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PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

PROPOSAL : **FULL APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF FORMER FARM BUILDINGS TO THREE SELF-CONTAINED HOLIDAY UNITS AND CREATION OF OFF-ROAD PARKING SPACES**

ADDRESS : **WOODHEAD FARM, TOP ROAD, BIDDULPH MOOR, ST8 7LF**

APPLICANT : **MR M RANDLES**

DATE : **OCTOBER 2019** **JOB No. : 2019-2430**

CONTENTS:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.0 PROPOSAL

4.0 SITE HISTORY

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

6.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

7.0 CONCLUSION

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

- **8.1 USE**
- **8.2 AMOUNT**
- **8.3 LAYOUT**
- **8.4 SCALE**
- **8.5 LANDSCAPING**
- **8.6 APPEARANCE**
- **8.7 ACCESS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr M Randles to prepare and submit a full planning application for the conversion of a former agricultural building to form three self-contained holiday units at Woodhead Farm, Biddulph Moor. The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings which should be read in conjunction with this planning, design and access statement.

This statement analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter, it provides justification for approval of these proposals, primarily on the basis that the development would result in sustainable development which would positively contribute to the current under supply of housing without harm to the valued characteristics of the area, prejudicing residential amenity or neighbouring land uses or being detrimental to highway safety.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application building is a long and narrow rank of former agricultural buildings constructed from mostly stone, but also some brick and some concrete block under a plain clay tile roof which lies on the southern side of Top Road. At present part of the building is used as stables and part for storage. The building is single storey with two door and three window openings in the West (yard) elevation and five window openings in the East (Top Road) elevation. There are two windows and a door in the North elevation. The South elevation is blind but it did have a high window that has been filled.

On the yard side of the building, the surface is concreted and can be used to sit out. Parking will also take place here. On the Top Road side is a narrow area of chippings before the retaining wall to a lawned area.

To the North of the application building is the applicant's house and, beyond that, a domestic garage.

The site lies in an attractive rural area with extensive views. The site is one of many small farmsteads or former farmsteads scattered along this ridge between Staffordshire and Cheshire.

3.0 PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks permission to convert the building into three holiday units- two two-bedroomed and one single bedroom. Living space is provided on the ground floor with bedrooms above.

The proposed conversion uses existing openings, with the opening of closed openings, as far as possible to light the proposed rooms. New rooflights are provided to light the bedrooms and these will be Conservation type lights.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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 revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF also sets out requirements in respect of housing delivery and securing high quality design. The following are considered to be the most relevant chapters: -

- Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 6- Building a Strong, Competitive Economy
- Chapter 11- Making Effective Use of Land
- Chapter 12 - Achieving Well Designed Places
- Chapter 13- Protecting Green Belt Land
- Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Chapter 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) and the Saved Local Plan Proposals Map / Settlement Boundaries (1998). The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS6 (Rural Areas); SD1 (Sustainable Use of Resources); SD3 (Carbon Saving Measures in Development); DC1 (Design Considerations);; DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); C1 (Creating Sustainable Communities); R1 (Rural Diversification); NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources); T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport) and T2 (Other Sustainable Transport Measures). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

6.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are therefore considered to be: -

- The principle of development particularly in relation to the Green Belt
- Design & impact on the local area
- Impact on biodiversity

The Principle of Development

The acceptability of the proposal in Green Belt terms is assessed against the policies set out in Chapter 13 of the NPPF and R1 of the Core Strategy.

Chapter 13 of the NPPF states that “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances” (para 143).

Para 146 recognises that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt “provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”. The “re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction” is one of these categories. Because the application building is of permanent and substantial construction, it follows that the proposal is not “inappropriate development”. The application building is not being proposed to be extended which means that the openness of the Green Belt will not be affected.

Core Strategy Policy R1-RuralDiversification requires that development outside the development boundaries

All development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries 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 “Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion”.

Planning Comment: This proposal represents appropriate development in the Green Belt by virtue of para. 146 of the NPPF. In addition, the proposal complies with Policy R1 of the Core Strategy in that it proposes a sustainable holiday use that will assist the diversification of the rural area and bring “new spend” into this part of the rural area. This is further supported by the Core Strategy giving priority “to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses”.

The application building is of a traditional vernacular building which by virtue of its scale, form, design and materials is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. Furthermore, its size, location and design would mean that it would not be suitable for any current agricultural or commercial uses.

Design & Impact on the Local Area

The Staffordshire Moorlands "Design Principles" SPD provides useful guidance on conversions of rural buildings. The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and contribute positively to the area, as is also reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Policy DC1 sets out the design criteria relating to new development to reinforce local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area.

Planning Comment: The application building is utilitarian former agricultural building and its appearance reflects this. The proposed conversion would be sympathetic as it would be contained within the shell of the existing without any extension. All existing openings would be reused and the only alteration would be the introduction of rooflights in the two slopes of the roof. These have been kept as small as possible and positions sensitively on the roof slopes.

Given that the application building is existing and that there would be minimal change to its external appearance it is not considered that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character of the site and the character of the surrounding area. The traditional appearance of the application building will continue to make a positive contribution to the character of this rural area.

In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies DC1 and DC2 of the adopted Core Strategy as well as guidance contained within the NPPF and supplementary planning guidance.

Impact on Biodiversity

The application is supported by a bat report prepared by Whitcher Wildlife Ltd. This concluded that the application building had a moderate potential for bat presence. However, surveys showed no evidence of bats entering or leaving the building so the report has concluded that it is unlikely that bats are roosting in the building.

Bats have been observed crossing the site leading to the recommendation that a bat brick be installed on the site.

Planning Comment: The application building and site have a low level of use by bats. There is no biodiversity justification to an objection. The provision of a bat brick can be conditioned.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Government has a strong commitment to growth and provides a strong presumption in favour of development and is committed to increasing levels of growth. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. It also states in the NPPF that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay, and where policies are out-of-date permission should only be refused where there is significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the benefits of the development.

The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development in that it involves the re-use of an existing rural building which is considered suitable in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. The proposal adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion of the building and will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area. The proposal increases “holiday spend” in the District and in doing so assists the rural economy. The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS6c, R2, DC1, DC2 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the conversion of the existing former agricultural building for holiday let purposes.

AMOUNT

The proposal is for a two two-bedroomed and one single bedroom units.

LAYOUT

The layout of the building is shown on the submitted plans and will be unchanged.

SCALE

The application building will be converted within the shell of the existing building without any extension or enlargement.

LANDSCAPING

No landscaping is proposed as part of this application.

APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the external character and appearance of the application building with the only alterations limited to the insertion of rooflights. These are shown on the submitted drawings.

ACCESS

Dedicated off road parking provision will be provided off the shared space in the curtilage of the site.