DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0548 **Valid 17/08/2021**	**BROADHURST FARM LEEK ROAD WATERHOUSES**	**THE USE OF THE FORMER HOLIDAY COTTAGE SITE MANAGER'S ACCOMMODATION AS A PERMANENT HOUSE UNENCUMBERED BY AN OCCUPANCY CONDITION.** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the change of use
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on residential amenity
The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the countryside to the south-east of Waterhouses and comprises a traditional stone building in the form of a small 2-bed, two-storey cottage, on a former farm. The building is vacant but was used as manager's accommodation for an adjacent holiday let business and is attached to the holiday let buildings, also traditional stone buildings that were once barns. The property is reached via a farm track connected to Common Lane to the north-west, a narrow country lane off A523 main road which lies to the north-east. The site has a rear garden area to the north-east of the building facing the A523. The front elevation faces an adjacent farmhouse to the south-west and which is now in different ownership to the former farm buildings used as holiday lets which lie to the north-west and which face the farmyard to the south-west which is connected to the access track. The farmyard is with the application site and is used as a shared parking area for the holiday lets, site manager and farmhouse. The grouping of farm buildings is completely surrounded by open land and fields.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the change of use of the building into a 2-bed dwelling and which would require no external alterations. The application includes a Planning Statement which explains the following:

"The use as manager's accommodation was approved in September 2004 subject to an occupancy condition (No. 2 on application SMD/2004/0528) which reads:-
"The premises shall only be used for the accommodation of a person and their

immediate family employed solely or mainly as the site manager of the short-stay holiday cottages identified on approved plan 002F as Pine, Elm, and Cedar Cottage." If the application is approved the intention is to sell the house to a local person who has had to move out of their house and is temporarily living in rented accommodation."

"There is an existing septic tank, a large rear garden to the east, and two car parking spaces in the large car parking area to the southwest."

The building was used as a permanent site manager's house between 2005 and 2012 in association with the running of three adjoining holiday let cottages, Pine, Elm and Cedar Cottages. In 2012 the building was used as a fourth holiday let building, Birch Cottage, although there does not appear to be any planning permission for the change of use.

The applicant claims the continues use as a holiday let is not viable and that the unit has recorded a financial loss from 2016 onwards. The Planning Statement includes accounts details from April 2016 to April 2020 to demonstrate this.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy
SS11 – Churnet Valley Strategy
H1 – New Housing
E4 – Tourism and Cultural Development
DC1 – Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 5 (Housing), 6 (Economy) and 12 (Design).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2004/0528: Variation of condition 3 of SM 1226 from short stay holiday accommodation to use as managers accommodation. Approved.

SMD/2005/1000: Variation of condition 2 of planning permission SM 91/00932 to permit use for residential purposes (class C3) during off peak period, 1st October - 31st March. Refused.

SMD/2005/1354: Variation of condition 2 of planning permission SM 91/00932 to permit use for residential purposes (class C3) during off peak period, 1st October - 31st March. Refused.

SMD/2007/0997: Extension to cottage and conservatory. Approved but not implemented.

SMD/2021/0276: Removal of condition 2 relating to SMD/2004/0528. Withdrawn as it was considered that due to a legal ruling, the proposed change of use to dwelling could not be achieved via a Removal of Condition planning application and that a full planning application was instead required.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 12/10/21.
Neighbour consultation period ends: 12/10/21.
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside, allows the conversion of buildings in the countryside to other uses and Policy H1 allows changes of use to dwellings in the countryside where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. I consider the traditional stone cottage would comply with the policy in this respect and has been in use recently for accommodation purposes. Since approval was given to use the building as a seasonal site managers accommodation, the subsequent full time use of it for this purpose and then its use as a holiday let appear to be unauthorised, with the former use being applied for but refused. However, it must be pointed out that before 2020, a former Local Plan was in use (the “Core Strategy”) which prioritised commercial uses (such as offices or holiday lets) over residential uses for rural building conversions. The new Local Plan now allows the conversion to residential uses without the requirement to demonstrate that a commercial use would be unviable or would safeguard a building of particular historic or architectural merit. The change of use to an unrestricted dwelling would therefore comply with Policy H1 of the 2020 Local Plan.

The Local Plan also looks to encourage and provide tourist accommodation in the interests of the rural economy and tourism is key to the economic aims of the Local Plan for the rural area, particularly in the Churnet Valley. The proposal in leading to the loss of a holiday let unit could be deemed to be contrary to those aims.

However, the holiday let use of the cottage from 2012 onwards was unauthorised and the applicant has submitted accounts details going back to April 2016 that demonstrate the unit had been operating at a loss. There are three other holiday let units at the former farm and I therefore do not consider the proposal to change the use to an unrestricted dwelling would significantly harm the tourism economy in the Churnet Valley. Furthermore, there is a particular shortage of small 2-bed units in the District and the agent claims the application has been made for the proposed dwelling to be purchased by a local person who is currently renting. Although a restriction on occupancy for a local person could not be secured, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of losing a small 2-bed holiday let unit which in any case was unauthorised.

Although the site is not in a very sustainable location, the centre of a large village with a convenience store, a school and other services is just over mile away and it is possible to safely walk (or cycle) via a safe country lane which is linked to a footway on the A523 a short distance outside of the village so at least access to local services is possible without the use of the car and the residential use is not solely reliant on car use. The number of vehicle movements would potentially increase in relation to the former holiday let use but would not be significantly different to the previous site manager's accommodation use.

As the cottage has been used for a considerable amount of time for some form of accommodation uses, the full time occupation would not give rise to any significant additional impact on the character and amenities of the area. No external changes are proposed and the building can be used as a dwelling immediately without any significant internal adaptations. As no new windows are proposed and the upper floor windows in any case incapable of allowing overlooking into other nearby dwellings, the residential amenities/living conditions of the occupants of the farmhouse would not be affected.

There is approx. 78 sq.m of internal floorspace which exceeds the 70 sq.m required for 2-bedroom, two-storey, three-person dwellings in the governments' Nationally Described Space Standards. There is also a back garden of decent size to the rear of the cottage within the site. The residential amenities and living conditions of the intended occupants would also therefore be satisfactory. The Environmental Health Section raised no objection to the proposal in response to the recent Removal of Condition application and did not recommend any conditions to be placed to protect the occupants from any noise nuisances.

With regard to parking provision and highway safety, there is a large shared yard area and the applicant states there are two spaces available for the cottage which is in line with parking standards for a dwelling of this size. These are not shown in the site plan but a condition can be added to identify these on a plan and ensure they are kept available for their intended purpose. As the site is a considerable distance from a public highway, the level of highway safety in the area would in any case be unaffected. No objection was raised by the Local Highways Authority in response to the previous Removal of Condition application earlier this year.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The change of use of the traditional stone cottage to a permanent 2-bed dwelling is acceptable in principle and would not lead to any impacts on the character and amenities of the area. It is broadly compliant with the current adopted 2020 Local Plan as well as the government planning guidance contained in the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 12.10.21

X

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council