

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0433
Valid 29/06/2021

LAPWING FARM
DEVILS LANE
LONGSDON

CONVERSION OF EXISTING
OUTBUILDING TO FORM
SINGLE HOLIDAY UNIT

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether the proposed development comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- Whether the principle of development is acceptable.
- 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 single storey garage/store/home office constructed of brick with a pitched tiled roof. The building is sited to the east of the existing dwellinghouse and approximately 60 metres west of Devils Lane. The outbuilding forms part of Lapwing Farm that comprises a detached dwellinghouse, L-shaped stables, menage, pond and associated fields. The application site is located in an isolated position within the Green Belt. Public Right of Way (PRoW) Longsdon 6 is located immediately to the north of the building.

PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought to convert part of the existing single storey outbuilding into a holiday let.

This is a resubmission of a recently withdrawn application. Concern was previously raised that the proposed holiday let would not comprise a sustainable form of tourism accommodation due to the siting of the building.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
 - 1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting

T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
NE1 Biodiversity & Geological Resources
E4 Tourism & Cultural Development

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14
Section(s) 4, 12, 13, 15

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2020/0507 Conversion of existing outbuilding to form single holiday unit
Withdrawn 26/11/2021

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 03/08/2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: 04/08/2021

Public Comments: None

Town / Parish Comments: Longsdon Parish Council has no objections in principle but asked that no long term or permanent lettings be allowed which could become a precursor for permanent residential use.

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

Staffordshire County Council Highways: No objection

Conservation Officer: I don't propose to comment on this as the building is not of heritage value.

Peak & Northern Footpaths Society: Use of the PROW and the safety of users should not be affected by the development, not during the work taking place.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) 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 (2021) 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 (2021).

The application site is located in the Open Countryside and the North Staffordshire Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that these rural areas will provide only for 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.

Part (5) of policy SS10 seeks to enhance tourist opportunities by:

- Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS11 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD; and
- Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E4).

The application site falls within the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD boundary and within the Rudyard Lake Character Area. The Masterplan SPD states that *'this area acts as a key recreational hub in the north of the Churnet Valley which is dominated by the lake which lends itself to a range of leisure and recreational activities for countrysiders and families'*. One of the key actions for this area is *'minimal further development - retaining and enhancing the unique character of Rudyard Lake; development within Rudyard in line with the Core Strategy [now the Local Plan], support for existing facilities and attractions'*.

Policy SS11 of the Local Plan (2020) states that the *'Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The Churnet Valley Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for development in the Churnet Valley and development should be in accordance with the Masterplan'*. The policy goes on to state that particular support will be given to certain forms of development and measures which include *'short stay and long stay visitor accommodation'*. It goes on to state that *'any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area. Strong sustainable development and environmental management principles should also be demonstrated'*.

The proposal will provide short stay visitor accommodation. It will be contained within part of an existing outbuilding located adjacent to the applicant's house, with minimal

alterations proposed. The proposed development will be small in scale and re-use an existing building. Therefore it will maintain and conserve the landscape character of the area. In terms of the development being sustainable, a Planning Statement has been submitted that includes the following statements:

- The site benefits from good connectivity with a number of local tourist destinations and amenities, including amongst others the following:
 - The Wheel Public House, Longsdon (1 mile)
 - The Holly Bush Public House, Brown Edge (2 miles)
 - Deep Hayes Country Park (1.5 miles)
 - Rudyard Lake, including the Rudyard Lake Hotel, Café, Sailing Club and Steam Railway (2 miles)
 - Leek Town Centre (4 miles)
 - Ladderedge Country Park (3 miles)
 - Denford / Caldon Canal (3 miles)
- The principal attraction in this area however is the countryside itself, as recognised by the Churnet Valley Master Plan.
- The application site is located within the Churnet Valley area and benefits from excellent connectivity with the local public footpath network. Public footpath connections are available to a number of local villages, including Longsdon, Horton, Rudyard, Leek and further afield. The Staffordshire Way (identified as Longsdon 27) is only a short walk from the site via Public Footpath Longsdon 6. Consequently, future occupiers of the holiday accommodation will have direct access to the extensive public footpath network to enjoy the high landscape value of the Churnet Valley.
- The application site offers direct connectivity to Ladderedge Country Park via the local public footpath network and by having a holiday let on this site it will contribute to the Masterplan's objective of making more of this existing attraction by encouraging more visitors to explore it.
- The site also offers excellent connectivity to local tourist attractions on bicycle...the majority of the surrounding road network is defined by Staffordshire County Council as "advisory cycle routes" and an enclosed map demonstrates the location of the site in relation to existing tourist attractions such as Rudyard, Leek, Cheddleton and Coombes Valley Nature Reserve, as well as a host of local public houses.
- There are also public transport opportunities available from Leek Road in Longsdon and from Rudyard village affording opportunities to widen the exploration of the District. The availability of bus services, coupled with the excellent connectivity of the site to the local walking and cycling network means there are opportunities for linked trips to get further afield within the District if so desired.
- The site is also served by local supermarket delivery services to further reduce reliance upon the car. The applicant's nevertheless also intend to provide an electric vehicle charging point to serve the holiday let, to contribute towards the shift to electrically powered vehicles.

