DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2020/0543 **Valid 02/10/2020**	**EASING VILLA** **STILE HOUSE LANE** **LEEK**	**ALTERATIONS TO OUTBUILDING AND CHANGE OF USE OF FIRST FLOOR TO ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- design
- rural character and landscape

DESCRIPTION OF SITE
Detached two storey former barn converted to garages at ground floor facing into the curtilage forecourt of Easing Villa but backing on to open field to the rear.

The building has a low lean-to timber shed along the rear (north-westerly) elevation effectively within the field. This lean-to wraps around and merges with a further timber and part brick shed with low dual-pitched roof and gable facing east off the east gable end. The building appears to have had this structure of layout at least since 2003 (by reference to air photos).

The main two storey building is of obvious age and character and is prominent from the public road (Thorncliffe Road) across the field 70m to the north.

PROPOSAL
To re-build the single storey lean-to and wrap around in brick to the same plan area but to a higher lean-to point and with a traditional style tile roof. Off the east end a flight of steps would be incorporated to meet the first floor pitching door and provide access with a railed landing.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE 2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework February 2019
Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;
Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):
- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:
- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS
None specific to this building. Several concerned with alterations and extensions to the separate dwelling.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 18th November 2020
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments
None

Town / Parish Comments
Leek Town Council – no objections subject to not being found unneighbourly

Staffordshire County Council Highways
Proposal uses an existing access which is in current and regular use, for an ancillary building. Internal layouts and access are not defined on the block plan. However, there appears to be adequate parking within the site for ancillary accommodation

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS10 for the rural areas is 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. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions: [inter alia]

- Allowing extensions or additional domestic outbuildings to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area. The Council will assess schemes having regard to the original dwelling, in cases where cumulative change has occurred;"

SS10 (3) is to Enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by [first point]:

- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape;

The LPA can be satisfied that the two storey former barn of this application has long been associated with the dwelling at Easing Villa with both buildings appearing together on the OS map for the first time in 1899-1901. It is not established when the garaging use came into being but use of the building is undoubtedly closely tied with the residential occupancy of the dwelling and the LPA can regard it as being already in ancillary use for purposes incidental to the dwelling. Moreover, from the LPA's site visit it appears very evident that this use is long established. The current owners have hobby workshops throughout the entire lean-to extension and there is door access through into the main barn / garage at ground floor. The first floor of the barn / garage, though described as 'vacant' in the application, is found by the LPA to be in use for domestic storage.

Design

Policy DC 1 expects all development to be in line with the Council's adopted design guidance. Paragraph 5.15 considers the principles of converting a rural building and states:

> "The guiding principle behind the design of any conversion should be that the character of the original building and its setting should be respected and retained. This means that in most cases the barn, mill or chapel should afterwards look like a converted barn, mill or chapel, and not like a new house or a new block of flats. When converting traditional buildings, new uses should not normally require the construction of extensions or ancillary buildings. However, if alterations are necessary and approached carefully, it may be possible to bring about a new understanding of historic buildings by making a clear distinction between what is old and what is new."

Although the current application would appear to involve a rural building which may not originally have been in domestic use, it is now undoubtedly used for purposes incidental to the residential occupancy of the dwelling and to that extent this is not a conversion as the change of use has in effect already taken place and it is judged for well in excess of ten years.

The proposed extensions would take the place of existing extensions occupying the same ground plan areas but differing in form and height. In line with DC1 and the Design Guidance such extensions would normally be resisted. The applicants have the fall-back alternative that they could simply repair and renovate the existing lean-to arrangement without needing planning consent. As with the main two-storey

building the incidental use of the extensions is long established and there is no conversion to a new use. Despite light weight construction and dilapidated exterior the interior appears well used – and in current use – as a hobby workshop.

Although the proposed replacement structure would be higher and obscure more of the older original barn wall, it may on balance be found acceptable due to using better materials of brick and tile emulating traditional style – and very creditably proposing timber framed windows.

New structure to provide access to the first floor off the east end would not be prominently visible publicly and would not be seen to have unduly conflicting design impact and the external steps can be accepted as broadly in keeping in this case.

Amenity
With no near neighbours there are no amenity conflicts to consider.

Highway Safety
As evident from the HO response, no issues.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE
Extensions to facilitate a rural building conversion would not normally be supported by adopted policy and guidance. The LPA finds that the proposed use in this case however is already largely established and not a conversion, certainly in the entire ground floor, including in the existing extensions. The proposed replacement extensions, whilst taller in the lean-to ridge and more elaborate off the east gable, do not extend the ground plan area and the improved materials, whilst making the extensions more permanent can be seen as an improvement to the existing timber structure.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to conditions

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 13th May 2021

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Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council