

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**PROPOSAL : CHANGE OF USE OF REDUNDANT BARN TO FORM
SINGLE DWELLING WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING AND
AMENITY SPACE**

**ADDRESS : WILLOWSHAW FARM, CLOUDSIDE, CONGLETON,
CW12 3QQ**

APPLICANT : MR S MOSS

DATE : MARCH 2021 JOB No. : 2020-2545

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application which seeks consent for the change of use of a redundant agricultural building to a dwelling with associated parking and amenity space at Willowshaw Farm, Cloudside, Congleton. The application has been submitted by Sammons Architectural Ltd on behalf of Mr S Moss and is accompanied by:

- Planning application forms, certificate and declaration
- Drawing numbers:
 - 2020-2545-02
 - 2020-2545-03
 - 2020-2545-05
 - 2020-2545-10A
 - 2020-2545-11A
 - 2020-2545-13
 - 2020-2545-15
 - Drystone wall detail
- Structural Report undertaken by Cheshire Structural Design Services (Feb 2021)
- Bat Survey undertaken by Absolute Ecology (Sep 2020)

1.2 This statement provides an introduction to the application site, details of the proposed development and the rationale for it and an examination of the planning policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter, it provides justification for approval of the proposed development on the basis that it would result in an appropriate reuse of a traditional and valued vernacular barn without adversely impacting upon the character and appearance of the area, harming residential amenity or being detrimental to highway safety. The proposed development therefore accords with the provision of local and national planning policy and should be approved without delay.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Willowshaw Farm is a working farm which lies on the south eastern side of Cloudside. The application building comprises of a detached stone and tile farmhouse with an attached 'L' shaped traditional barn to its north eastern gable. Beyond this lies a range of more modern portal farm

buildings and the working farmyard. The site lies close to the junction of Cloudside with Dial Lane and the area is characterised by sporadic groups of dwellings on this side of the valley with the land falling away in a north west to south east and south west to north east direction. For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 This is a full application which seeks consent for the change of use of a redundant agricultural building to a dwelling with associated parking and amenity space. The application building comprises of a traditional vernacular building constructed from stone under a plain clay tile roof. It is attached to the north eastern gable of the main farmhouse and previously used as a cattle shed and milking parlour is no longer conducive for modern day farming practices and is now redundant.

3.2 The application proposal would provide an open plan kitchen/family room with separate dining room, lounge and cloak room at ground floor with three bedrooms, study and family bathroom above. The building would be access off the existing farm track which would lead to a dedicated off road parking area. Private amenity space would be provided to the north eastern side of the dwelling and delineated by a boundary wall.

4.0 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 February 2019. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered as a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

4.3 The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material

considerations indicate otherwise. It goes on to seek to significantly boost the supply of new housing throughout the country and sets out requirements for Local Authorities to maintain a five year deliverable supply of housing at all times. It also sets out guidance inter alia in respect of making effective use of previously developed land, securing high quality design and assessing impacts on highway safety. The content of this document has been taken into account in the preparation of this application and the most relevant sections of the NPPF are considered to be:-

- 1 Introduction paragraphs 1-14
- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 4 Decision making
- 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well designed places
- 13 Green Belt

4.4 The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of Local Plan which was adopted in September 2020. The main policies of relevance to the determination of this application are as follows:-

SS1 (Development Principles); SS10 (Rural Areas Strategy); H1 (New Housing Development); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting) and T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

4.5 In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance Council's adopted Design Guide and Space About Dwellings publications are also important in the consideration of this application.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 The key issues are considered to be:

- The Principle of development
- The impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the application building and wider surrounding area
- Residential amenity

- Highway safety

Principle of development

5.2 The NPPF is quite clear that the "fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open" and that "the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence". It goes on to confirm that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The council has no specific green belt policies and is therefore reliant on those contained within the NPPF.

5.3 The proposal does not accord with any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 145 of the NPPF. Paragraph 146 indicates that certain other forms of the development within the Green Belt are "also not inappropriate" provided that they "preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt". These other forms of development are then set out and the penultimate bullet point in the paragraph refers to the "re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction".

5.4 Policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan in part 6 seeks to maintain the Green Belt exercising strict control over inappropriate development, allowing only exceptions as defined by Government policy. Part 1 of the policy allows the conversion of rural buildings in accordance with Policy H1 of the Plan. Policy H1 in part 5 d) permits the conversion of rural buildings to residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.

5.5 The application building is a valued vernacular building which is constructed from traditional materials. The proposed reuse of the building would comply with local and national planning policies and would not therefore constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Impact upon the openness of the Green Belt, character and appearance of application building and wider setting

5.6 The application building would be converted within the shell of the existing building with no extension sought as part of this proposal. Whilst a separate self contained dwelling has the potential to introduce a higher degree of residential paraphernalia, within the combined sites it is not considered that there would be any significant changes which would lead to harm being caused to the character and appearance of this part of the open countryside. When approaching the application building in either direction of Cloudside there would not be any noticeable difference in how the appeal site would be perceived. Private amenity space would be formed within an enclosed hard standing/yard area on the courtyard side of the building which is viewed in

context with the domestic curtilage for the existing dwelling. Similarly the garden and parking area would be set well back from the public highway, again formed from existing areas of hard standing yard area and would be screened largely from public view by the adjacent portal farm buildings. There would therefore be no net change in openness to the Green Belt and no harm would be caused in this respect.

5.7 Having regard to the five purposes set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF, the proposal would not result in urban sprawl and does not involve any merging of neighbouring towns. Nor does it encroach into the open countryside since it lies within the curtilage / yard of Willowshaw Farm. It does not affect any historic setting and the last bullet point is not relevant. It is therefore considered that the appeal proposal would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and again there would be no harm caused in this respect.

