Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

LAND AT DOUBLE GATES NURSERY
BROWN EDGE

SEPTEMBER 2020

Site Address:
Land at Double Gates Nursery, Sytch Road, Brown Edge, ST6 8QX

Applicant:
Mr. A. Beardmore

Proposal:
Retention of two stable blocks comprising of 5no. stables and tack room

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 17th September 2020
Job Reference: RDP/2020/128

Report Prepared By:
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1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. A. Beardmore to seek full planning permission for the retention of two stable blocks that have been constructed on land at Double Gates Nursery, Sytch Road, Brown Edge.

1.2 The stables were erected in July 2019 with the applicant believing that they did not require planning permission. Upon being notified of the need for planning permission by the Local Authority, the applicant has sought to regularise the situation by submitting this application.

1.3 The two stable blocks are arranged side by side and lie some 210 metres to the southwest of its vehicular access point onto Sytch Road. The buildings are enclosed along their western boundary by a mature field hedgerow, which wraps around the northern boundary of the field beyond another stable block which is the subject of a separate application. The two stable buildings are orientated so that their long axis run broadly east / west and both have their doors facing north towards an existing courtyard area.

1.4 The buildings are constructed from timber, and encompass a typical stable design, with front overhanging canopy. The buildings stand to a maximum height of 3.1 metres and occupy a cumulative floor area of 66.7 square metres (42.6m^2 and 24.1m^2 individually). The stable buildings are both used for DIY livery purposes.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, with the main settlement of Brown Edge located to its northeast, east and southeast. The site is flat in nature and is enclosed along its western boundary by mature field hedgerows. An existing stable block is located to the immediate north.

2.2 Further mature hedgerows enclose the eastern site boundary, beyond the existing vehicular access track which connects the site with Sytch Road to the north. A public footpath (Brown Edge 15) follows the route of this existing vehicular access, continuing on in a southeasterly direction.

2.3 The land to the south of the site remains flat for a short period, before dropping away in a southerly direction. To the northeast of the site, approximately 135 metres away, lie two small brick and tile buildings that are used for livery purposes, having been granted consent for such purposes under application SMD/2010/1120.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase 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 Development Plan for this area comprises the recently adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- *a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, including starter homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities*

- *quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;*

- *easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community;*

- *increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce;*

- *a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment;*

- *development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;*

- *development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations.*

- *support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.*

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It goes on to state that the Council will continue to exercise strict control over inappropriate development, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and 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 Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:

1. *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

2. *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;*

3. *create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design;*

4. *incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development;*

5. *protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, overbearing development, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution;*

6. *promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate;*

7. *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;*

8. *require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links;*

9. *ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;*

10. *ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community;*

11. *be served by high speed broadband (>30mbps) unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access Network providers that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable. In all circumstances during construction of the site sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.*

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt and securing high quality design. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment section below.

SMD/2013/1081 – Land at Clough Lane, Werrington

4.2 This application granted consent for the construction of a stable block on land within the Green Belt on the edge of Werrington. The conclusions of the Local Authority in its assessment of that application are material considerations in the assessment of this application and are discussed within the Planning Assessment section below.

SMD/2018/0061 – Springs Cottage Farm, Bagnall

4.3 This application granted consent for the erection of a stable block and manege on land within the Green Belt on the edge of Bagnall. The conclusions of the Local Authority in its assessment of that application are material considerations in the assessment of this application and are discussed within the Planning Assessment section below.

SMD/2018/0796 – Land at Baileys Bank, Biddulph

4.4 This application granted consent for the erection of a stable block and manege on land within the Green Belt on the edge of Gillow Heath. The conclusions of the Local Authority in its assessment of that application are material considerations in the assessment of this application and are discussed within the Planning Assessment section below.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

5.1 The application seeks consent to retain two existing stable blocks that have been constructed on this site. The larger stable block comprises of 3no. stables and a tack room and occupies a footprint of 42.6 square metres. The smaller stable block comprises of two further stables and occupies a footprint of 24.1 square metres. Both stable blocks are used for DIY livery purposes.

