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PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

PROPOSAL : FULL APPLICATION FOR ALTERATIONS TO OUTBUILDING AND CHANGE OF USE TO FORM SINGLE DWELLING

ADDRESS : THE BOATHOUSE RUDYARD, LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE

APPLICANT : MR J SHAW

DATE : NOVEMBER 2021 JOB No. : 2020-2578

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr Shaw to prepare and submit a full planning application for alterations and change of use of an existing outbuilding to a single dwelling at The Boathouse, Rudyard. The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings numbered 2020-2578-01, 2020-2578-02A and 2020-2578-03 which should be read in conjunction with this planning, design and access 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 these proposals, primarily on the basis that the development would result in a sustainable form of development which would not impact adversely on the character and appearance of the application building or its wider setting, prejudice residential amenity, harm highway safety or affect any established ecological interests.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises of an irregular shaped plot of land which lies on the south western bank of Rudyard Lake. It contains a modest two storey boathouse which measures 8.4m long x 6.8m wide with an eaves height of 2.4m and an overall ridge height of 3.78m. It is constructed from coursed natural gritstone under a plain clay tile roof. The gable fronted building has a simple rectangular form although some interest is added with the oversailing eaves and detailed scalloped fascia boarding and double gated wet mooring.

The building which is currently used as a boat store with storage above is enclosed on three sides with the side fronting the lake open. The application building, lies within a short row of similar structures on this side of the lake with residential development to the west and south and a caravan park to the south west. For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt where restrictive development plan policies apply. It also lies within the Rudyard Conservation Area and an area covered by an Article 4 Direction.

3.0 PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks consent for alterations and change of use of the first floor of the boathouse to a residential dwelling. The proposed dwelling would provide an open plan kitchen / lounge arrangement with a single bedroom and shower room at ground floor level whilst the existing docking level will be retained underneath.

The application building will be retained largely as existing. An existing but built up opening in the south west elevation will be reinstated to provide an additional window opening to the proposed bedroom. The timber studwork and cladding on the north east (lakeside) elevation is to be removed and replaced with a combination of aluminium patio doors and windows as shown on the submitted drawing 2020-2578-02A. A suspended timber floor will be provided to form a small balcony and a steel and glass balustrade fitted. The existing metal windows shall be replaced with aluminium windows. New half round cast aluminium guttering and circular downpipes shall be installed on the south western elevation. The decorative timber fascia and soffits are to be replaced like for like and existing purlins are to be treated with natural preservative.

The existing parking area which currently serves the building to the west of Windycote off Lake Road shall be retained and made available for the occupiers of the proposed dwelling. A pedestrian path which leads from the car parking area to the application building is already provided and again shall be maintained for the proposed development.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published on 27th March 2012 and revised in July 2021 replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF also sets out requirements in respect of housing delivery and securing high quality design. The following are considered to be the most relevant chapters:-

- Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 12 - Achieving Well Designed Places
- Chapter 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land
- Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Local Plan (September, 2020). The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS10 (Other Rural Areas Strategy); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources) and T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance the Space About Dwellings (September 1998 - Appendix 3 of the Local Plan [1998]), Design Principles for Staffordshire Moorlands and Churnet Valley Masterplan are also important in the consideration of this application.

5.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are therefore considered to be:-

- The principle of development
- Design and appearance
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety

The Principle of Development

For the purposes of planning policy consideration the application site lies within the Green Belt. Both the Council's Core Strategy and the NPPF restrict Green Belt/open countryside developments. Core Strategy policies SS1 and SS1a highlight the importance of sustainable development. Policy SS6c states that the areas within the Green Belt will only provide development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of rural areas and promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.

The National Planning Policy Framework clearly states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. A Green Belt designation serves five purposes; 1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; 2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; 3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and 5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Chapter 13 of the NPPF states that "inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances" (para 143). Para 146 recognises that certain 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". The "re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction" is one of these categories.

The application proposes the change of use of an existing rural building, which is of solid and permanent construction to a modest self contained dwellinghouse accordingly the principle of development is considered acceptable in principle in accordance with the provisions of policy SS10 of the recently adopted Local Plan.

Design & Appearance

Policy DC1 sets out the design criteria to reinforce local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area. The recently updated NPPF advises that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and states that great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help to raise the standard of design more generally within the area. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area.

The proposed conversion would be sympathetic as it would be contained within the shell of the existing building. Alterations to facilitate the proposed use are minimal and limited to the provision of a small balcony, re-opening of an existing doorway in the gable elevation and alterations to the existing cladding on the north east elevation. Given that the application building is existing and that there would be minimal change to its external appearance it is not considered that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application building, its setting or the valued characteristics of the wider area including the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies DC1 of the adopted Core Strategy as well as guidance contained within the NPPF and supplementary planning guidance.

