

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

APPLICANT : MR & MRS MEYRICK

**ADDRESS : SMITHY FARM COTTAGE, BLAKELEY
LANE, DILHORNE, STOKE ON TRENT,
STAFFS, ST10 2PS**

**PROPOSAL : RETROSPECTIVE CONSENT FOR
RETENTION OF HARDSTANDING**

DATE : SEPTEMBER 2021

JOB No. : 2021-2614

INTRODUCTION

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application which seeks retrospective consent for the retention of hardstanding at Smithy Farm Cottage, Blakeley Lane, Dihorne. The application, which follows discussions with the council's Enforcement Officer, has been submitted by Sammons Architectural Ltd on behalf of Mr & Mrs Meyrick and is accompanied by drawing numbers 2021-2614-01A, 2021-2614-02A and 2021-2614-03A which should be read in conjunction with this statement.

This statement analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter it provides justification for approval of the proposed development on the basis that it would comprise of appropriate development within the Green Belt without any material harm to its openness or visual amenity. Furthermore the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the area, nor would it harm residential amenity or be detrimental to highway safety. The proposed development therefore constitutes a sustainable and appropriate form of development which accords with the provision of local and national planning policy and should therefore be approved without delay.

APPLICATION SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

Smithy Farm Cottage is a semi-detached property which lies on the northern side of Blakeley Lane. It lies within a cluster of buildings with the farmhouse to the north east, a further pair of semi's to the south west and Blake Lee a detached dwelling to the south west. It is accessed via a short unmade access track which serves this and the other dwellings excluding Blake Lee mentioned above.

The application site comprises of a small L shaped parcel of land which forms part of a larger parcel of agricultural land which lies on the eastern side of the access track. The land levels fall gradually across the site in a west to east direction.

THE PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks retrospective consent to retain an existing area of hardstanding. The application site has been re-graded to form a level area and a small area of hardstanding extending to some 75 sq metres has been provided and enclosed with a timber post and rail fence. The hardstanding is accessed via an existing field gate opening and is required to provide an appropriate level and secure area in order to serve the wider land holding.

PLANNING POLICIES & GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy and Guidance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was republished in July 2021. The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision for sustainable development which should be interpreted and applied in determining planning applications/appeals.

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

In addition, the Government published its Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in March 2014. The web-based resource pools together a series of planning guidance documents into a new format. It is updated regularly and is intended to be used to assist in the interpretation and execution of the NPPF. It is also therefore a material consideration in the determination of this application.

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council consists of the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020). For the sake of brevity the policies are not repeated here but referred to below where appropriate. In addition consideration should also be given to the provisions of the recently adopted the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD which sets out the importance of good design and high quality development and identifying that requirements of the design guide area material consideration in all relevant planning considerations and the Supplementary Planning Document and the Council's Local Plan Supporting Evidence Document: Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008).

ASSESSMENT

As the application building is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt the main issues for consideration during the determination of this application are considered to be as follows:

- (1) whether the proposed development would be appropriate or inappropriate development for the purposes of the NPPF and development plan policy;
- (2) the effect of the proposal on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt
- (3) impact upon the character and appearance of the application building and the wider part of the countryside;

- (4) impact upon the residential amenities of the area
- (5) impact upon highway safety.

(1) whether the proposed development would be appropriate or inappropriate development for the purposes of the NPPF and development plan policy and (2) the effect of the proposal on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt

Part 6 of Policy SS10 of the adopted Local Plan states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

In terms of the hardstanding and re-grading works outlined above these are considered to constitute engineering operations. The boundary enclosure would be permitted under Part 2 of the General Permitted Development Order and does not therefore form part of this proposal.

Paragraph 150 of the Framework identifies that engineering operations are not an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt providing they preserve its openness and do not conflict with its purposes.