5.8 Local Plan policy DC1 refers to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality which is designed to add value to the area and to respect the site and its surroundings. New development should promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

5.9 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF (2019) requires the design of a development to add to the overall quality of an area, by being sympathetic to local character and by being visually attractive as a result of good architecture. The Council's Design SPD outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that 'alterations need to be undertaken with care. Insensitive changes can easily spoil a building...The aim is to revitalise the building without altering its fundamental character'.

5.10 The proposed development represents a sensitive and conservative approach to the conversion. The application building will be converted entirely within its shell with no extensions required. All existing windows and door will be reused and the extent of the alterations to facilitate the proposal are limited to the provision of two rooflights in the roadside part of the building and a new opening in the side elevation. These alterations do not detract from the character and appearance of the application building nor are they harmful to its setting. In conclusion therefore it is considered that the proposed development would not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the application site or their valued characteristics of the wider surrounding area. In this respect the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy DC1 and the guidance contained in the NPPF more generally.

The impact on residential amenity

5.11 Local Plan policy H1 states that all new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings. Policy DC1 of the Local Plan and paragraph 127(f) of the NNPF states that all development should protect the amenity of the area, including the creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution.

5.12 Whilst the proposed barn conversion would have a close relationship with the adjacent farmhouse careful attention has been paid to windows and their relationship. Adequate parking and amenity areas have been provided which comply with the council's adopted Space About Dwellings Standards for the occupiers of the new dwellings as well as being retained for the existing occupiers of the main farmhouse building. In conclusion therefore it is considered that the proposal would not be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of the existing or proposed occupiers and the proposal complies with Local Plan policy HC1 and DC1 in this regard.

Sustainability of the site

5.13 The application site does not lie within any defined settlement boundary within the settlement hierarchy for the District. It is therefore considered to lie within a countryside location. However the application building, farmhouse and former barns form a discernible group. This arrangement of buildings is relatively common and the form of development within the vicinity of the appeal site is characterised by sporadic and dispersed groups of farmhouses and their outbuildings.

5.14 The application site lies approximately 1.8m to the east of Rushton Spencer, which contains a church, public house, school and employment opportunities and is defined as a larger village within the Local Plan and 1.9m to the west of Congleton, a market town with a greater range of services and facilities.

5.15 The new single house would be in as sustainable a location as the existing dwelling. It is also important to note that is a distinct difference between a home in the designated open countryside and a really isolated home in the countryside and sustainability is not just reliant on location. In economic terms there would be benefits, albeit minor ones and there would be no negative impacts on the social or economic threads set out in the NNPF. The proposed new dwelling and its residents will help support local facilities, bus route, shops nearby and thus local

employment. The application proposal relates to the conversion of an existing building and thus cannot help its location. Whilst the need to try to reduce the need for travel by car and to locate new housing close to existing services and facilities is recognised and acknowledged it is not always possible with conversion schemes.

Highways

5.16 Paragraph 108 of the NPPF states that development should provide a strong and suitable access for all users with paragraph 109 stating that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. This guidance is reflected in policy DC1 which requires, amongst other matters, for development to provide for a safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

5.17 The proposed dwelling would be served by the existing farm access. Adequate parking and turning facilities are provided within the site. Given the existing use of the access for farm vehicles and machinery and the modest size and scale of the dwelling proposed it is not considered that the use of the access for residential purposes for a single dwelling would result in any significant intensification of the site which would be detrimental to highway safety. In conclusion therefore it is not considered that the proposed use would adversely affect highway safety and would therefore be compliant with LP Policy DC1 and guidance contained in the NPPF.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 In conclusion, it is considered that it has been adequately demonstrated that the proposed development is in accordance with the policies of the adopted development plan as it proposes the conversion of valued vernacular traditional buildings to an alternative beneficial reuse which will achieve conservation and enhancement of the site. The proposed development would not be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the surrounding residential properties or adjoining land uses nor would it be detrimental to highway safety or adversely affect any established ecological interests. In this respect it is respectfully requested that the application is approved without delay.

7.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT USE

7.1 The application proposes the conversion of a redundant agricultural building to a single residential dwelling. This form of development is considered to reflect the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

AMOUNT

7.2 The application proposes the conversion to a single dwelling. This amount of development is considered to be in keeping with the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site. The proposed unit would have an internal floor area of 256 sq metres.

LAYOUT

7.3 The layout of the proposed development is dictated by that of the existing building and as shown on the submitted drawings.

SCALE

7.4 The scale of the proposed development is dictated by that of the existing building. The proposed conversion will be carried out entirely within the shell of the existing building and no extensions are proposed.

LANDSCAPING

7.5 The site lies within a countryside setting. Hard and soft landscaping works are shown on the submitted drawings and can be secured through a suitably worded planning condition if required.

APPEARANCE

7.6 The proposal represents a very sensitive conversion of the former farm building to residential use. All existing openings have been reused and any new alterations/openings have been limited. The proposed change of use of the building to residential use will result in some domestication of the site through the change of use of land for domestic curtilage and parking areas however this is considered acceptable given that it lies adjacent to the existing farmhouse and that wider views will be screened by the adjacent farm buildings which serve to enclose the area and provide clear areas where domestic curtilage can be created without little if any harm to the character and appearance of the buildings, their setting or wider setting within the landscape.

ACCESS

7.7 The proposed development would be served by the existing farm access. adequate on site parking and manouvering facilities will be provided. The site is within easy walking and cycling

distance of the centre of the village which has a wide range of services and facilities. Public transport links are easily accessible to Leek and other parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands as well as the neighbouring town of Congleton.