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Supporting Statement in relation to the erection of agricultural buildings to establish new poultry unit

Land at Cauldon Low

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Project	Cauldon Low
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1 Introduction

1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.

1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jon Imber, has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

2 Site and Planning History

2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of agricultural grazing land on the eastern side of Ellastone Road, Cauldon Low. The site lies in a rural area approximately 400 metres south of the hamlet of Cauldon Low and approximately 2.7 kilometres north-east of the village of Oakamoor.

2.2 Surrounding land is predominantly in agricultural use, with numerous farmsteads interspersed throughout the wider landscape setting. The site is enclosed by stone walls across the road frontage and the eastern boundary, stock proof fencing to the south and a row of trees to the north.

2.3 The site lies on an elevated plateau in the landscape.

2.4 The parcel extends to approximately 4.55 acres. The site has no recent planning history of relevance to these proposals.

2.5 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following photographs.

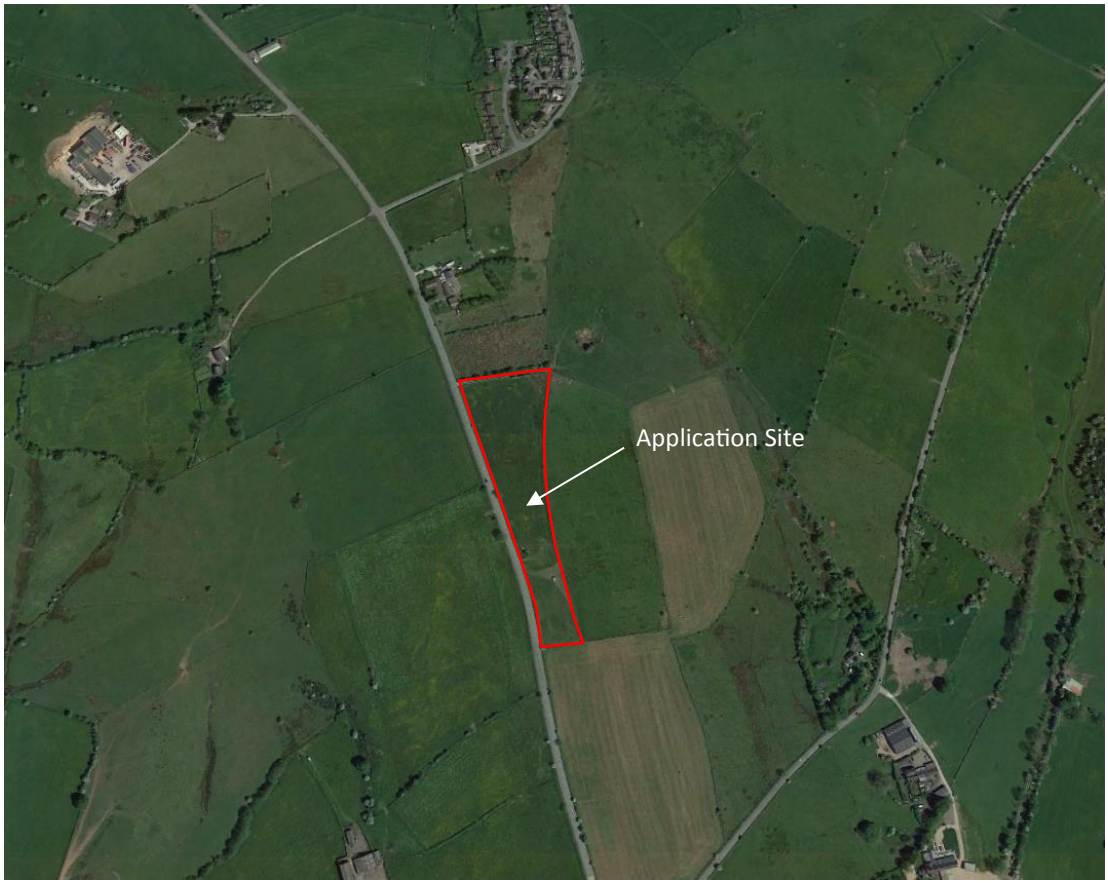


Figure 1 - Aerial photograph of site

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The applicant is a young new entrant to farming, having been employed in the agricultural sector for 12 years. He has recently purchased the site and intends to establish a small organic poultry unit.

3.2 Organic eggs have seen demand outstripping supply for the past two years. In a move away from the recent UK trend in poultry and eggs becoming more intensive and using global inputs, with associated environmental and welfare issues, the applicant intends to run the operation in a more sustainable and traditional manner. This involves sourcing feed more locally, selling produce locally (through delivery and in

independent shops and farmers markets), breeding and hatching/rearing replacements on site and housing birds in small flocks at lower density to minimise impact on the ground and promote natural bird foraging behaviour. The land is in soil association organic conversion and will be managed as such to increase biodiversity and minimise environmental impact.

