Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

TOMFIELDS FARM, KINGSLEY ROAD
KINGSLEY MOOR

SEPTEMBER 2019

Site Address:
Tomfields Farm, Kingsley Road, Kingsley Moor, ST10 2EN

Applicant:
Mrs. P. Lawton & Mr. J. Millward

Proposal:
Conversion and alteration of former agricultural building to form a single dwellinghouse

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 9th September 2019
Job Reference: RDP/2019/064

Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mrs. P. Lawton and Mr. J. Millward to seek full planning permission for the conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building at Tomfields Farm, Kingsley Road, Kingsley Moor into a single dwellinghouse.

1.2 The existing building is constructed from red facing brickwork with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof, and it is proposed to convert it into a dwellinghouse, comprising of a lounge, kitchen/diner, utility, integral garage and store at ground floor, with three bedrooms (one ensuite) and family bathroom at first floor. A concurrent application has been submitted to convert the remaining part of the building into additional living accommodation serving the existing farmhouse.

1.3 Externally it is proposed to provide an area of private amenity space to the rear of the building, enclosed by post and rail fencing, and this will wrap around the western end of the building adjacent to the existing vehicular access to the site. To the front of the building it is proposed to create two off-street parking spaces to serve the dwelling, with the associated manouvering space to the southwest to be shared with the existing farmhouse.

1.4 The Planning Statement appraises the planning merits of the proposal in the context of local and national planning policy, and should be read in conjunction with the following accompanying documents:

- Structural Survey (Fairclough Consulting Structural Engineers)
- Bat Survey Report (Fauna Forest Ecology Ltd).

2 Site Location

2.1 The application site comprises a two-storey former agricultural building that is constructed from red facing brickwork with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof. The building connects to an existing farmhouse at its eastern end and has a pleasing visual and architectural character. Hollins Lane encloses the western boundary of the site, from which vehicular access to the site is already established. To the northwest of the building lies a portal framed agricultural building used for the storage of hay and implements. Agricultural land extends to the northeast of the building, with the A52 (Kingsley Road) enclosing the southern boundary of the site. An existing agricultural storage building owned by the applicants is located to the southwest of the building. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, and is located some 1.3km from the village of Kingsley, and 4.5km from the centre of Cheadle. Public transport connections are available immediately adjacent to the site on the A52 (Kingsley Road), which provide regular services throughout the day to Kingsley village, along with Uttoxeter and Cheadle.

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:

3.1 **Policy SS1a** of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and 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.*

3.2 **Policy SS6c** of the adopted 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. The policy goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs by (amongst others):

- *Allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2.*

3.3 Policy SS6c 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.

3.2 **Policy R2** of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use will be acceptable where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion and it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable through a marketing exercise, or its conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.

3.3 **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.

3.4 **Policy NE1** of the Core Strategy relates to 'Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and states that development should ensure that it produces a net gain in biodiversity, and ensure that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for. Proposals should also protect and enhance habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt, securing the delivery of rural housing, ensuring high quality design, and safeguarding biodiversity. 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.

SMDC Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018)

4.2 This document assesses the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing delivery and the availability of deliverable sites. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.8 years. The content of this document is considered in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

4.3 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Submission Version) has recently been through its independent examination in public and is expected to be adopted early in 2020. Policies within the emerging Local Plan can now be afforded some weight, including the following which are of particular relevance to this application:

- **Policy SS1** – reflects the provisions of policy SS1 of the Core Strategy as set out above;
- **Policy SS1a** – sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as per the provisions of policy SS1a of the Core Strategy;

- **Policy SS10** – sets out the strategy for the other rural areas, and seeks to restrict new housing development in the countryside to that which accords with policy H1, and reflects the provisions of policy SS6c;
- **Policy H1** – allows for the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion, or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset, or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- **Policy DC1** – reflects the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy, as set out above.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 Planning permission is sought for the conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building to create a single dwellinghouse. The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, wherein development is restricted to a limited number of exceptions, as listed in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 146 of the NPPF confirms that the reuse of rural buildings is not inappropriate in the Green Belt; provided that the buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction, and that the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt. These provisions are reflected within policies SS6c and R2 of the adopted Core Strategy, and policies SS10 and H1 of the emerging Local Plan which also make provision for the conversion of rural buildings for residential purposes, provided that the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural or character terms for conversion.

5.2 The existing building comprises a nicely proportioned, traditional two storey former agricultural building, constructed from red facing brickwork and a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof. It exhibits a number of traditional characteristics, including a ground hugging form, strong eaves and ridge line, a high solid to void ratio, and windows and doors with arched header detailing. The accompanying Structural Survey prepared by Fairclough Consulting Structural Engineers furthermore demonstrates that the building is in a structurally stable condition and that it is suitable for conversion without substantial rebuilding works being required. The existing building is therefore considered to be suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion, and amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with the above policies.

5.3 It is noted in this context that Policy R2 of the Core Strategy also sets out a requirement for a marketing exercise to be undertaken to demonstrate that alternative commercial uses are not viable. However, that requirement is out-of-date and conflicts with more recently published policies as set out within the NPPF, and consequently is afforded very limited weight. Policy H1 of the emerging Local Plan acknowledges this conflict, and as a result, it is not necessary or appropriate for marketing to be undertaken.

