisation studies and Masterplanning.*

- *Preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.*

3.9 **Policy DC1** of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

- *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;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

- *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available.*

3.10 **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 (2019)

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the green belt, safeguarding heritage assets and promoting the growth of the rural economy. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this Planning Statement and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Impact on the Green Belt

5.1 The application proposes the alteration and reuse of two former agricultural buildings to create equestrian stables. The site lies within the Green Belt wherein there is a presumption against the erection of new buildings. Paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF nevertheless identify a number of exceptions, which include:

> *"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" (paragraph 145 refers)*
>
> and…
>
> *"the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction" (paragraph 146 refers)*

5.2 The existing buildings are considered to be of permanent and substantial construction, comprising of robust steel portal framed structures. The proposed reuse of the building will not derive any material impact to the openness of the Green Belt and consequently the development is in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 146 of the NPPF. The application also proposes to remove the existing poor quality metal cladding to the upper elevations of the existing buildings, and replace it with new vertical Yorkshire boarding. The alteration of the buildings in this way is also considered to constitute an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt in the context of paragraph 145 of the NPPF, as it will not result in disproportionate additions to the original buildings.

5.3 The proposed manege is also considered to constitute an appropriate form of development in that it constitutes an engineering operation, and by virtue of the flat nature of the site where it is to be located, will not derive the need for any retaining structures, and consequently will preserve the openness of the Green Belt. In this context it is noted that the proposed post and rail enclosure to the manege would in itself constitute permitted development. The proposed manege is therefore also considered to be acceptable in the context of paragraph 146 of the NPPF, and leads to me to conclude that the development overall is in accordance with the requirements of policies SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy.

Design & Layout

5.4 The application proposes the replacement of the existing poor quality metal cladding to the upper section of the existing buildings and its replacement with vertical Yorkshire boarding, with concrete paneling below as existing. Such works will enhance the appearance of the buildings, and will be in keeping with the rural character of the surrounding area. The proposed manege is typical of its sort, and will be located to the rear of the existing buildings, away from principal views from Eaves Lane, and consequently will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.5 The site benefits from an existing vehicular access off Eaves Lane which provides vehicular access to the farmhouse and the large central courtyard which is enclosed by the existing buildings. This courtyard will provide parking for users of the equestrian business, and at 11 spaces is considered to be of sufficient size to meet the needs of that enterprise. The site furthermore benefits from reasonable visibility in both directions on egress,

and any highway impacts have to be considered in the context of the existing agricultural use of the site. In light of the above it is respectfully submitted that no severe adverse highway impacts would arise, that being the test to be applied under paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

Heritage Impacts

5.6 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF 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.

5.7 Paragraph 192 of the NPPF, reflecting the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy, goes on to state that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*

- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

5.8 The existing farm buildings proposed for conversion do not constitute heritage assets in their own right, nor do they lie within a Conservation Area.

The buildings do however lie adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building (Eaves Farmhouse) and thus are related to its setting. Immediately to the west of the farmhouse lies a detached garage building (Building C), and this provides a reasonably effective visual screen of the adjacent yard area from the rear elevation of the farmhouse. The proposed equestrian use will be otherwise contained within the existing buildings, and thus will not derive any material harm to the setting of the Listed Building. The setting of the Listed Building would arguably be enhanced by virtue of the proposed removal of the existing poor quality cladding and its replacement with new Yorkshire boarding.

5.9 Such considerations lead me to conclude that the development overall will not derive any material harm to the significance of the Listed Building as a heritage asset. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy and the provisions of paragraph 192 of the NPPF.

Other Considerations

5.10 In assessing the planning merits of this proposal, regard also needs to be given the economic benefits of the proposed development. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) *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*

b) *The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses*

c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside

5.11 These provisions are reflected within policies SS6c and E1 of the Core Strategy which seeks to promote commercial reuse of rural buildings, and support and improve the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs.

5.12 The proposed development will benefit the local economy by reusing the existing buildings to provide a commercial livery enterprise that will not only constitute a diversification from the agricultural use of the site, but will also facility leisure by providing an exercise area for horses. The development is expected to generate one full time and up to 3 part time jobs involved in the cleaning out and exercising of the horses, and to this end the proposal will benefit the local economy. The provisions of paragraph 83 of the NPPF and policies SS6c and E1 of the Core Strategy therefore lend significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is submitted that the proposal represents a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- *The proposal involves the reuse of existing buildings or permanent and substantial construction and thus constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt;*

- *The proposed replacement cladding constitutes an alteration to the existing buildings, and is therefore also an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt;*

- *The proposal encompasses the creation of an equestrian manege which amounts to an engineering operation that will not materially detract from the openness of the Green Belt;*

- *The proposed design and layout of the development is acceptable, and will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area;*

- *The proposal will not derive any severe residual impacts to highway safety;*

- *The proposal will not derive any material adverse impact to the significance of the adjacent Grade II Listed Building as a heritage asset;*

- *The proposed development will derive significant benefits to the local economy and promote sustainable leisure activities, in accordance with the objectives of paragraph 83 of the NPPF.*

6.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS6c, R1, E1, DC1 and DC2 of the of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully request to grant planning permission for the proposed development.