

Planning Statement

Extension, alteration and conversion of former agricultural building to provide additional accommodation to the dwellinghouse approved under application DET/2020/0061
Land at Old Engine Farm, Birchenfields Lane, Dilhorne
For Mr. M. Wheat

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the extension, alteration and conversion of a former agricultural building on land at Old Engine Farm, Birchenfields Lane, Dilhorne to provide additional living accommodation connected to the dwellinghouse recently approved under application DET/2020/0061.
- 1.2. Application DET/2020/0061 granted prior approval for the change of use of an existing brick and asbestos roofed former agricultural building to a dwellinghouse. The approved accommodation comprises an open plan kitchen / dining / living room, utility, w.c. five bedrooms (one ensuite) and a family bathroom.
- 1.3. The applicant's intention is to create a multi-generational property on the site, and to this end they are proposing the extension, alteration and conversion of an adjacent agricultural building to provide additional living accommodation to serve the dwelling approved under application DET/2020/0061. The building will be extended and converted to provide three additional bedrooms, a study, lounge and bathroom, with a glazed link connecting the two buildings together. An external courtyard is also proposed. An area of private amenity space is to be provided around the buildings, with parking to be provided within the existing courtyard to the south of the buildings.
- 1.4. By way of background, it is noted that consent has previously been granted for this building to be converted to residential use as an independent dwellinghouse under applications SMD/2011/1163 and SMD/2014/0615, and following the discharge of pre-commencement conditions works to implement the consent was undertaken by way of underpinning. No further works have subsequently taken place, and in the intervening period a portion of the building has collapsed.
- 1.5. The application is accompanied by the following documents which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement and the submitted plans:
 - Structural Survey (Fairclough Consulting Structural Engineers)
 - Bat Survey (Evolution Ecology Ltd.)

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site lies within the Green Belt and comprises a cluster of agricultural buildings located to the north of an existing detached farmhouse. Vehicular access to the site is taken from Birchenfields Lane via a hard surfaced track that extends for approximately 290 metres, with open agricultural fields extending in all directions around.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application.
- 3.2. Policy SS1 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, 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 states that the other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages. 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 a number of actions, including:
- Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H 1
 - 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

- Maintain the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands. Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4. Policy DC1 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, visual impact, 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

3.5. Policy NE1 states that the Council will conserve and enhance regional and locally designated sites by not permitting any development proposal which would directly or indirectly result in significant harm to geological and biodiversity conservation interests, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) there is no appropriate alternative site available; and
- b) all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to any such proposal have been satisfied; and
- c) appropriate conservation and mitigation measures are provided; or if it is demonstrated that this is not possible

- d) the need for, and benefit of, the development is demonstrated to clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site and compensatory measures are implemented

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out guidance in respect of various matters, including the delivery of new rural housing, safeguarding the green belt, securing high quality design, ensuring highway safety and ensuring a net gain to biodiversity. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Green Belt

- 5.1. The application site is located within the Green Belt, and proposes the extension, alteration and conversion of a former agricultural building to provide additional accommodation to serve the recently approved dwelling on the site (DET/2020/0061 refers). The application does not propose the creation of an independent dwellinghouse, but rather the provision of additional accommodation to facilitate the creation a multi-generational home on the site for the applicant and his family to reside in.
- 5.2. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. Policy H1 of the Local Plan furthermore
- 5.3. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework allows for the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- 5.4. A review of historic Ordnance Survey mapping reveals that much of the building the subject of this application was in situ prior to 1948, the only previous addition having been the part of the building that is proposed for conversion to the master suite, which was constructed sometime in the mid-late 1950s. The OS Maps show that the adjacent building to the west, which has recently been granted prior approval for conversion to residential use (DET/2020/0061), was also in situ prior to 1948. That building has not been previously extended.
- 5.5. The original footprint of the building that is subject to this application, equates to some 123 square metres. The previous extension to that building at its eastern end equates to some 37.4 square metres – an increase of some 30%. The adjacent building to which the proposal is intended to be linked, has an original footprint of 161 square metres and has not been previously extended.

