Hewitt&CarrServices

Planning Statement

Retention of vehicular access
Isaac Walton Farm, Cresswell Lane, Cresswell
For Mr. & Mrs. Swinnerton

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a revised application for the retention of an existing vehicular access serving Isaac Walton Farm, Cresswell Lane, Cresswell. The application represents a re-submission following the refusal of application SMD/2020/0123 which had proposed the retention of the vehicular access, along with an associated parking area. That application was refused for the following reason:

> *1. The development has been carried out in the Green Belt. The development that has resulted in an engineering operation and a material change of use to provide an expanse of hard surface as a parking area for, indicatively, at least four of the applicant's vehicles, has not preserved the openness of the Green Belt and conflicts with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Specifically the development encroaches on the countryside beyond the curtilage of existing development by making an addition to and exacerbating the urbanising impact and form of existing built development that lies in the Green Belt between neighbouring towns. The development is therefore, inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. There are no considerations that clearly outweigh that harm to the Green Belt. The development conflicts with the terms of the NPPF and policy SS6c of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (SS10 of the emerging Local Plan).*

1.2. The access connects to the Cresswell Old Road to the south of the site and is surfaced with hardcore. It runs northwards from the Cresswell Old Road for a distance of approximately 48 metres before turning westwards where a parking area with space for up to four vehicles had been constructed. That parking area has since been removed and is in the process of being re-seeded to grass, as shown on the enclosed photographs. This revised application therefore proposes the retention of the vehicular access only.

1.3. Pre-application advice has been sought from the Local Authority (Mr. B. Hurst) who has advised that a revised application omitting the parking area would have merit as the rustic track and use for the transient carriage of vehicles would not harm openness.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site lies within the north Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a parcel of land located to the south of Isaac Walton Farm, and to the east and northeast of the Isaac Walton Public House (closed). Mature landscaping and trees enclose the southern, western and eastern boundaries of the site, with a 2m high wall along the western boundary to the Sandon Road, providing a high degree of enclosure to the site. Beyond the eastern boundary lies an open field.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (March 2014) and the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application.

3.2. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that the 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. It 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.

3.3. Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
- 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;
- create, where appropriate, attractive, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate, amongst others, landscaping and designing out crime initiatives;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;
- promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate, in accordance with policy NE1;
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;
- ensure that existing drainage, wastewater and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;

3.4. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important

views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;

2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out guidance in respect of various planning matters, including safeguarding the Green Belt. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Statement of Case below.

SMDC Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

4.2. This document appraises the landscape character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, breaking the District down into character areas. For each character area the document identifies its key landscape characteristics, incongruous features, and identifies landscape planning guidelines. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Statement of Case below.

5.0 STATEMENT OF CASE

Green Belt

5.1. The application proposes the retention of an existing vehicular access that has been created on land adjacent to Isaac Walton Farm, which is located within the Green Belt. The access track is used by the applicants as a means of vehicular access to serve their existing farmhouse. The farmhouse has an existing vehicular access direct onto the Cresswell Road, but the applicant's find this a difficult entrance to utilise, given the speed and frequency of oncoming traffic along the Cresswell Road. The track was installed to enable them to access their property via the Cresswell Old Road, which the applicant considers to be far safer as there is a substantially lesser degree of traffic using the Cresswell Old Road.

5.2. Policy SS6c of the confirms that strict control will be exercised over development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions set out within Government policy. Paragraph 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies a number of forms of development that can be considered appropriate within the Green Belt provided that the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

5.3. The list of developments considered acceptable includes:

"engineering operations"

And

"material changes in the use of land"

5.4. The creation of the access track amounts to an engineering operation and associated with its installation was a material change of use of the land from agricultural to residential. Owing to the open nature of the access track, the transient nature of vehicles using it, coupled with the strong enclosure of the site by mature vegetation and a boundary wall, tit is considered that the development does not derive any material harm to the openness of the Green Belt, nor does it derive any conflict with the five purposes of the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of paragraph 146 of the NPPF and policies SS6c of the Core Strategy.

Landscape Impact

5.5. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy seeks to resist development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment and supports development which respects and enhances local landscape character. Policy DC1 reinforces these provisions, requiring that development be of a high quality and add value to the local area, and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings.

5.6. The application site is located within the Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes character area as defined by the SMDC Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA). The LSCA defines the landscape character to comprise:

- Gentle undulating landform with flat open valleys
- Small scale ancient hedgerow field pattern
- Low lying wet fields with ponds and well vegetated streams
- Views limited by hedgerow pattern and dense tree cover
- Urban fringe farming with horseyculture
- Incongruous A50 dual carriageway corridor and mainline railway

5.7. The LSCA goes on to identify a number of incongruous landscape features, which includes the A50 dual carriageway corridor and mainline railway, the adverse impact of the conurbation edge, and the use of post and wire fences for stock control. It goes on to identify a number of Landscape Planning Guidelines including:

"Reinforcing the existing vegetational structure of the area away from the urban fringe should consist of small-scale planting of small field size, field corners and hedgerow trees. The character of floodplains should remain more open".

"New native woodland planting should where possible be used to improve the distribution of and links to existing ancient woodlands, counteracting isolation of these woodlands".

"Where new development is proposed, the edge of the development and public open spaces associated with it should contain appropriate tree and shrub planting to reduce the visual impact of the development and to enable it to be more readily assimilated into the landscape".

5.8. The application site benefits from a strong degree of visual enclosure provided by mature boundary hedgerows and trees that extend along its, southern and eastern boundaries, as well as a wall that has been erected to the western boundary. The existing boundary treatments serves to ensure that the visual impact of the development is minimal and assimilates the development into the landscape, in accordance with the landscape planning guidelines identified within the LSCA. The application nevertheless confirms the removal of the parking area and its re-seeding with grass which will assist in further minimising the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the landscape. The previous application was not refused on such grounds, and consequently it can be reasonably concluded that the access track is in accordance with the provisions of policies DC1 and DC3 of the Core Strategy.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. It is considered that the retention of the access track amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, as it involves engineering operations and a change of use of the land which do not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt or derive any conflict with the five purposes of the Green Belt. The proposal also preserves the character of the landscape in accordance with the objectives of the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.

6.2. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS6c, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and SMDC Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission to retain the access track.