

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0139
Valid 13/05/2021

ROWNALL VIEW
ROWNALL ROAD
WETLEY ROCKS

**RETROSPECTIVE
APPLICATION FOR THE
ERECTION OF A TIMBER
FRAME, STABLE BLOCK
CONTAINING 3 SINGLE
STABLES, AND A SMALL
EQUIPMENT STORE (TACK
ROOM), WITH A HAY AND
FODDER STORE**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether the proposal comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- Impact on neighbouring amenity.
- Impact on highway safety.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site comprises a field measuring 1.34 hectares located to the south of Rownall Road. An L-shaped building has been erected towards the northeastern part of the field that comprises 3no. stables, a tack room and covered hay storage area. The building is sited on top of a concrete pad. Hardcore surrounds the buildings to provide a parking and turning area. The application site is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt and is bounded by Rownall Road to the north and east and fields to the west and south.

PROPOSAL

Retrospective full planning permission is sought for the erection of the L-shaped stables building and associated works.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14
Section(s) 4, 12, 13

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2008/1093 Erection of 2no. field shelters, hardstanding and alterations to access
Refused 05/12/2008

This application was refused due to a lack of supporting information to justify the proposed development

SMD/2009/0143 Erection of field shelter, hardstanding and alterations to access
Approved 03/07/2009

The field shelter comprised an L-shaped building that was to be used for shelter for livestock. It was sited in a similar position to the building now built but had a different orientation.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 15/06/2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments: Six comments have been received; 3 in support of the application, 2 that object to the application and 1 that simply made a comment.

The concerns raised regarding the scheme include:

- Impact of the development on flooding due to the installation of a concrete base. Request that an impact assessment is carried out to ensure that adequate drainage is available. Request that drainage ditches are installed. An Officer from SCC Highways Department confirmed that the base of the stables was the reason why flooding occurred in the area.
- A permanent structure on this land for stables contravenes the NPPF.
- Other horse owners only use temporary field shelters on skids. This application will set a precedent for permanent stables.
- Planning permission was previously rejected for a similar structure but the building that has been erected is bigger than the rejected structure.

The comments in support of the application included:

- The building has been sited carefully to avoid highway safety issues.

- The design and construction of the building is acceptable.
- The building has been sited away from the nearest residential properties and therefore doesn't affect their view or cause a loss of privacy.
- There was a previous approval for a field shelter on the land.
- The concrete base was added for the comfort of the horses.
- Rainwater from the roof of the stables is collected in a water butt and used as drinking water for the horses.

Town / Parish Comments: Cheddleton Parish Council object most strongly as it is a hard standing within the greenbelt and they decry the use of retrospective applications.

SCC Highways: No objections on highways grounds to this proposal.

Severn Trent Water: No objection to the proposals and do not require a drainage condition to be applied.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) promotes a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. For decision takers this means (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are more important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission, unless: i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (2019) identifies three dimensions to sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental. In accordance with policies SS1 and 1a of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, the Council will expect all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protecting, and where possible, enhancing the environment. When considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF (2019).

The application site is located in the Open Countryside and Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that within rural areas that only development that 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 will be supported.

Equestrian development is not specifically listed within the policy, but it is considered that buildings for the stabling of horses have an essential need to be located in the

countryside. The principle of the development is therefore considered to comply with policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020).

Green Belt

The application site is located in the Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2019) are applicable. Part (6) of policy SS10 states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

The proposal is for the retention of an existing L-shaped building used for 3no. stables, a tack room and a hay storage area. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF (2019) outlines that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless it meets an exception. One such exception is (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.

The NPPF (2019) acknowledges that there are certain outdoor recreational and sporting pursuits that make use of and depend on the open undeveloped nature of Green Belt, indeed opportunity to access the countryside and take part in outdoor sport and recreation is identified as a beneficial use. The exception, therefore, recognises that in some circumstances, certain limited development can provide facilities to assist that wider benefit without undue detriment. All of this suggests therefore, that to determine whether a facility might be '*appropriate*' in respect of a particular use, the assessment should rely on considerations of scale, size, proportionality and reasonableness relevant to the characteristics of the pursuit, its relationship with openness and the nature of site specific circumstances. Every case is considered on its individual merits, but horse riding is a popular and traditional outdoor pursuit and if a person is fortunate enough to own a modest parcel of grazing land and wishes to keep their own horses for recreational riding, generally there would seem to be a certain reasonableness associated with the provision of a small shelter or stable to support that use.

Turning to the term '*appropriate facilities*', this is not defined in the NPPF (2019) however, it is usually considered to apply to a small number of stables. The application comprises 3no. stables, a small tack room and an area for the storage of hay and fodder which, in isolation, would be considered to be '*small scale*' and therefore '*appropriate facilities*'.

Turning to the facilities needing to '*preserve the openness of the Green Belt*', it is noted that this does not mean that all new development within the Green Belt will automatically affect openness, instead it is an assessment of a development's harm.

The stables are located adjacent to Rownall Road and utilise an existing field access. An area of previously approved hardstanding (gravel) has been extended to create space for the parking and turning of vehicles. The stables are sited adjacent to an existing mature roadside hedge that screens some of the building. The building

is visible when travelling east-west along Rownall Road but is largely screened by the roadside hedge when travelling in the opposite direction. The stables are small in scale, of wooden construction and are common buildings that are found within the countryside, including the Green Belt. The extent of the gravel area is largely contained to the area surrounding the building and is not unduly prominent. The small number of horses will not lead to a significant number of vehicles being parked on the land or result in frequent trips. It is for these reasons that the development is considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. The development will also not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, as detailed at paragraph 134 of the NPPF (2019).