3.3 There are currently no buildings on the site. It is therefore proposed to erect four 200-bird poultry sheds on the site, together with a hatchery and egg-packing room. The proposed poultry sheds measure approximately 3.6 metres by 7.2 metres, and have a ridge height of approximately 2.55 metres. The hatchery measures approximately 7.2 metres by 10.75 metres and has a ridge height of approximately 4.14 metres.

3.4 The buildings are of timber construction with profile sheet roofs. They are to be sited towards the northern boundary of the site, where they would be viewed against the backdrop of an existing row of trees.

3.5 The proposals include the formation of a new access onto Ellastone Road. This emerges on a crest in the road to maximise visibility in both directions.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that "applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise". Paragraph 12 expands upon this statement confirming that the Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-

to-date Local Plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF prescribes significant weight to the need to support economic growth and productivity.

4.3 Paragraph 83 of the Framework supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both the conversion of existing buildings and the provision of well-designed new buildings. It specifically supports the development of agricultural and other land-based, rural enterprises.

4.4 Paragraph 170 of the Framework states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*'.

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014)

4.5 The application site lies outside of any settlement boundary. As such, it falls within the category 'Other Rural Areas' as defined by Policy SS6c. Policy SS6c states that Other Rural 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*".

4.6 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy states:-

"*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.

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."

5 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

5.1 The application site lies in a rural area outside of any settlement boundary. Policies SS6c and R1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy are therefore relevant.

5.2 The applicant's proposals to farm the land require poultry housing, a hatchery and an egg-packing room. As set out in Paragraph 3.1 above, there are no existing buildings on the site. The proposed buildings are therefore reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture on a newly established agricultural holding.

5.3 Poultry units are land intensive and are therefore inextricably linked with a countryside location. The proposed buildings are therefore essential to the support and sustainable growth of an enterprise appropriately located within a rural area.

5.4 The broad principle of the proposed development is therefore in accordance with Policy R1 of the Core Strategy, which promotes development of the rural economy.

Impact upon Character and Appearance of Countryside

5.5 The form of the proposed buildings reflects their agricultural function. They are modest in scale, and are of timber construction with dual pitched profile sheet roofs. The buildings are similar in terms of character and appearance to agricultural buildings at the various farmsteads dotted across the wider landscape context, and are typical of a type of development prevalent in the countryside in general. The proposed buildings would not therefore appear out of keeping within their rural setting.

5.6 The proposed buildings have been grouped together to avoid individual structures appearing isolated. They are sited adjacent to the only hedgerow surrounding the site, which filters views approaching from the north and provides a backdrop to the buildings in views from the south. The buildings are sited on a relatively low-lying part of the application site and therefore benefit from a degree of screening by topography. The buildings would not therefore break the skyline, and would not appear unduly prominent in the landscape.

5.7 The proposed access track would be of low-key compacted stone construction and runs broadly parallel to the field boundary. The length of the track has been minimised whilst having regard to providing safe access and egress to and from the site.

5.8 The proposals would not therefore harm the character or appearance of the countryside.

Impact upon Residential Amenity

5.9 The proposal safeguards the amenities of neighbouring land users. The building lies approximately 130 metres from the nearest residential property, and would not give rise to an unacceptable increase in noise, disturbance or odours.

Impact upon Highway Network

5.10 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that "*Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe*."

5.11 The proposals include the re-siting of the existing field access so that it is located on a crest in the road, maximising visibility in both directions. Although this section of Ellastone Road is subject to the National Speed Limit, by relocating the access adequate visibility can be provided in both directions.

5.12 This is a relatively modest operation which will not generate significant vehicle movements.,

5.13 The proposals would not therefore prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

Other Material Considerations

5.14 The Environment Agency shows the site lying entirely within Flood Zone 1, where the annual probability of flooding from rivers or the sea is less than 1 in 1000. The proposals would not therefore be at unacceptable risk from flooding and would not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere.

5.15 The application is accompanied by a preliminary ecological appraisal which demonstrates that protected species are not a constraint to development in this instance.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The application proposes the erection of modest agricultural buildings on a newly formed smallholding. The proposed building is essential to the support and viability of a rural enterprise, and also constitutes development appropriate in the countryside.

6.2 The proposed buildings are remote from residential properties. The proposals therefore safeguard the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby dwellings.

6.3 The form of the building reflects their agricultural function and they would be viewed in the context of existing agricultural buildings in the wider landscape. The buildings are sensitively sited where views are filtered by the adjacent hedgerow as well as the topography of the site. The proposals would not therefore harm the character or appearance of the countryside.

6.4 The development would not compromise the safe of efficient use of the highway network.

6.5 The proposals therefore satisfy Policies SS6c and R1 of the Core Strategy as well as the National Planning Policy Framework. As such the proposal constitutes development appropriate within the countryside.