5.2 The site is located within the Green Belt wherein there is a presumption against the erection of new buildings. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework nevertheless identifies a number of exceptions, which includes:

> *"b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"*

5.3 The two stable blocks the subject of this application are considered to constitute appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation. Whilst their use for livery purposes could be considered in some circumstances to be commercial in nature as they generate income, it is important to note that these stables operate on a DIY livery basis. Consequently, the people using the stables are the individual owners of the horses themselves who are using the stables to keep their horses in order to pursue their hobby of horse riding on the surrounding land.

5.4 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF makes ***no distinction*** between appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation for private or commercial use, and had it intended that such facilities should be restricted to private outdoor sport and recreation then it would say so. However, it plainly does not, and given that the buildings are each used for the keeping of horses, by the owners of the horses themselves, the two stable blocks are considered to constitute appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation. The British Horse Society recommends that 0.4 hectares of land should be provided for each horse. The applicant's land holding extends to some 8 hectares, and thus is capable of accommodating up to 20 horses in line with the aforementioned guidance. The two stable blocks subject of this application (5 stables), coupled with the existing livery stables to the north (4 stables) do not exceed those provisions.

5.5 In order to constitute appropriate development, the stables must also be found to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it (paragraph 145b of the NPPF refers). The stable block is sited in a corner of the site which benefits from a good degree of screening along its northern and western boundaries, which comprise of mature field hedgerows. These hedgerows serve to significantly reduce the visual impact of the development.

5.6 The stable blocks also have a good visual relationship to the main built up area of Brown Edge, with views of the development from the nearby public footpath viewing the stables in the context of the built-up area behind. With an overall floor area of 66.7 square metres, and a maximum ridge height of 3.1 metres, the stable blocks are considered to be small-scale in nature and will not materially detract from the openness of the Green Belt or the five purposes of including land within it.

5.7 In consideration of this matter I draw attention to a number of other stable developments permitted elsewhere within the Staffordshire Moorlands, where similar conclusions were reached. These are discussed in turn below:

SMD/2013/1081 – Clough Lane, Werrington

5.8 This application granted consent for the erection of a stable block with a floor area of 101m^2, comprising of 6no. stables and large tack room arranged in an 'L' shaped form. The building was located adjacent to a single storey clubhouse, and was found to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, the Local Authority concluding that:

> *"The essential stabling of horses within the Green Belt in connection with an outdoor sport or recreation use would not be inappropriate in principle, provided that it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposal for six stables and a tack room expressed as a more modest loosebox arrangement is considered to be commensurate with the 8.5ha landholding and overcomes previous concerns in respect of the substantial massing of the American Barn style of development. Consequently, the proposal is considered to be appropriate development within the Green Belt to accord with Saved Local Plan Policy N2 and the NPPF"*

5.9 The site at Clough Lane is readily visible from the both Clough Lane to the east and Ford Hayes Lane to the south, whereas the current application is afforded much better screening, and is only visible from the adjacent public footpath, with no adverse views from any of the nearby roads. The approved scheme at Clough Lane was also of a considerably larger size (101m^2) than the cumulative footprint of the two stable buildings proposed in this

application (66.7m^2) and was found to constitute appropriate development within the Green Belt. The Local Authority's approval of application SMD/2013/1081 is therefore considered to weigh in favour of the proposed development.

SMD/2018/0061 – Springs Cottage Farm, Bagnall

5.10 This application granted consent for the erection of a stable block with a floor area of 91.5m^2, comprising of four stables and a tack room. The stable block was located within a field, distant from nearby surrounding development, and was found to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, the Local Authority concluding that:

> *"The stable block is also considered to be relatively modest in size and as the Agent points out is similar in size to one approved by the Council in a similar position in 2011 under reference 11/00870 but never built. Maneges are generally held to be appropriate in the Green Belt. Although this manege is unusually large it does nevertheless generally preserve openness. Overall the judgement is that the scheme does preserve openness and does not conflict with the purpose of including land in the Green Belt. It is appropriate development, in accordance with Policy SS6c and the NPPF. It is acceptable in principle"*

5.11 The approved stable block at Thorney Edge Farm was of a much larger footprint (91.5m^2) than the two buildings proposed in this application (66.7m^2) and no less visually prominent and was found to constitute an appropriate form of development. The Local Authority's approval of this application reinforces the assertion that the proposed stable blocks amount

to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and weighs in favour of the proposed development.

