

PLANNING STATEMENT

**TOWN HEAD FARM
FOXT**

APRIL 2021

Site Address:

Town Head Farm, Foxt Road, Foxt, ST10 2HW

Applicant:

Mr. I. Titterton

Proposal:

Conversion and alteration of stone agricultural building to
form 1no. dwellinghouse

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 14th April 2021

Job Reference: RDP/2020/090

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. I. Titterton to seek full planning permission for the conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building at Town Head Farm, Foxt Road, Foxt to form a single dwellinghouse.
- 1.2 The existing building is constructed from natural stone with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof and stands to two storeys in height. The application proposes the conversion of the building to a single dwellinghouse whose accommodation will comprise of an open plan kitchen/sitting room, utility, larder, two bedrooms and bathroom at ground floor, with a further bedroom, dressing room, ensuite and sitting room and study at first floor. The application is part retrospective as the rooflights proposed within the application have already been installed.
- 1.3 Vehicular access to the site is to be taken via the existing access serving the farm, which also serves the adjacent farmhouse to the southeast. An area of private amenity space and parking / manouvering space is to be provided to the west and north of the building,
- 1.4 This application is accompanied by the following documentation which should be read in conjunction with this Statement:
- Structural Survey (Ideal Design Solutions)
 - Preliminary Roost Assessment (Elite Ecology)

2 Planning History & Background

2.1 The applicant has previously sought consent to convert this building to residential use under application SMD/2015/0528. That application was refused for the following three reasons:

1. *In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the application fails to justify that alternative commercial uses of the barn are inappropriate. While it is noted that a report on alternative uses has been provided, it is not considered that the report provides a robust justification for discounting alternative uses which may be suitable and viable. The application proposals also include the partial demolition of a large barn to facilitate the proposed residential use. It has not been demonstrated that the barn to be demolished is surplus to the requirements of the agricultural enterprise and therefore that the development would not have implications on the viability of the existing agricultural enterprise. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies SS6c, R1, R2 and SD1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
2. *The application site is located centrally to the existing farm and as such would be surrounded on all sides by the existing agricultural enterprise. The application relies on shared areas for both uses which has the potential to lead to conflict between the uses. Furthermore, as the building is at the heart of the farm, the proposed private amenity spaces would be exposed to the agricultural operations which would be detrimental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house for future occupants. By virtue of the siting of the building, it is considered that the use would be incompatible with the farming enterprise and therefore the barn is not considered to be suitable for conversion to a dwelling. The proposal would be contrary to Policies*

SS6c, R1, R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the NPPF.

- 3. The application includes the demolition of a large barn and the submission indicates that this would be utilised for further residential amenity space. The change of use of this land to provide amenity space for the proposed development would fail to harmonise satisfactorily with the character and appearance of the rural area and as such would cause harm. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies SS6c, R1, R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the NPPF.*

2.2 In the intervening period there has been a change to the development plan by way of the recent adoption of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, which has served to remove the requirement for alternative commercial uses to be explored before residential use will be considered.

2.3 Consent has also recently been granted under application SMD/2020/0639 for the demolition of a range of existing farm buildings that lay close to this building, and the erection of a new farm building much further away to the northeast. That permission has since been implemented, so the close proximity of the former agricultural buildings to this building has now been removed.

3 Site Location

- 3.1 The application site is located within the rural and forms part of a cluster of stone and tile buildings arranged around the main two storey farmhouse. The site is accessed directly from the Foxt Road, which serves a large area of hardstanding. The building sits centrally within the site and was previously surrounded to its northwest and west by existing agricultural buildings – these have since been removed, and a new agricultural building erected further to the northeast, as approved under application SMD/2020/0639. The site lies a short distance from the centre of Foxt village, which lies to the south.

4 Planning Policy

4.1 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 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

4.2 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, 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.

4.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan 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. The policy states that the Council and its partners will achieve this through a number of actions, including:

- Restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with policy H1.

- 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;
- Encouraging measures which protect and enhance the biodiversity, geological resources and heritage of the District

4.4 Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that in the rural areas only the following forms of housing development will be permitted:

- a) Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H3.
- b) A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.
- c) Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.
- d) The conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.

- e) Proposals to redevelop previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.
- f) The subdivision of an existing residential dwelling provided it is not in an isolated location.

4.5 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, 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;
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.

4.6 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and 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 accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

5 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out policies, *inter alia*, in respect the delivery of rural housing, facilitating the beneficial reuse of resources, securing high quality design, ensuring highway safety and securing a net gain in biodiversity. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is referenced within the Planning Assessment section below.

DCLG Technical Housing Standards

- 5.2 The Technical Housing Standards identify minimum floorspace requirements that new dwellinghouses should meet in the interests of providing a satisfactory level of residential amenity for future occupiers. The content of the Technical Housing Standards document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is referenced within the Planning Assessment section below.

