

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0275
Valid 27/05/2021

TOWN HEAD FARM FOXT
ROAD
FOXT

CONVERSION AND
ALTERATION OF STONE
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO
FORM 1NO. DWELLINGHOUSE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Compliance with the development plan and the NPPF in terms of a strategic provision of housing and sustainable development; and the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Two storey stone farm building that shares open yard to the rear of Town Head Farm as part of that original 19th C farmstead. The building in question is central to the site, detached with a roughly square footprint, more contemporary functional farm sheds have been removed to expose and open up the area around the building. The stone work and the tiled roof is in good condition and has apparently been subject to repair works in readiness for conversion.

Town Head Farm is in the other rural area outside of the 'smaller village' of Foxt.

PROPOSAL

To convert and change the use of the stone farm building into a circa 5 bedroom 'open market' dwellinghouse. The open surrounding yard would provide parking and amenity space, divided by hedgerow.

A structural report is provided confirming that the existing buildings are capable of conversion without substantial demolition and rebuilding.

An ecology report confirms that, subject to some mitigation for the loss of habitat for blackbirds and swallows by the introduction of nest boxes, the proposals do not present a threat to the local ecology.

The conversion and extension of the barn will be carried out to meet or exceed current Building Regulation standards in respect of energy efficiency and control of emissions.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area
H1 Housing supply

DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape Character Area
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2015/0528 onversion of building to dwelling. Refused.
SMD/2020/0639 Remodelling of farm inc. demolition of buildings and erection of relocated shed. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 22nd July 2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 22nd July 2021
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

3 Letters of support received. Comments raised:

Good use of building that already exists
No adverse impacts on village, assist with rural housing supply

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

In response to a holding objection, an activity survey was submitted as a follow up to the preliminary report. The trust have confirmed no objection subject to conditions requiring biodiversity enhancements.

Town / Parish Comments

Ipstones Parish Council: No Objection, in favour.

Environmental Health

No Objection. Concern around conflicting uses from adjacent yard and farm building. Condition suggested accordingly.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection. Parking standard compliant.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The starting point for these considerations is the development plan for the area – The Local Plan (Adopted 2020). The farmstead is located in the ‘other rural area’ to the north of the main village grouping of Foxt, a settlement identified as a ‘smaller village’ at SS9 of the LP. Here the strategy SS10 only provides for development that has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports rural diversification

and sustainability of the rural area, or promotes sustainable tourism. This will be achieved through meeting housing requirements and needs by allowing the conversion or replacement of existing rural buildings in accordance with policy H1. Policy H1 at 5)(d) permits the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.

The house would be provided within an existing 'underused' attractive stone building on an established farmstead dating from the 19th C. It would be light on resources and material sharing access and infrastructure already in place serving other properties. The house would be part of a little grouping of other dwellings, including the farm house and an adjacent row of three cottages. The building appears to be of solid construction in good condition, it is a stone farm building of obvious age that contributes to character and appearance of the area. The development would be compliant with policy H1 and, in turn, strategy SS10 in those regards.

Impact on Character and Appearance

The dwelling and its farm building date from the 19th C. They are located in more open farm land to the north of Foxt. The proposal would respect the character and appearance heritage of the farm building and the origins of the farm stead and in some respects enhance it. As part of a project, where this proposal was clearly the aim, functional buildings have been cleared out and removed to reveal the original stone buildings and the arrangement of the farmstead. This in turn makes positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and landscape, appearing as features of interest in rolling farmland where fields are enclosed by traditional hedgerow. From the road and across the open field to the southwest the stone building and the farmstead group are revealed. The conversion itself would sensitively make use of existing openings that lend themselves to a residential layout and minimal alterations would be required. There would be limited impact on the significance of the heritage asset and no conflict with Policy DC1 or DC3 of the NPPF in these respects.

Amenity Impacts

There is reasonable separation between the building and the existing farmhouse, with ample amenity space to be provided for both. Environmental Health officers have raised a concern over the proximity of a future resident's living conditions to the adjacent farm yard and farm shed, and the extent to which the site remains that of a working farm.

The applicant was asked to respond on this matter, particularly in respect of audible sound during the officer site visit. It has been explained that:

In connection to the Agricultural Buildings, as we frequently have farm thefts and trespassers in the area, we leave Classic FM on loud 24/7 so that potential thieves think there is someone on the premises. The Agricultural sheds, house Agricultural machinery ie tractors, toppers, trailers, vacuum tankers, hedge cutters etc. We sometimes make hay or silage, we buy stores to graze the land from Spring to Autumn and graze sheep outside in Winter. We are a 'small holding' rather than a working farm. During lockdown our main 'farming' activity has been to reinstate the stonewalls to our ground to improve the look, mainly along the roadside to improve the look for the village and passers-by. We would install windows to a specification of

28mm sealed units for u value and noise, having lived in Foxt for 12 years, we know the main 'sound' is wind, living 910 ft above sea level.

The applicant describes the use of the property as a small-scale operation, not an intensive agricultural activity.

EH officers updated their comments accordingly:

- Noise: The proposed dwelling is potentially situated inside a working farm so a condition is advised below. The applicant indicates the farm buildings likely to have impacted amenity have been removed. If the farm is no longer active then this condition might be considered onerous. Seek clarification from the applicant. **If agricultural activity is still happening on the site then we would recommend a full site specific noise assessment should be undertaken to determine the noise impacts from agricultural activity and propose a suitable scheme of sound insulation.** This assessment should be undertaken in consideration of BS8233:2014 and BS4142:2014.

The applicant is agreeable to undertaking the noise assessment which can be secured via condition. It is considered that having regard to the arrangement of the dwellings and the new dwelling's juxtaposition to its neighbours it could be accommodated whilst meeting the Council's Space About Dwellings Standards and protecting neighbour amenity. There would be no conflict with Policy DC1 or SD4 in these respects.

Highway Safety

The proposal uses an existing access that it would share with the farm house. The access connects to the public highway with appropriate visibility. Existing hard standings would provide parking and turning for both the existing and proposed dwelling. There would be no conflict with Policy DC1 or T1 in these respects.

Ecology

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have reviewed both of the reports from the applicant's ecologist and confirm that no statutorily protected or priority habitats will be impacted by the development. A bat/bird activity survey report by Elite Ecology, dated Aug 2021, recommended bat and bird boxes to be installed as enhancement and mitigation for loss of potential roost.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

The impacts of the development have all been discussed above relevant to those other development plan policies that are generally consistent with the NPPF and there is no harm or conflict identified in those respects. The provision of a house in this location would benefit and contribute to the economy, local community and housing supply in some small way. There would be no conflict with the Local Plan policies listed and discussed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 05/10/2021

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council