SMD/2018/0796 – Land at Baileys Bank, Gillow Heath

5.12 This application granted consent for the erection of a new stable block with a floor area of 45.6m^2. The stable block was located alongside an existing stable block, in a highly conspicuous location, visible from the existing vehicular access running along the western boundary of the site. In granting consent the Local Authority concluded that:

> *"Stables are regarded as appropriate for equestrian uses on the land and I consider the principle of the proposal is therefore appropriate and would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt"*

And that:

> *"The amended proposal showing a complete timber stables structure is not inappropriate in the Green Belt and would not harm either the rural character and appearance of the area or Green Belt openness".*

5.13 The approved stable block at Baileys Bank was far more visually conspicuous than the buildings the subject of this application, with no meaningful boundary vegetation to minimise its visual impact. Whilst it was smaller than the cumulative footprint of the two buildings within this application, each of the stable buildings individually is smaller than the building that was approved in that application. The Local Authority's approval of this application is therefore considered to reinforce the assertion that the

proposed stable blocks at Double Gates Nursery amount to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

5.14 Having regard to the considerations set out above it is concluded that the two stable blocks will not materially detract from the openness of the Green Belt or the five purposes of including land within it, and that consequently the proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with the provisions of policy SS10 of the Local Plan and paragraph 145 of the NPPF.

Visual Impact

5.15 The scale, massing and design of the stable blocks is typical of this kind of development, and they both have a muted, low-key impact. The siting of the buildings adjacent to the existing hedgerow that forms the western boundary of the site helps to soften its visual impact and anchor the development into its surroundings. The stables are visible from the public footpath that runs to the immediate east of the building, but they are features which one regularly sees within the rural area, and do not appear intrusive or incongruous.

5.16 On approach along the public footpath from the north, the existing boundary hedgerow along the northern perimeter of the field provides an effective softening of the stables, which by virtue of their timber construction, assimilate well with the surrounding vegetation. On approach along the public footpath from the stable buildings are clearly visible, but are seen against the backdrop of the adjacent stable block (subject of a separate application) and against the backdrop of the existing dwellings along Sytch Road to the north, which lie at a higher level to the application site, and which are also predominantly two storey in nature.

5.17 The applicant is furthermore agreeable to undertaking additional planting along the southern boundary of the site in order to provide an indigenous hedgerow screen to soften the impact of the development on the character of the area when approached from the south. Such landscaping can be secured by way of a suitably worded planning condition, and in doing so the development will meet the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

5.18 Owing to the location of the stable block some 160 metres from the nearest residential properties to the east, the development will have no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers by virtue of noise and general disturbance. The development gives rise to the coming and going of vehicles associated with the DIY Livery use of the site, but this has not been substantially increased to a point where it causes material harm to the amenity of residential properties on either side of the vehicular access where it meets Sytch Road. The development is therefore consistent with the relevant provisions of policy DC1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

5.19 The application site benefits from an existing vehicular access direct onto Sytch Road which serves the applicant's existing livery buildings, as well as the proposed stable block. The access benefits from good visibility in both directions on egress and is wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another at the point of entry off Sytch Road. Within the site itself is ample room for the parking and manouvering of vehicles, and consequently the development does not give rise to any material harm to highway safety in the locality, and thus is in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The two stable blocks constructed on the site are considered to constitute a sustainable and appropriate form of development within the Green Belt on the basis that they amount to appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation that do not materially detract from the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The buildings are of a scale, massing, design and type of construction that is firmly in keeping with the rural character of the area within which they are located, and the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers. The proposal is also acceptable from a highway safety perspective.

6.2 The development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to support the proposal and grant planning permission to retain the stable blocks as constructed.