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PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

PROPOSAL : FULL APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF FORMER AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO SINGLE DWELLING

ADDRESS : NEW HOUSE FARM, HULME LANE, HULME, ST3 5BH

APPLICANT : MR & MRS BECKETT

DATE : NOVEMBER 2019 **JOB No. : 2019-2457**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr and Mrs Beckett to prepare and submit a full planning application for the conversion of former agricultural buildings to form a single dwelling at New House Farm, Hulme Lane, Hulme. 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 'L' shaped on plan and is a mix of one and two storeys. It is constructed of a mix of materials including coursed natural stone and painted and rendered stone and brick. The roofs are Staffordshire Blue clay tiles. The land at New House Farm is used for grazing. The application building is no longer needed to assist the farm and is used mostly as a domestic store. The covered area to the side of New House Farmhouse and the buildings behind the application building are considered sufficient to cater for any agricultural need the farm may have.

New House Farmhouse and the application site are served off a single access onto Hulme Lane. There is a field gate at the rear of the application building which is proposed to be used as its new access.

Opposite the site on the corner of Clough Lane is an equestrian centre. To the east, further along Hulme Lane is a group of eight semi-detached houses. Beyond that, and to the south is a pattern of detached houses or small groups of houses and small agricultural and equine related buildings.

The site lies in an attractive rural area but close to the edge of Werrington Village where there is a large range of community and essential facilities.

PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks permission to convert the application building into a single dwelling. An open living space with a kitchen, a separate lounge and a utility and shower room are proposed on the ground floor with two bedrooms above.

The application proposes a small garden at the rear of the proposed dwelling within which it is proposed to place the car parking spaces. The access to this would be off Hulme Lane by the reconfiguration of the existing field gate.

An area of the courtyard at the front of the application building will provide pedestrian access from the highway but will not be fenced. This area of "free access" will allow the applicant, who will continue to live in the farmhouse, access to the log store.

The proposed conversion uses the existing openings, with the exception of a new door from the utility into the rear garden and four rooflights at first floor (these will be Conservation type lights) and a new window in the roof space of the corner building to allow a view through it from the bedroom.

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 (the Structural Survey confirms this), 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- in fact given that it proposes an element of demolition, the proposal enhances openness, albeit minimally. Garden areas to the front courtyard and rear are kept to a minimum.

Core Strategy Policy R1-Rural Diversification requires that development 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 use to an under-used building in the rural area.

The application building is constructed of traditional materials 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. A Structural Survey accompanies the application which confirms that the building is structurally sound.

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 in design and retains traditional external materials. 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 a ground floor door to the rear garden and rooflights in one of the slopes of the roof and a new window in the south-east elevation. These have been kept as small as possible and positioned sensitively.

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 Elite Ecology. The initial survey showed high evidence of bat roosts and nesting birds (swallows and wrens). As a result of this, three activity surveys (in August and September 2019) were carried out. This showed that the application site and adjacent hedges were being used as a day roost for brown long-eared and pipistrelle bats. The report has recommendations on limits to the carrying out of works on the site and the provision of compensatory facilities for bats and birds on the site.

Planning Comment: The application building and site have a high level of use by bats and birds. The report therefore recommends that the proposal, if approved, should not be carried out without first obtaining an appropriate licence from Natural England. Other recommendations relate to compensatory roosting and nesting facilities at the site. These can be conditioned under the planning permission.

Sustainability

Planning Comment: The application building is located close to the edge of Werrington Village. Werrington is identified in the Core Strategy as a "Larger Village" which is a village that contains many of the local services and facilities that are necessary to deliver sustainable living. Consequently, the application building, whist being in the open countryside, is considered to be in a sustainable location where there is good access local services.

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 and is close to the edge of a "Larger Village" which includes a sustainable level of facilities and local services . 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. There are no objections to the proposal on ecology grounds subject to the provision on site of compensatory facilities for bats and birds. 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 redundant farm building to a dwelling.

AMOUNT

The proposal is for a single two-bedroomed dwelling.

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, one door and one small window. These are shown on the submitted drawings.

ACCESS

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