6 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 6.1 In determining the previous application for the conversion of this building to residential use (SMD/2015/0528) the Local Authority concluded that the proposal had not given sufficient consideration to alternative commercial uses, as per the requirements of the policy in force at that time (R2 of the Core Strategy refers). However, in the intervening period the Local Authority has adopted its new Local Plan which incorporates no requirement for alternative commercial uses to be considered before residential reuse will be accepted.
- 6.2 Policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan support the conversion of rural buildings to residential use where the buildings are considered to be worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion, or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.
- 6.3 The building proposed for conversion is understood to date from the mid-late 19th Century, and comprises a traditional former agricultural building, constructed from natural stone with a Staffordshire blue tiled roof. It is a visually pleasing building that relates well to its immediate surroundings, and which is evidently worthy in architectural and character terms for conversion.
- 6.4 The accompanying Structural Survey furthermore demonstrates that the building is worthy in physical terms for conversion noting that its walls are satisfactory to support the applied loading associated with the intended uses and that the roof structure is appropriate. The building is consequently of a permanent and substantial construction and suitable for conversion in physical terms.

- 6.5 In addition, the proposal will not result in the creation of an isolated home in the countryside, with the resultant dwelling being located in close proximity to the existing farmhouse and a cluster of other buildings. The proposal furthermore makes beneficial use of a vernacular building, and as such is considered to meet the requirements of policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan and does not conflict with the provisions of paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principle.

Design & Layout

- 6.6 The application adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion of the existing building, retaining the existing external structure and form of the building, and making beneficial reuse of existing openings. On the front (SE) elevation the application proposes to reuse an existing first floor opening in the gable end of the building, and to alter two existing full height timber openings to provide full height glazing with a horizontal break at first floor level. The form and size of the openings are maintained. Two rooflights are also proposed (retrospective) to serve the master bedroom to optimise natural daylight and thereby reduce reliance upon non-renewable sources of energy.
- 6.7 On the rear (NW) elevation, the application proposes to reuse an existing first floor opening in the gable end of the building, and to insert three rooflights (retrospective). The application also proposes the insertion of a full height opening in the rear lean-to, which is a latter addition to the building constructed from brickwork. The new opening has the form of an agricultural opening and the elevation will retain a high solid to void ratio, so these works will not materially erode the agrarian character of the existing building.
- 6.8 The alterations to the two side elevations of the property (NE and SW) make beneficial reuse of the existing openings, without any new openings being

provided. By resultant effect this proposal will preserve the agrarian character of the existing building in accordance with the objectives of policies DC1 and SS1 of the Local Plan.

- 6.9 The proposed internal floor area exceeds the minimum requirement set out within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards and thus will provide an appropriate area of floorspace for use by future occupiers. An area of private amenity space is also to be created to the southwest and north of the building and which is to be enclosed by a new indigenous hedgerow and post and rail fencing. The area of amenity space proposed will not have a harmful impact within the surrounding area, and will relate well to its immediate surroundings, without deriving any encroachment of development beyond the confines of the existing farmyard.
- 6.10 The previous cluster of agricultural buildings that used to lie in close proximity to this building have since been removed, with a new agricultural building constructed to the NE of the site under the provisions of application SMD/2020/0639. As a consequence, the previously held concerns about the impact of agricultural activities on the amenity of the occupants of the dwelling have been resolved, and the proposal is in accordance with policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity

- 6.11 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Bat Survey which has assessed the building for evidence of bats as well as its potential to roosting opportunities for bats. The survey concludes that the building does not contain any bat roosts and the building has negligible ecological value to bats with no suitability for the structure to support roosting specimens. No bat activity surveys are therefore required.

- 6.12 The survey nevertheless recommends the provision of a bat boxes into the eastern, southern or western elevations In the interests of securing a net gain to biodiversity, and the applicant is agreeable to the implementation of such measures. The identified measures can be secured by way of an appropriately worded planning condition, and in doing so the development will meet the requirements of paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highway Safety

- 6.13 The application site benefits from an existing vehicular access off Foxt Road which serves the existing farmhouse and the farmyard beyond. The access is wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another and has good visibility in both directions on egress onto the Foxt Road. Two parking spaces are to be provided within the site curtilage to serve the proposed dwelling, with such level of parking provision according with the Local Authority's adopted car parking standards. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with policy T1 of the Local Plan.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The building is worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion
- The design and layout of the development will preserve the agrarian appearance of the existing building
- The proposal will provide a satisfactory level of residential amenity for future occupiers and will not be adversely affected by existing agricultural activities
- The proposal will secure a net gain to biodiversity
- The proposal will not detract from highway safety within the locality

7.2 The application is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.