It is for these reasons that the development to be retained comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and therefore complies with both Local Plan policy SS10 and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2019).

Amenity

Core Strategy policy DC1 and paragraph 127(f) of the NPPF (2019) seek to secure development that protects amenity, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

The stables are bounded by Rownall Road to the north and open fields to the south, east and west. The nearest residential property to the stables is the applicant's own house, Rownall View that is sited over 70 metres to the east. Rownall Cottage Farm is located over 80 metres to the east of the stables, beyond Rownall View, and Far Rownall Cottage is located almost 200 metres to the northwest of the stables. Due to the small scale of the building and the separation distances involved, the development will not adversely affect neighbouring amenity and will comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2019).

Design

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.

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 building that is the subject of this application comprises an L-shaped stable block consisting of 3no. stables, a small tack room and a covered area for the storage of hay and fodder. Each stable measures 3.8m x 3.4/3.5m, the tack room measures 3.8m x 1.5m and the hay storage area measures 3.8m x 3.4m. The building is constructed of timber boarding to the walls and has a corrugated roof with an overhang above the stable doors. The building is typical in design, materials and appearance for stables and has been designed for its intended use. The size of the stables meet the minimum stable sizes for horses and ponies, as outlined in DEFRA's *'Code for Practice for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their*

Hybrids' (Dec 2017). An area of hardstanding is located outside the building that is separated from the access/parking area by a five-bar gate and timber post and rail fencing. DEFRA's 'Code' states that *'if stabling or a yard area is not available, a safely enclosed area of hard standing should be available to facilitate routine and emergency treatment, such as farriery, dentistry and veterinary attention'*. No objection is therefore raised to the design or materials of the stables that have been constructed.

The application site covers 1.34 hectares and DEFRA's 'Code' states that between 0.5-1.0 hectare of land should be provided for each horse if no supplementary feed is provided. 3no. horses occupy the land and are given additional feed. The land is spilt into sections and rotated so the grass is not overly grazed. With additional feed, the field is large enough to accommodate 3no. horses.

It is for these reasons that the stables are considered to comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2019).

Landscape

Policy DC3 of the Local Plan seeks to protect and where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements, resisting development that will lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement.

Policy SS10 of the Local Plan seeks to enhance and conserve the quality of the countryside by 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 Landscape Character Assessment outlines that the application site is located within the Potteries and Churnet Valley character area and within the Ancient Plateau Farmlands character type. The stable building is partially screened by a mature hedge to the northern boundary and is not visually prominent within the landscape due to its small scale, its materials and its colour. The building has been designed for its intended use and is typical of other equestrian buildings found within the rural area. A Public Right of Way (PRoW), Cheddleton 19, is located nearly 300 metres to the south of the stables and due to the separation distance, the building is not visually prominent to people utilising this footpath. An area of hardstanding surrounds the existing building to create a parking and turning area for vehicles and has been laid with hardcore/gravel. The extent of the hardstanding is small and does not unduly affect the character or appearance of the countryside.

It is for these reasons that the development is considered to have an acceptable visual impact and complies with policies DC3 and SS10 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

Policies DC1 and T1 seek to achieve a level of parking and an access that is appropriate to the development it serves.

The stables utilises an existing access off Rownall Road that, together with an area of hardstanding for the parking and turning of vehicles, was approved as part of a previous application to erect a field shelter on the site in 2009. The application has been assessed by the Highway Engineer who made the following comments:

'The site is located off Rownall Road (Road No. C0083) a C classification road and is subject to a 60 mph speed limit. The application is retrospective and is for the construction of a timber framed, stable block containing 3 single stables, and a small equipment store (tack room), with a hay and fodder store. The stable block is constructed on an existing site and access has remained unchanged.'

'It is considered the proposal will not cause an increase in trip generation and therefore does not have a detrimental impact on the highway. I have no objection.'

'Note to Planning Officer: The above decision is based on the understanding that the proposals are for personal equestrian activities.'

Subject to a condition that requires the development to be retained for the use of personal equestrian activities rather than commercial, it is considered to not have a detrimental effect on highway safety and will comply with policies DC1 and T1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2019).

Other Considerations

Concern has been raised regarding the impact the concrete base that has been installed will have on flooding. The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and the concrete slab is small in scale and will drain into the adjacent permeable gravel area/field. Severn Trent Water has assessed the application and raise no objection. The Highways Engineer has similarly raised no objection to the development. The development is therefore not considered to have an impact on flooding and a Flood Impact Assessment is not required. It was also noted during a site visit that the guttering to the stable's feeds into two water butts. It is acknowledged that this is a retrospective planning application, and whilst the Council does not support works commencing before the submission of a planning application, it is for the above reasons that the development is found to be acceptable.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The concerns of neighbours, the Parish Council and a local councillor have been taken into consideration. However, for the reasons outlined above, the development is considered to accord with the relevant policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2019). As such the application is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to Conditions

Case Officer: Ailsa Berry

Recommendation Date: 06/07/2021

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council