Policy E4 of the Local Plan (2020) outlines that new tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported. It goes on to state at (1) that new tourist, visitor and cultural

accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering either:

- A) Good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling; or
- B) In locations in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available; or
- C) In areas specifically identified for tourism development in the Churnet Valley Masterplan or other relevant documents.

Although located within the Churnet Valley, as identified by the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD, the application site does not fall within an area specifically identified for tourism development. It therefore does not comply with part (1)(C) of policy E4 of the Local Plan. However, the application site is located 1.3 miles away on foot from Longsdon which has a public house and a church and bus stops provide access to Ladderage and Leek. In addition, a Planning Statement has been submitted with the application that outlines how the application site has good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling (as detailed above). It is therefore considered that the proposed development will comply in principle with policy E4 of the Local Plan (2020) in respect of the provision of new visitor accommodation.

Green Belt

The application site is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt whereby policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2021) 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.

Paragraph 150 of the NPPF (2021) outlines that certain other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. One such exception is: *d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.*

The proposal seeks to convert part of an existing building used for ancillary storage/home office/garage to a holiday let. No extensions are proposed and therefore the proposed conversion will not affect openness. A structural survey has not been submitted with the application, however the building was constructed in the 1980s, is currently in use for ancillary residential purposes and appears to be in good condition. The existing building is therefore considered to be of permanent and substantial construction. The proposed conversion will not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, as detailed at paragraph 138 of the NPPF (2021). It is therefore considered that the proposed conversion will comprise an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF (2021).

It is proposed to replace an existing window in the southern elevation of the outbuilding with patio doors and a full-length glazed panel to either side. An existing door within the side elevation will be bricked up. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021)

states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt, unless it meets an exception. One such exception is: *'c) 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'*.

The alterations proposed to the building would not result in its size increasing and therefore it is considered that the proposal will not result in disproportionate additions. The proposed alterations will therefore comply with paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) as they will comply with one of the exceptions to inappropriate development.

Accordingly, the development comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and it will comply with policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 13 of the NPPF (2021).

Design

Policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) 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 130 of the NPPF (2021) 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 because of good architecture.

The Council's Design Guide 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'*.

The existing building is of modern construction, built circa 1980s. It comprises a single storey detached outbuilding constructed of brick with a pitched roof covered in concrete roof tiles. The building is currently used as a home office, domestic storage and a garage. A WC is located in one corner. It is proposed to sub-divide the building so that the southern portion is utilised as a holiday let and the northern portion continues to be used as a garage serving the dwellinghouse.

The holiday let will comprise a bedroom/living/kitchen/dining room as one open-plan space with a separate bathroom. It is proposed to replace an existing window in the southern elevation of the outbuilding with patio doors and a full-length glazed window to either side. An existing door within the side elevation will be bricked up.

The alterations to the external appearance of the existing building will be minor and they will not adversely affect the character or appearance of the existing building or the surrounding countryside. The proposed development will therefore comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020), the Design Guide SPD and the NPPF (2021).

Amenity

Local Plan policy DC1 and paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF (2021) seek to secure development that protects amenity, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

The application site is surrounded by fields, with no residential properties (other than the applicant's house) located within close proximity. The proposed holiday let will therefore not have a detrimental effect on amenity and will comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

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 dwellinghouse is sited over 90 metres to the west of Devils Lane. The existing garage will not form part of the proposed conversion and therefore will be retained. The dwellinghouse has a large parking and turning area, which will not be affected by the proposed development.

2no. spaces are proposed to serve the proposed holiday let that will be sited adjacent to the western side of the building. Sufficient space will remain for the parking of numerous vehicles. The existing access onto Devils Lane was upgraded when permission was granted for the L-shaped stable block and therefore no alterations are proposed.

The Highway Engineer has assessed the application and does not consider that the holiday let will cause an increase in trip generation or parking and turning within the curtilage of the site and therefore does not consider that it will have a detrimental impact on highway safety. The proposed development will therefore comply with policies DC1 and T1 of the Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021).

Ecology

Policy NE1 outlines that the biodiversity of the District will be conserved and enhancement by positive management and the strict control of development by (1) protecting and enhancing habitats and species of principal importance for conservation; (2) ensuring development produces a net gain in biodiversity and; (3) any unavoidable impacts are mitigated.

The building was constructed in the 1980s and is currently used for ancillary residential purposes associated with Lapwing Farm. The roof of the building is open to the rooms below. The age of the building, together with its construction and current use, do not make it a suitable habitat for bats or nesting birds. It is therefore not considered that a Bat and Bird Survey is required in this instance. The proposed conversion will therefore not adversely affect protected species or nesting birds and it will therefore comply with policy NE1 of the Local Plan (2020) and chapter 15 of the NPPF (2021).

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development is considered to accord with the relevant policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and the NPPF (2021). As such the application is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to Conditions

Case Officer: Ailsa Berry

Recommendation Date: 24/08/2021

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council