The works are relatively minor with the hard standing extending to an area around 75 sq metres and the site is reasonably well enclosed. As stated above the hardstanding and re-grading works have already been carried out and therefore their visual impact is relatively easy to assess. Whilst the change of surfacing material from grass to tarmac scalplings could be considered to have a more urbanising appearance it would not affect openness in a visual or spatial sense.

On that basis and given the nature of the development, a small open area of hard standing, to facilitate the continuous use of the field throughout the year, it is

considered that the proposed development would comprise of appropriate development within the Green belt which would not have a materially greater impact upon its openness or its visual amenity.

(3) Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

Policy DC1 of the Local Plan states that all development should 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

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 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 hard standing and re-grading works have a very low key minimal impact. Its size and scale is modest and would appear excessively prominent and its overall design and materials is not uncommon for this type of agricultural development. The access to the field from the adjacent lane is existing and no changes are proposed to this as part of the proposal. Overall it is considered that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the area. In this respect it would accord with policy DC1 of the Local Plan which aims to ensure development respects the site and its surroundings and Local Plan policy DC3 which seeks to protect the local landscape as well as guidance contained in the NPPF.

(4) Impact upon the residential amenities of the area

Local Plan Policy DC1 and Paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF states, amongst a number of other matters, that new development should create a high standard of amenity for both existing and future occupiers. Policy DC1 of the adopted Local Plan states that all development should protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution.

Notwithstanding the sites location adjacent to a number of residential dwellings it is not considered that the development as constructed would adversely impact upon

the existing residential amenity afforded to any of the surrounding residential properties nor would it be detrimental to any neighbouring land uses due to its modest size and scale and nature of use. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with policy DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

(5) impact upon highway safety.

Policies DC1 and T1 of the Local Plan seek to achieve a level of parking and an access that is appropriate to the development which it serves. The application site is accessed via an existing access off Blakeley Road and no amendments to this are proposed as part of the application. The existing agricultural access off the private lane into the field is existing and again, as stated above no amendments are proposed to this. Prior to the provision of the hard standing agricultural activity associated with the parcel of land such as loading of sheep from the field into a trailer etc meant that this had to be undertaken on the lane blocking access to the dwelling further north. The provision of a small hard standing area within the field actually improves highway safety and encourages the free flow of traffic along the lane as this can now be undertaken safely within the field itself. On this basis it is considered that the proposal complies with Local Plan policies DC1, T1 and national guidance in this respect contained in the NPPF.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore it is considered that the application seeks consent for the retention of sustainable form of development which is appropriate within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and which would have no harm to its openness or visual amenity. Furthermore, the development is modest in size and scale and appropriate to the use of the wider parcel of agricultural land. Its overall form, design and materials is in keeping with and appropriate to its rural locations and it is not considered that it would harm the character and appearance of the site or wider area. Furthermore it is not prejudicial to residential amenity enjoyed by the occupiers of the surrounding dwellings nor does it adversely impact on neighbouring land uses or detrimental to highway safety. The development as already provided is therefore considered to be in compliance with Local Plan policies SS10, DC1, DC3, T1 as well as guidance contained within the NPPF.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

This is a full application which seeks retrospective consent for the retention of a hard standing. This reflects the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

AMOUNT

The existing hard standing area extends to some 75 sq metres and forms part of a larger agricultural field. This amount of development is considered to comply with both the adopted Local Plan and National planning policies in relation to appropriate development within the Green Belt.

LAYOUT

The layout of the development has been provided as shown on the submitted site layout plan. The hard standing has been provided in the north western corner of site adjacent to the existing lane.

SCALE

The provision of a small hard standing area within the field will actually improve highway safety.

The hard standing area which has been created extends to some 75 sq metres.

LANDSCAPING

The existing field hedgerow will be retained. No additional landscaping is proposed as part of this application.

APPEARANCE

The development has an agricultural appearance reflective of its use and rural location.

ACCESS

The proposed development would be served by the existing vehicular access point off Blakeley Road. Agricultural access into the field off the private lane is existing.