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PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSAL: **Retrospective application for retention of stable block**

ADDRESS: **Micklea Farm, Micklea Lane, Longsdon, ST9 9QA**

APPLICANT: **Mr M Jones**

DATE: **September 2020**

JOB No: **2019-2468**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a retrospective planning application for the retention of a stable block at Micklea Farm, Micklea Lane, Longsdon. It has been submitted by Sammons Architectural Ltd on behalf of Mr M Jones and is accompanied by drawings numbered 2019-2468-01A, 2019-2468-02, 2019-2468-04B and 2019-2468-05 which should be read in conjunction with this statement.

1.2 The application is a resubmission of a similar scheme considered under application number SMD/2020/0031 which was refused by the council on the 8th April 2020 for the following reasons:-

"1. This application represents an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt for which no very special circumstances have been presented. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the openness of the green belt, and in the absence of any very special circumstances, the development is contrary to policies SS6c and R1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The development represents a building of a domestic form and nature which is considered detrimental to the character of the local landscape and setting of the street scene, contrary to policies DC1, DC3 and R1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and paragraphs 127 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework."

1.3 This statement seeks to address the above reasons for refusal. It analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which they are made and thereafter, it provides justification for approval of the proposal on the basis that the proposal would constitute appropriate development which would be in accordance with Development Plan as it would result in the provision of an appropriately sized, suitably located building for equestrian use that would not harm the character and appearance of the wider landscape. Furthermore, it would not impact adversely upon the openness of the Green Belt, be prejudicial to residential amenity, detrimental to highway safety or harm any established ecological interests. This statement also serves as a Design & Access Statement as required by Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as set out in Circular 01/2006.

2. APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 The application site comprises of a 0.47 hectare irregular 'L' shaped parcel of grazing land which lies to the south-east side of Micklea Farm, a traditional Moorlands detached stone farmhouse which lies on the north side of Micklea Lane, Longsdon. The land has a gentle slope towards the south-east, has a low stone wall at the road frontage boundary and hedges on all other boundaries. There is a gated field access in the south east corner of the frontage from which leads a concreted track to the front of the stables. The application building has been constructed on the footprint of a former stable block granted planning permission in 2005

(SMD/2005/1249). For the purposes of the Development Plan the application site lies outside any settlement boundary and is in the North Staffordshire Green Belt

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 This is a full application which seeks consent for the erection of a stable block. The application building measures 8.4 metres x 9.2 metres would comprise of a stable, loose block and separate feed store. It would have a simple "L" footprint with a pitched roof on each leg of the "L". It sits on a concrete hard standing area approximately 10.5m to the south east of the dwelling that is Micklea Farm It is constructed from blockwork above a blue brick base, all encased within horizontal shiplap timber under a plain clay tile roof.

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 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.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2019 and it and its predecessors replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. 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, which in this area comprises of the Core Strategy document which was adopted earlier this month.

4.3 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. It also sets out ways in which the planning system, should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity.

4.4 Policy SS10 of the Core Strategy states that within the open countryside these 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.

4.5 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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.

4.6 Policy DC3 states that the Council will protect and, where possible enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape. The Council will also support development which respects and enhances local landscape character and will support opportunities to use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape.

4.7 Policy T1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and helps deliver the priorities of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plans, where this is consistent with other policies.

5. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 The key issues for consideration during the processing of this application are considered to be the principle of development and whether it constitutes inappropriate development, the impact of the proposal upon the openness of the Green Belt the visual impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and the wider surrounding area, impact on residential amenity and highway safety.

Principle of development and w*hether it constitutes inappropriate development*

5.2 Section 13 of the NPPF concerns protecting Green Belt land and paragraph 143 indicates that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 145 sets out that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate unless one of the stated exceptions apply. The relevant categories for this case are the provision of appropriate new facilities for (amongst other aspects) outdoor sport and recreation. The latter is subject to a test of the preservation of the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it.

5.3 The case officer delegated report for the previous application considered that the form and design of the building did not meet the Department for Environmental Food and Rural Affairs Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and their Hybrids and therefore did not constitute an appropriate facility for outdoor sport or recreation.

5.4 It is important to note that the publication relied upon in the assessment of the above is not adopted guidance and does not form part of the recently adopted development plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands. There is therefore no onus upon an applicant to meet the requirements laid out in this publication.

5.5 Notwithstanding this it is considered that the applicant's proposal is for a building to be used for equestrian purposes. The publication accepts at paragraph 1.1. that "where horses are of less hardy breeding (e.g. Thoroughbreeds), clipped, very young or elderly they may require stable accommodation / housing or other shelter to protect them from the cold and damp or very hot weather. Any horse may need stabling at short notice should they become sick or injured and provision should be made for this in advance of an emergency arising. Donkeys have specific needs for roofed shelters with solid walls and clean, dry areas on which to

stand as they are not well adapted to wet and cold conditions". No further commentary regarding layout or materials of such buildings is provided.

