DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2019/0708	**1 CRESSWELL OLD LANE**	**PROPOSED STABLE**
Valid 21/11/2019	**CRESSWELL**	**BUILDING FOR 6 HORSES.**
		(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies within the open countryside between Cresswell to the west and Draycott to the north and is between Old Cresswell Lane (to the south) and the A50 to the north. It comprises 4.5 hectares of equestrian land, a dwelling, stables, horse exerciser, modern farm storage building and horse manege, with the access off the lane. The property is surrounded by other open land. Most of the property is within the Green Belt but part of it is excluded (the field where the manege is located and all land to the south of the lane which is outside of the property).

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for an L-shaped timber stables building for six horses placed immediately to the north and west of the horse exerciser and to the west side of the complex of at the property buildings, adjacent to the lane. The access to the property is located between the exerciser and complex of buildings. The horses are currently stabled in a small stables block which has permission for a change of use to dwelling and also within the modern storage building. The applicant requires improved stabling facilities for the horses.

The plans are a revision to the original siting which was further to the west of the current revised siting and with a north and east facing orientation, whereas the new scheme rotates the building 90 degrees clockwise (so it faces the south and east) and pushed closer to the horse exerciser. The size of footprint remains the same but the new scheme has a slightly lower roof with lower pitches and features such as the clock tower have been removed. The roof would comprise slate grey “tile shingles” instead of clay tiles shown on the original drawings.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy (Adopted March 2014)

SS6c Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)

Sections 12 (Design) and 13 (Green Belts).

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was "sound". Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. An examination in public is ongoing in order to determine whether the Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. Hearing sessions were conducted in October 2018 and the Inspector issued his initial post-hearing advice in January 2019 which set out some actions for the Council and a range of modifications that would be necessary to make the plan sound. The full schedule of modifications was agreed by the Council and the subject of public consultation between 18th September 2019 and 31st October 2019. The schedule consisted of modifications that the Inspector has deemed necessary to make the Local Plan sound. Following the consultation, the Inspector concluded that further hearing sessions were necessary to consider; proposals for safeguarded land at Gillow Heath in Biddulph, housing land supply, Local Green Spaces in Cheddleton (Ox Pasture), Biddulph (Dorset Drive and implications for the emerging neighbourhood plan) and Blythe Bridge. They were held on 4th and 5th February.

On 27th February, the Inspector issued his post hearing advice. Key recommendations in the letter include:

- The proposed safeguarded land at Gillow Health, Biddulph should be removed. Neither should the site be allocated for housing as requested by the landowners as the case for exceptional circumstances has not ben met. The land will remain Green Belt as per the Local Plan Submission Version agreed by the Council in June 2018
- No further housing allocations in Biddulph are required
- No further amendments to the housing trajectory are required aside from pushing back the predicted commencement of the Wharf Road, Biddulph site (excluding BDNEW) until 2022/23.
- Monitoring of housing supply will determine if a full or partial Local Plan review is required within 5 years
- Land at Ox Pasture (Cheddleton) and Dorset Drive (Biddulph) should revert back to the Local Green Space designations as per the Local Plan Submission Version as agreed by the Council in June 2018.
- Other modifications were considered during the recent hearings sessions are necessary to make the plan sound, including; updating neighbourhood area housing requirements (Policy SS4) to reflect the latest monitoring data,

updating the employment land area for the Tunstall Road allocation to reflect the masterplan and other adjustments to the wording of Policy SS4 and Policy DC2.

No further representations will be sought by the Inspector. As such, the Local Plan policies as proposed to be modified in September 2019 along with the Inspector recommended revisions (February 2020) provide a strong indication of the final policies likely to be adopted in the Local Plan. The Inspector's final report is expected within 2 months and will reflect the post hearing advice. The Council will be able to consider the adoption of the Local Plan at this point. As such, the plan is at a very advanced stage of preparation with some of the key outstanding objections now having been resolved following the February 2020 hearing sessions.

In this context, the Council's position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is considered below:

- The stage of preparation – the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the main modifications have been subject to consultation
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies this varies depending on the policy in question – the Inspector wishes to explore outstanding objections on a limited number of issues at the February hearing sessions further before drawing conclusions.
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework – policies have been modified to address soundness issues identified by the Inspector to date. It is the Council's view that the policies (as modified) are consistent with national policy. The Inspector has yet to draw final conclusions, particularly on the matters subject to further hearing sessions.

Given the above, the majority of policies (as modified) can be given substantial weight.

Emerging Policies

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this application:

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

No previous applications that are relevant to the proposal.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 8.1.20
Neighbour consultation period ends: 8.1.20

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt where there are restrictions for new development in order to protect the openness of the Green Belt. The forms of development that are exceptionally allowed in the Green Belt are listed in paras 145 and 146 of the NPPF and include "the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport or, outdoor recreation….as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it." Stables for equestrian uses are considered to amount to an appropriate facility in this case. In order to protect as much as possible the openness of the Green Belt, the best possible siting needs to be explored. Part of the property site is in fact outside of the Green Belt and could have been accommodated around the horse manege. However, it was considered that this would also be the most visually intrusive part of the property, especially when viewed from surrounding roads. Whilst the principle of locating a stables building in the Green Belt remains acceptable, it was found there were much better screened locations within the Green Belt part of the property. The main issue with the proposal is finding the part of the site which respects the "openness" of the Green Belt the most. This does not necessarily relate to visual prominence. For example, a new building in the middle of a large field away from roads and footpaths may be inconspicuous, but it would still harm openness because there are no other buildings near it and therefore the level of openness is lost.

It was considered the original siting was in an open part of the property, significantly detached from other buildings within the property which are huddled together close to the main access. The proposal was therefore considered to harm the openness of the Green Belt and would therefore have been deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and therefore would not have been allowed unless there were very special circumstances considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances had been demonstrated or were in evidence.

However, the building has been moved significantly closer to other buildings and development and is positioned around the horse exerciser and close to a hardstanding/yard, the road and access i.e. developed features of the landscape. Although it is visible from the road, it relates well to the complex of buildings and would be seen as being part of the developed area of the property. It would also be screened by those buildings when viewed from the north and east. It would also be partly screened by an existing hedgerow along the lane when viewed from the south and west.

The scale of the building can also affect openness. It is important to minimise the scale and height of new buildings which are acceptable in principle in the Green Belt. Although the stables building can be described as large, the applicant has demonstrated that the size of building is needed due to the number of horses within the ownership i.e. six. The number of horses is also not excessive for the size of the property and its grazing land. The British Horse Society recommends 0.5 hectares of grazing land per horse. The property has 4.5 hectares and so the number of horses kept is not inappropriate and the size of the stables building is therefore justified.

The revised plans also reduce the height of the building and which has a simpler form without ornate features and more low-key materials. This helps to reduce the prominence of the building within the rural landscape and blend in more with the nature of the area including the nearby buildings, in keeping with the more traditional rural character and appearance of the area.

There are no nearby dwellings outside of the property and therefore the residential amenities of the area would not be affected. Apart from the nearby house within the property, there is an adjacent stables block which has the benefit of a recent planning permission for conversion into a dwellings. However, if this is converted, the new dwelling would still remain to be surrounded by nearby equestrian uses and therefore the new stables block, which is not associated with any expansion or intensification of the current equestrian use of land, would not lead to any significant additional harm to the living conditions or residential amenities of the future occupants.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The amended proposal would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not harm its openness or the rural character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore comply with the Core Strategy, the forthcoming Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 9.7.20

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council