

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0357
Valid 19/07/2021

MOORSIDE FARM
ELLASTONE ROAD
CAULDON LOW

**THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF
USE OF AN EXISTING COW
BYRE INTO A SMALL
BUSINESS UNIT INCLUDING A
NEW TOILET, OFFICE,
WORKSHOP AND STOCK
STORAGE ROOM**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development in the countryside
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity.
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within the countryside a short distance to the west of Cauldon Low village but is not in the Green Belt. It comprises a traditional stone farm building which is part of a former farm and there are several other farm buildings surrounding it on all sides separated by yards which include a farmhouse, barn converted into a separate dwelling and other buildings which are either vacant or used for domestic storage purposes/garaging. The building on site is a redundant cow byre and the applicant claims farming ceased on the site in the late 1970s. The farm is reached at the end of a long farm access track off Ellastone Road to the east. This goes past "Moorside Works" a short distance to the north of the farm. Other than that the farm is surrounded by open fields which slope downwards towards the west.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the change of use of the building into a workshop and office for the farm owner's antique business. The current open space within the building, which equates to 51 sq.m, would be divided up via new internal walls into an office room, workshop room, stock room, hall and WC. The external works would be restricted to three new windows in the west elevation at ground floor level, one each to serve the workshop, office and WC and these would be UPVC brown woodgrain effect windows. There would be no new replacement of the existing stone in the walls or Staffs Blue clay tiles in the roof. Foul drainage would be to an existing septic tank. The application includes a Design and Access Statement, Structural Survey Report and Bat Survey Report.

Further information about the use was received from the applicant as follows:

“My business is mail-order and from sales at antique and collectors fairs. The intention of the application is to convert a redundant building into an office, repair workshop and warehouse and not shop/ retail premises. If anything, I encourage potential customers NOT to visit.”

Amended plans were received to show the reduction of width of the workshop and office windows and the shifting along the wall of the workshop window so that it does not lie beneath the existing gable. The window frame materials have also changed to timber.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy
E1 – New Employment
DC1 – Design Considerations
NE1 - Biodiversity

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 6 (Economy), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 14.9.21
Neighbour consultation period ends: 14.9.21
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Support.

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions relating to a workshop unit.

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No objection subject to conditions.

The PRA survey dated 23rd June 2021 found the building to be of low bat roosting potential. A follow up dusk survey found no bats to be roosting in the structure. If any bats are found during construction, work must cease and an ecologist must be contacted.

However, one bat was recorded roosting in the adjacent farmhouse. Due to this, it is important that no additional lighting is installed that illuminates the existing roost entrance. Alternatively, if any lighting has to be installed on this side of the building it should be installed lower than the height of the roost entrance, be hooded, pointed downwards, and ideally be on a short timer and if on a sensor, only be triggered by large bodies. This is to avoid light spill onto the roost entrance. To be secured via condition. To provide additional roosting habitat and a biodiversity net gain, a minimum of one bat box (suitable for crevice dwelling species) is to be installed post-development.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

The Ramblers

There are three public footpaths crossing the farm and care should be taken to keep These open.

Peak & Northern Footpaths Society

Use of the PROWs, and the safety of users must not be affected by the development, nor during the work taking place.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside allows the conversion of buildings to other uses, including commercial or business uses, where they are physically solid and stable and architecturally in keeping with the rural area. The cow byre is a traditional stone building with a Staffs Blue clay tile roof and is certainly in keeping with the traditional rural area. It is also in good condition and stable and can easily be converted into an office and workshop without significant building works. This is confirmed in the Building Survey Report which states it is suitable for conversion. The principle of the change of use to an office and workshop base for the farm owner's antiques business is therefore acceptable.

With regard to the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the form and materials of the building would not be altered and there would be no extensions. The only external alterations are three new windows on the most prominent elevation directly facing a public footpath which crosses the farm and this elevation is also visible from wide views down the hillside towards the west. The windows originally proposed were considered to be too large, not well positioned and comprised UPVC frames. These would have harmed the traditional rural appearance of the building. However, alterations have been made including to their size and materials (now timber) and are in keeping with the building. There would be a replacement entrance door which would appear to be UPVC but this would be on the opposite elevation which is not prominent from footpaths or anywhere outside of the site.

With regards to residential amenity, in addition to the farmhouse, there is a nearby separate barn dwelling. This would not be overlooked by the new windows and the proposed workshop, which is small in size (presumably required for antiques repairs), would not lead to any significant noise creation although SMDC Environmental Health recommend a condition to restrict noise (for example from any machinery used in the workshop). There would be no vehicular movements generated by the proposal as the applicant confirms that the building would not be used for direct sales to customers at the site as these are conducted via the internet and at antiques fairs. There would be no visitors to the site and the building would just be used as the office and workshop for the business along with the storage. Therefore, no additional vehicle noise would be encountered.

As there would be no additional vehicle movements due to there being no visitors or staff in addition to the applicant who lives on the farm, there is no objection from the local highways authority. There is no requirement to provide parking although there is ample yard space available for this.

Finally, with regard to the ecological value of the site, the ecological surveys reveal the building has “low” potential for bats and a dusk survey did not reveal their presence. However, a bat roost was found at the farmhouse but no harm would result if any proposed lighting for the business unit was directed away from the farmhouse. This can be achieved via a condition requiring details of any proposed external lighting. The amended plans show the installation of a bat box and bird box which counts as adequate biodiversity enhancement as required in accordance with Policy NE1 and can be secured by way of a planning condition.

CONCLUSION

The proposed conversion to small business unit is acceptable in this rural location in principle and would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area with the safeguard of conditions and would not lead to any other forms of environmental harms. The proposal complies with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained within the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 30.9.21

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council