5.6 It goes on to state at paragraph 1.12 that "Welfare should be considered when constructing or altering buildings to provide housing for horses. The main considerations are the safety and comfort of the horses, ease of access and adequate drainage and ventilation. If poorly designed or managed, stabling can contribute to the rapid spread of disease, cause injury and pose significant fire risks". At paragraph 1.13 it states that the "building should be constructed soundly with no exposed surfaces or projections likely to cause injury. It goes on to set out some basic design parameters stating that "doors should be a minimum of 4'ft wide and roofs should be high enough to provide adequate ventilation including good air circulation. There should be a minimum clear space to the eaves of 60-90 cm (2-3ft) above the ears of the horse in its normal standing position.

5.7 The guidance accepts at paragraph 1.15 that "as horses and ponies vary so greatly in size it is difficult to set an ideal size for loose boxes, barns or stables. However as a minimise each horse should have sufficient room to lie down, readily rise and turn around in comfort. The BHS minimum stable size recommendations for large horses is 3.65m x 4.25m and 4.25m x 4.25m for a foaling box for a horse.

5.8 The internal measurement of the stable box provided is 4.5m x 5.1 m. Whilst it is accepted that this is marginally more than the guidance set out in the paragraph above by DEFRA it should be noted, as clearly stated within the publication that these size guidelines are **minimum** criteria. The size of the stable also allows a degree of flexibility in terms of providing suitable accommodation for foaling etc should this be required.

5.9 The current building replaces a former stable block approved in 2005. This building was constructed with timber cladding, which reflects the materials used in the replacement building. It had three compartments, the openings for which had large timber doors- this detail has also been followed into the replacement building. The former stable block had a large overhang at the front. This has been used on the west side of the building to accommodate the tail of the “L” in the current building- the other part of the overhang has been removed. The outcome of this change has resulted in a slightly larger floor area, but a smaller overall footprint.

5.10 On the basis of the above it is considered that the replacement building comprises of an essential facility for the keeping of horses which is modest in terms of size and scale and constructed entirely for the purposes for which it is intended. In this respect it is considered that the proposal would meet the recognised provisions for exceptional forms of development in the Green Belt as set out in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF and would not amount to inappropriate development.

Effect upon openness

5.11 The case officer's report for the previous application accepts "through the assistance of Google Earth imagery that a stable previously existed in the same location as the building for which approval is sought".

5.12 It goes on to state that whilst a planning permission for a double stable and store was approved in 2005 under application reference SMD/2005/1249 it would appear that this was not constructed in the approved location or in accordance with the approved plans.

5.13 The plans approved in 2005 were for 2 stables, a tack room and hay room. The building was laid on in a simple rectangular form with a gable width of 6.6m and an overall length of 12m which would give an approved floor area of 79.2 sq metres. It was constructed on a concrete foundation and constructed from a dwarf wall, timber construction and felt tile roof.

5.14 The building as approved had its ridge running at 90 degrees to Micklea Lane however as constructed it was turned 90 degrees within the site so that its ridge run parallel with the highway. The constructed building was also slightly smaller in plan but with a large overhang. Submitted drawings of the stable block which this development replaces have been supported in support of this application. These show that the footprint of the former stable building as 60.7 sq metres.

5.15 Notwithstanding this the previous building had clearly been in existence in excess of 4 years and gained immunity from enforcement action and as confirmed by the planning case officer would therefore constitute previously developed land.

5.16 The replacement building has been constructed on the same concrete plinth so is in the exact same location as the previous stable building. Furthermore the replacement building has a floor area of 64.7 sq metres which is just 4 sq metres more than that which it replaced but 14.5 sq metres less than that which could have been constructed following the approval in 2005. Whilst it is accepted that the replacement stable building essentially has a 'L' shaped footprint, as opposed to the rectangular one approved, this arrangement is not uncommon for buildings of this type.

5.17 The replacement building has been constructed from double skinned breeze block for strength and in an effort to combat rural crime and there is no insulation. Roof construction is open rafters, tiles and no insulation. Whilst the construction method is different the external view is very similar appearing as a timber clad building which is appropriate in this rural location.

5.18 It is recognised that the effect on openness includes a spatial as well as a visual dimension. The replacement building has been located in the same position, orientation and location as the previous stable building. It is not prominent in the landscape and it is seen and read in the context of the physical features of the site including drystone walls, hedges and mature trees and set against the backdrop of the existing farmhouse and associated built development.

