FOREFRONT
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING
4 Ridge House, Ridge House Drive, Festival Park, S-O-T. ST1 5SJ
Office 01782 216912 WWW.FOREFRONTDC.UK

HERITAGE STATEMENT

FOR PLANNING APPLICATION

FOR ALTERATIONS AND CONVERSION OF FARM BUILDING TO A DWELLING

AT EDGEFIELDS FARM, EDGEFIELDS LANE,

STOCKTON BROOK, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST9 9NS

1.0 Introduction

Edgefields Farm is a working farm comprising a farmhouse, 50 acres of farmland and both traditional and modern farm buildings. This Application relates to one of the traditional farm buildings which is located between the farmhouse and the nearest highway.

The building lies parallel to the road. The main building has a pitched gabled roof, with a smaller lean-to section. The main building comprises two distinct section, the taller southern and lower northern element. There is a parapet detail marking the gable wall between the two sections. The southern part is two storey height with a pitched roof and a south facing gable. The northern section is slightly lower. Due to levels changes the eastern wall of the building is mainly below ground.

The buildings are situated in a rural location off Edgefield Lane, 625m to the north of Stockton Brook and the busy A53 Leek New Road. The surrounding area is characterised by meadows and pastures bordered by dry-stone walls and hedgerows containing mature trees. Numerous copses and small woodlands occur locally, including Tinster Wood 325m to the north-east and scattered woodland and scrub between Edgefield Lane and Willfield Lane to the west. The Caldon Canal lies 335m to the south. The approximate OS grid reference for the outbuildings is SJ 91242 52375.

2.0 Heritage Matters

Staffordshire Moorlands Council's records indicate that the site is an historic farmstead and the Statmap identifies the building the subject of this application ad dated from pre 1895 farm barn in the location of the application site. The farmhouse is dated 1895 but the barn apparently predated that. The Councils' records suggest that the barn was stone built with a tiled, gabled roof. Off the northern facing gable there was an open ramshackle outrigger with a mono pitch roof.

However neither the barn nor the farmhouse or any of the other buildings at Edgefield's Farm are Listed Buildings. Nor do they lie within a Conservation Area. They are not therefore subject to historic building legislation.

However the LPA has requested a Heritage Assessment be submitted with the planning application.

3.0 Details Of The Building

The building the subject of this application is used for both agricultural uses and ancillary domestic uses. Between 2002 and 2014 a series of works took place to the building including

• rebuilding of some of the external walls in the same position;

• changes to the elevations; and

• changing a mono-pitched roof to a pitched gabled roof.

The applicant has also undertaken considerable restoration works of the building, Retained parts of the building are described below.

a. the original wall between the southern(taller) part and the northern section of the building has been retained.
b. The external eastern wall of the southern section has been retained

The southern section was altered in 2013-14 and mainly retains its original appearance. It has not been altered in shape and size.

As the barn is not a listed building many of these works did not require the consent of the local planning authority.

The present building includes internal blockwork walls which have been added to protect the external stonework from damage from cattle and provide support to the original walls. The building still resembles a farm building. It has been renovated and only essential rebuilding has been undertaken. Clear evidence of the retained walls has been provided. The former monopitched roof of the northern section has been replaced with a more aesthetically pleasing tiled gabled roof. This change and the insertion of blockwork walls has made the building more suited for continued agricultural use. The building has been altered in excess of 4 years ago.

4.0 The Proposals

The plans propose the conversion of the existing building to create a dwelling. The existing walls and roof would be retained. New windows and doors would be inserted in the existing openings. No extension or rebuilding is proposed

There would be a minimum of new openings formed to allow daylight and ventilation to the dwelling. In addition, the existing unglazed rectangular openings in the upper end gable would be closed and 2 circular opening formed instead This as been planned in order to replicate the existing traditional “pitching hole” openings in the upper floor of the side elevation.

The application building is a large farm building and large sections of the traditional fabric have been retained to date. Some parts have been rebuilt using sympathetic materials in the same position as the original walls. The overall appearance is of a traditional rural building. Its pattern of openings closely resembles the original building and there are 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 re-used and the facade alterations are minimal and these have been kept as small as possible and positioned sensitively.

The present building on the site has been partly rebuilt and some of the pre-existing elevation features have been changed as follows

1. Removal of gable feature in south west roof slope
2. Change from mono-pitched roof to gabled roof on northern section
3. Introduction of 3 upper floor level openings in south east gable

The gable feature 1. was in all likelihood not a traditional feature. It was at odds with the single rectilinear form of the main barn. It was not a strident or architecturally important feature. Its removal and the reinstatement of a simple gabled roof is arguably a reinstatement of the authentic form.

The mono-pitched roof on the northern section of the building 2. was a low pitch sloping roof of corrugated sheeting. This was not a traditional feature. However, this part of the building would have been a traditional addition to the main barn, with lower walls and a lower roof. The change to a gabled roof of a matching roof material and the same pitch as the taller southern section of the barn is, again, a reversion to the original building's traditional form.

The planning application proposes closing up the upper floor openings in the southern gable 3.and insertion of a pair of circular openings instead. These would replicate those seen in the south east elevation of that building.

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.

5.0 Heritage Assessment

This statement assesses the significance of the proposed works in terms of their effect on the heritage asset. What matters in assessing if a proposal causes substantial harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

A value judgement must be made regarding the significance of what is opened up or covered over by the works, and the impact on plan form. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.

It is important to reiterate once again that the barn the subject of this application is not a listed building.

The converted building would be occupied as a single family dwelling. The manner of conversion retains the original parts of the building. The other alterations proposed are sympathetic to the character of the building.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the removal of some of the original fabric represents a level of harm' the harm is considered to be at the very lower end of "less than substantial harm".

The National Planning Policy Framework states that great weight should be given to the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, but also recognises that retaining listed buildings in viable use is the best way to secure their long-term conservation. Central Government Guidance: National Planning Policy Framework – paragraphs 128-129 and 131-132 National Planning Practice Guidance – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that one of the 12 core principles that underpin both plan-making and decision-taking is that planning should conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. It also says that account should always be taken of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; their potential to contribute to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the historic environment's local distinctiveness.

Significance, as defined by the NPPF glossary 'includes archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'. The NPPF Section 12 makes it clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), gives further information on how national policy is to be interpreted and applied locally. The advice contained within the framework clearly establishes a hierarchy; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. It follows therefore that the lesser the importance of the asset the lesser the weight should be.

The unlisted status of the barn means that the applicant could have demolished the entire barn. However the barn has been retained and although parts rebuilt. This has been done sympathetically. Some of the original outer walls have been retained and the replacement ones are in the same position. The roof on the taller section of the barn mirrors the original building. The works undertaken and proposed improve the condition of the barn which was previously at risk or in poor condition.

6.0 Conclusion

The works already undertaken and proposed are considered to represent less than substantial harm to the barn which is a locally identified historic building. However there are scant records about the barn and it is not a Listed Building, nor within a Conservation Area.

It is concluded that there is no conflict between this proposal and the National and Local Plan policies that aim to protect Heritage Assets and their settings. The Council are therefore respectfully requested to support the scheme and grant planning permission.