- 5.6. The application proposes a modest, lightweight, glazed link to connect the two buildings together, which is not considered to represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building (total footprint of 23 square metres). Furthermore, the works to reinstate parts of the existing building that have recently collapsed also amount to alterations of a building that will not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building – indeed the building will be modestly smaller than the original.
- 5.7. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF also allows for the reuse of existing buildings that of a permanent and substantial construction. The building the subject of this application has previously been granted consent for conversion to residential use, which was subsequently implemented by way of underpinning works. A portion of the building nevertheless subsequently collapsed, and no further works have been undertaken.
- 5.8. The accompanying Structural Survey nevertheless confirms that the building which remains on site has elevations that are formed from solid brickwork, and that these elevations are plumb within normal tolerances. There is no indication of roof / eaves spread and no structurally significant cracks, or gaps other than one vertical crack which is of some age as evidenced by its rounded and weathered edges.
- 5.9. The Structural Survey goes on to conclude that the building is suitable for conversion, but recommends rebuilding of the roof, some further underpinning works and some minor rebuilding at high level where there is some minor distortion. The proposed development therefore involves the reuse of a building that is of a permanent and substantial construction. The reuse will furthermore not derive any material adverse impact to the openness of the Green Belt, or the purposes of including land within it, and consequently we submit that the proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

Design & Layout

- 5.10. The submitted proposal adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion and alteration of the existing building on the site, making beneficial reuse of existing openings to avoid the requirement for any new openings. The proposal also seeks to utilise part of the collapsed portion of the building as an enclosed courtyard area for use by the occupants of the dwelling.
- 5.11. The adopted Design Guide SPD states that 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, going on to state that the building should look like a converted barn, and not like a new house. The guidance also states that 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.

5.12. In this case the proposals safeguard the existing agrarian character of the building, and in its converted state it will retain the appearance of a barn. The proposed link extension connecting the building with the adjacent building has furthermore been designed to have a lightweight, glazed appearance so that it reads as a clear distinction between the two brick built barns, without having a dominant visual impact. In doing so the development safeguards the agrarian character of the existing buildings and will not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.13. The proposal is also acceptable from a residential amenity perspective, with the dwelling providing floorspace that exceeds the minimum requirement set out within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards and ensuring compliance with the adopted space about dwellings standards. The proposal furthermore represents enlargement of the recently approved dwelling under DET/2020/0061 where issues of noise in relation to the nearby wind turbine were addressed. The proposal will therefore not give rise to any adverse impacts to residential amenity, and as such meets the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

5.14. The application proposes the conversion of the existing building to provide additional living accommodation to serve the recently approved dwelling in the adjacent building (DET/2020/0061 refers). Consequently, the proposal will not result in the creation of an additional residential unit on the site and thus will not give rise to a material intensification of use of the existing access.

5.15. The proposal will nevertheless increase the number of bedrooms in the property from the approved 5 bedrooms, up to 8 bedrooms. The application site benefits from a substantial area of courtyard in front of the buildings where parking for four vehicles is to be provided. This level of parking provision accords with the adopted parking standards set out within the Local Plan, and consequently no adverse impact to highway safety will arise as a consequence of the development.

Ecology

5.16. The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey prepared by Evolution Ecology which has assessed the building for potential and evidence of bats, concluding that the buildings are not suitable for bats. Nesting birds were nevertheless highlighted, and to ensure no adverse impact on such birds it is recommended that works are not undertaken during the bird breeding season, or that sheeting is applied to existing openings prior to the breeding season to prevent them becoming used for nesting. Such mitigation can be secured via condition and in doing so the development will not give rise to harm to ecological interests, and thus accords with policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The proposed development constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, as it involves the reuse of an existing building that is of permanent and substantial construction, along with extensions and alterations to a building that do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The proposal furthermore adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion of the building and will not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal is also acceptable from a highway safety and ecology perspective.
- 6.2. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, DC1 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and SMDC Design Guide SPD.