5.4 Paragraph 103 of the NPPF confirms that significant development should be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. It goes on to acknowledge that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that this should be taken into account in decision making. In this particular case, the development does not involve significant development, and the application site is located a short distance from the centre of Kingsley (1.3km) which is classed as a larger village within the adopted Core Strategy, and which has a

range of local services and facilities. It is therefore within easy reach of the site. The site is also noted to benefit from bus stops being located directly in front on the Kingsley Road, which offer regular connections to Kingsley, Cheadle and Uttoxeter throughout the day. Future occupants of the dwelling would consequently have a realistic choice in their means of transportation to access local services and facilities, and such considerations lead me to conclude that the principle of development is acceptable in the context of the policies set out above.

Design & Amenity

5.5 To facilitate the conversion of this building into residential use a number of alterations are proposed to the building. These include the lowering of two small windows in the southern elevation, and two small windows in the northern elevation to a more usable, functional height, and the reinstatement of two former openings in the northern elevation. Alongside these alterations it is also proposed to introduce three rooflights on the southern and northern roof slopes to provide valuable natural light to the first floor accommodation, thereby minimising the need for artificial sources of light, and in turn, reduce the energy demands of the building. The proposed rooflights are to be flush fitting, conservation style, and will not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the building. All windows are to be set back 50mm within the elevations in accordance with Moorlands vernacular.

5.6 Externally it is proposed to create an area of amenity space to the rear of the building, wrapping around the western elevation, and enclosed by post and rail fencing. The area of amenity space exceeds the recommended minimum area as set out in the Local Authority's informal standards and will be free from overlooking by the attached farmhouse. The proposed dwelling will furthermore have a gross internal area that exceeds the recommended

minimum floor area within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards. Future occupiers of the dwelling will therefore benefit from an appropriate level of residential amenity.

5.7 The resultant development is considered to be sensitive to the agrarian character of the building and will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It will furthermore derive an acceptable level of residential amenity for future occupiers, and therefore accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.8 The application site benefits from an established vehicular access onto Hollins Lane at the western end of the site. This provides access to a large manouvering / parking area to the northeast of the existing portal framed agricultural storage building and immediately southwest of the building. The proposed dwelling will be provided with three off-street parking spaces to meet the needs of future occupants, and also makes provision to retain adequate parking for the occupiers of the farmhouse. All of the parking spaces on site will be served by the large manouvering area to the southwest of the building, and consequently all vehicles will be able to exit the site in a forward gear. The access benefits from good visibility on egress, and consequently the development will not derive any significant or severe residual impacts to highway safety, that being the test to be applied under paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF.

Ecological Impacts

5.9 The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey prepared by Fauna Forest Ecology Ltd., which has assessed the potential of the existing building as habitat for bats and birds. The survey identified evidence of bats within the building, including discarded moth wings and bat droppings, and this led to

emergence surveys being carried out to determine the extent to which the building was being used by bats.

5.10 The survey concludes that building supports low numbers of bats, but nevertheless recommends that a Method Statement be put in place to ensure that care is taken during the conversion works to ensure that any undetected bats in situ, particular beneath roof tiles, are safeguarded. The recommended Method Statement, coupled with further biodiversity enhancements such as bat boxes, can be secured by way of a suitably worded planning condition, and in doing so the development will accord with the provisions of policy NE1 of the Core Strategy.

Other Considerations

5.11 The Local Authority's continued inability to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development. In such circumstances the titled balance in favour of approval is engaged, and planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would arise to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development (paragraph 11 of the NPPF refers).

5.12 This proposal will derive a number of benefits; most notably giving the building a viable end use that will ensure it is safeguarded into the future to the benefit of the character and appearance of the area. Economic and social benefits will also be derived as a consequence of creating one additional household to contribute towards the Local Authority's substantial shortfall in housing land supply, and in this context I draw attention to the provisions of paragraph 118 of the NPPF which confirms that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained, as is the case here. Further economic benefits will

ensue as a consequence of generating additional household expenditure within the District, whilst environmental benefits will arise as a consequence of delivering a new dwelling in a sustainable location where future occupiers will not be reliant upon the car to access local services and facilities.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural, and character terms for conversion;

- The proposal involves the reuse of a building of permanent and substantial construction, and will not give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt;

- The proposal adopts a sensitive design approach, which makes beneficial reuse of existing openings and safeguards the agrarian character and appearance of the building;

- The proposed development will provide an acceptable level of residential amenity for future occupiers of the dwelling;

- The proposed means of access will not derive any unacceptable or severe residual impacts to highway safety;

- The accompanying bat survey demonstrates that appropriate mitigation can be undertaken to ensure that protected species will be safeguarded;

- The proposal will derive a number of material benefits when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole, and no adverse impacts have been identified to *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh them.

6.2 For these reasons the proposal is considered to meet the requirements of policies SS6c, R2, DC1, DC2 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.