5.19 In terms of the spatial dimension the replacement stable building represents a small scale development that is appropriate in national policy terms. The modest increase in size over and above that it replaced is minor and would not result in any adverse harm to the openness of the Green Belt especially having regard to the fact that planning permission had been granted for a building which would be materially larger in footprint, volume and massing.

Effect on visual amenity and character and appearance of the area

5.20 The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

5.21 The application proposes a modest sized building which would provide a stable and loose box and a separate feed store. The application site extends to just over 2.5 hectares of land which according to advice from the British Horse Society is capable of providing sufficient grazing for 1-2 horses/ponies, depending upon how they are managed. The replacement building has been kept as low as is practically possible in order to minimise its visual impact with an eaves height of 2.56m and an overall ridge height of 3.86m. It has been sensitively located in the corner of a field so that it relates well to the existing physical boundaries of the site.

5.22 Following the refusal of the previous application amendments to both the external and internal appearance of the building have been made as shown on the submitted drawings. Externally the roller shutter doors will be removed with the access to the stable being reduced in width and a traditional timber stable door being installed whilst a pair of vertically boarded side hung timber doors will be fitted to the store / tack room. The pedestrian door to the store tack room is also to be amended with the existing uPVC door replaced with something more appropriate. Internally the stable and store tack room have been divided with a block work wall in order to separate the uses. Subject to the above revisions it is considered that the replacement building, as constructed, is typical in terms of its form and appearance and the use of good quality natural materials will ensure that it is in keeping with the rural landscape. Accordingly in this respect it is considered to comply with local and national planning policies.

Residential Amenity

5.23 Policy DC1 states that new development should protect residential amenity in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. Whilst the proposed development is surrounded on three sides by residential development it is considered that the intervening distances between these and the proposed building is sufficient to ensure that it would not be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the surrounding residential dwellings or neighbouring land uses. No amenity issues were raised as part of the consideration of the previous application.

Highway Safety

5.24 In terms of highway safety considerations Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that "development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residential cumulative impacts of development are severe". Core Strategy Policy DC1 states that development proposals should provide for safe and satisfactory access whilst also meeting the parking requirement for the necessary car use.

5.25 The proposed development will be served by the existing access off Micklea Lane which will be unaltered. No highway issues were raised as part of the consideration of the previous application.

6. Conclusion

6.1 In conclusion it is considered that the replacement stable building constitutes an appropriate form of development and is acceptable is acceptable in principle as it will support an equestrian use and is therefore consistent with adopted Development Plan policies. Furthermore its overall size and scale is commensurate with the land holding which it will serve and will not when assessed against the former stable building and that which was permitted in 2005 will not result in any significant increase in massing which would adversely harm the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. Subject to the proposed revisions the application building is acceptable in terms of its overall form and design and its siting will ensure that the building would sit comfortably within the landscape area within which it would be located. As a consequence the character and appearance of this rural landscape would not be harmed, nor would it raise any adverse amenity issues or be detrimental to highway safety. The proposal would therefore comply with policies SS10, DC1, DC3, and T1 of the Core Strategy which require, amongst other matters, the protection of the character and appearance of a locality through well designed development. It would also comply with the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to appropriate development within the Green Belt.

Amount

The replacement stable block would have a footprint of 64.7 sq metres comprising of a stable block with separate store / tack room.

Layout

The proposed stable block would be located in the north western corner of the applicants' land holding. It would be laid out in a simple L shaped arrangement as shown on the submitted drawings. The location of the building is on an existing concrete plinth where a former stable building stood until recently.

Scale

The proposed stable block would have a footprint of 64.7 sq metres. It would be laid out in a simple L shaped arrangement with the gable width viewed from Micklea Lane being 5.63m, its elevation to Micklea Lane being 9.2m before returning along the hedgerow for 8.43m. The gable presenting itself towards the field would be 4.64m. The proposed building has been kept as low as is practically possible in order to minimise its visual impact with an eaves height of 2.56m and an overall ridge height of 3.86m.

Landscaping

The general site layout will remain unaltered and all trees and hedges to the whole of the application site will be retained. No additional landscaping is proposed as part of the application but can be secured via an appropriately worded condition in the event that the Local Planning Authority considers this necessary.

Appearance

The replacement stable building has a simple utilitarian appearance and its overall form and design which has been dictated by its intended use is typical for this type of building. .The appearance of the proposed building is in keeping with the rural location and the use of good quality natural materials will ensure that it is quickly assimilated into its surroundings.

Access

The existing vehicular access to the site will be unaltered and retained. The site is located adjacent to the applicants' dwellinghouse . The proposal will not lead to any increase in traffic and therefore is considered to represent an appropriate and sustainable use of the site.