Amenity

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF also states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area. Local Plan policy DC1 requires that all development proposals should 'protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.'

Although the application site lies within an area characterised by residential dwellings the application building is relatively divorced from these being located on the actual lakeside. Given the relationship of the application building with the adjacent dwellings and the intervening distances between is considered that the proposal would not raise any adverse amenity issues or be prejudicial to any adjoining land uses.

In terms of the living conditions of the occupants, the Nationally Described Space Standards require a minimum floorspace of 39 sq.m for a single storey 1-bed dwelling with a double bedroom. The scheme would provide 40 sq.m and this therefore exceeds the thresholds and on this basis would provide the occupants with a decent standard of accommodation.

Highways

Paragraph 108 and 109 of the NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in LP Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

Whilst it is accepted that the application building has a relatively low intensive use it is accessed frequently. The proposed use may be considered to result in an intensification of use of the site however the size of the proposed unit is very modest and given its location in a Conservation Area and Article 4 Direction it is unlikely that any future extension of the building would be supported. The existing parking area, shown on the submitted block plan will be retained for the parking of vehicles in conjunction with the proposed dwelling and it is therefore considered, on balance, that there would be no detrimental impact upon highway safety in this regard. The proposal therefore complies with CS policy T1 and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Heritage Impact

Whilst not listed the application building does have a high heritage value being located on the shore of the Lake which lies within the heart of the Rudyard Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Appraisal (July 2016) identifies the early 19th century man made reservoir and the surrounding area as a key characteristic. It also goes on to make reference to the "picturesque groupings of traditional and modern boathouses and chalets which punctuate the lakeside", of which the application building forms a part.

According to the Conservation Area Appraisal the boathouses on the western shore of the Cliffe Park Estate were erected from 1885 onwards when the estate of Fanny Bostock started to be sold off. For ease of use the Conservation Area Appraisal is split into several sub areas and the application building and site fall into the second sub area which includes the Damhead and Lake.

The Conservation Area Appraisal states that “Along the perimeter of the lake, a number of boathouses sit on the banks; the older ones have wet moorings or are jettied out into the water; they all sit within a wooded setting, where trees crowd down to meet the foreshore. Many of these are serendipitously placed and discovered by chance as part of a lake excursion, which enhances the experience. The most attractive boathouses are those which relate directly to the Lake, with wet moorings, large decorative gable-frontages facing the lake and where any accommodation is contained mainly within the roof / attic.

It is clear from the above that the application building would appear to be one of the true early Victorian boathouses characterised by is double gated wet mooring and traditional stone built form with steep pitched gable roof. The application building is specifically referred to within the Conservation Areas Appraisal as being an example of one of the best preserved boathouses on the western shore of the Lake. The submitted scheme offers a sensitive and sympathetic conversion which would secure the future of the building without detriment or harm to its character and appearance of that of the wider site including the Conservation Area within which it is located.

Biodiversity

Works started on site to renovate the building a number of years ago including the re-felting of the roof as you will see on the internal photos provided. The building has been well maintained and is 100% watertight with no access or entry points for bats as confirmed by Matt Haydock of Absolute Ecology. Given the condition of the building and that the potential for bats is low no surveys in this regard have been undertaken.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. It also states in the NPPF that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay, and where policies are out-of-date permission should only be refused where there is significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the benefits of the development.

This proposal represents appropriate development in the Green Belt by virtue of para 146 of the NPPF and supported by Local Plan Policy SS10. In addition the submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development in that it involves the re-use of an existing rural building which is considered suitable in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. The proposal adopts a sympathetic approach to the conversion of the building and will not give rise to any material harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area. The proposal furthermore will not derive any significant issues in respect of highway safety nor will it be prejudicial to residential amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements policies SS10, DC1, DC3 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the alteration and re-use of the existing boathouse for domestic purposes which is considered sustainable and appropriate in this location.

AMOUNT

The application proposes to change the ground floor use of the building to a modest self contained single one bedroomed dwelling whilst the existing docking level will be retained.

LAYOUT

The layout of the proposal is as shown on the submitted plans numbered 2020-2578-02A.

SCALE

The application building will be converted within the shell of the existing building without any extension. The scale of the proposal is therefore dictated by the parameters of the existing building.

LANDSCAPING

The application building lies on the shore of Rudyard Lake with a heavily wooded area to the rear. No landscape proposals are proposed as part of this scheme.

APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the external character and appearance of the application building with the only alterations limited to the alterations set out above as shown on the submitted drawings.

ACCESS

Pedestrian access will be as shown on the submitted plans. The existing parking and turning facilities for the building will be retained. The application is located within a sustainable and accessible location.