

Planning Statement – Conversion of attached barn to two holiday lets

Manor Farm, Dukes Lane, Winkhill

Conversion to holiday let – Manor Farm, Dukes Lane

Project	Manor Farm, Duke Lane, Winkhill
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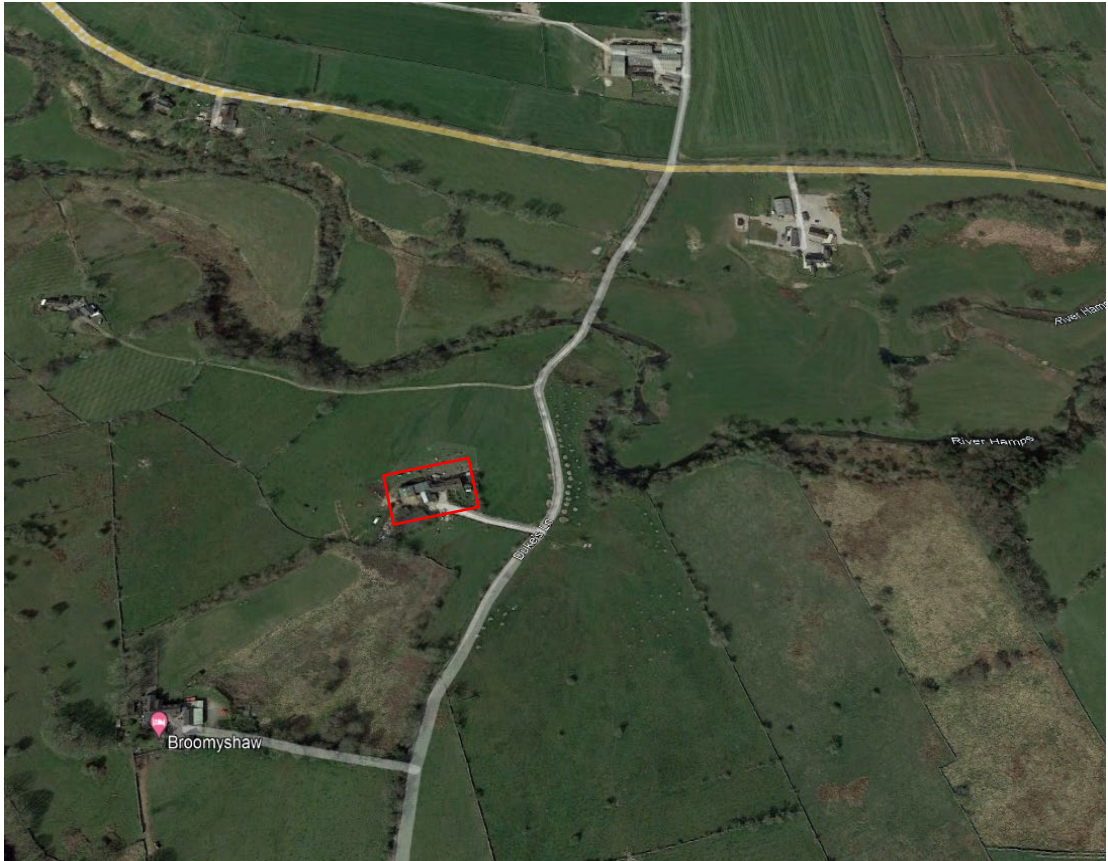
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.
- 1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jim Malkin, has worked as a principal planning officer in development control in local government, and more recently as a planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.
- 1.3 This statement accompanies an application for the conversion of the attached barn to form a holiday let.

2 Site and Planning History

- 2.1 The application site comprises of an existing farmhouse and an attractive, attached stone barn, this is currently redundant as it is not suited to modern agricultural activity.
- 2.2 Manor Farm is located in relatively isolated location on the edge of Waterhouses. The site is accessed directly off Dukes Lane which emerges onto the A523.
- 2.3 The subject building is linked to the applicants dwelling and is adjoined by the front yard / parking area. To the rear of the building is the applicants' fields, with buildings associated with the agricultural holding to the north-east.
- 2.4 The site and surroundings are shown on the extract below:



3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The applicant is finding that the stone barn is under-utilised and not suited to modern agricultural activities. It is therefore entirely under-utilised on the holding. The applicants are therefore wishing to make better use of this asset.
- 3.2 The site is within close proximity to the Leek, Alton Towers and the Peak Park alongside the River Churnet and its valley which presents opportunity for walking and hiking.
- 3.3 It is thought that the building could be better used as two small holiday lets to provide accommodation to visitors to the area, permission is therefore sought for the conversion of the building to form two holiday lets.
- 3.4 Very minor alterations to the building are necessary to support the conversion of the

building, these entail 3 rooflights in the rear roof slope, alongside the insertion of new windows and doors within existing openings.

- 3.5 The existing internal arrangement will be retained with a small amount of stud walling completed to separate the two units alongside the installation of new staircases.
- 3.6 The existing yard to the front of the property will be retained and will provide parking for each holiday let. An EV charging point will also be provided.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Paragraph 11 advises that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Local Plan; and also in circumstances where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date unless 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.
- 4.2 Paragraph 81 of the NPPF prescribes significant weight to the need to support economic growth and productivity.
- 4.3 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both the conversion of existing buildings and the provision of well-designed new buildings. It specifically supports the development of sustainable rural tourist facilities.

- 4.4 Chapter 12 of the NPPF houses a number of relevant paragraphs relating to the importance of appropriate design. Paragraph 126 encourages the creation of high-quality buildings which raise the quality of the built environment and create better places in which to live and work. Paragraph 130 advises that decision makers should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

[Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan \(2020\)](#)

4.5 **Policy SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy (key sections below)**

The other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

These areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

2. *Sustain the rural economy by:*
 - *Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified*
 - *Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises*
 - *Supporting the development of appropriate ICT and new means of communications to enable homeworking and small businesses reliant on e-technology;*
5. *Enhance tourist opportunities by:*

- *Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS 11 and the Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD;*
- *Allowing for small-scale tourism developments in other areas (in accordance with policy E 4);*
- *Establishing strong linkages between recreational and tourist resources;*
- *Recognising and developing the close linkages to the Peak District National Park.*

4.6 **Policy SS 11 – Churnet Valley Strategy**

“The Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The Churnet Valley Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for development in the Churnet Valley and development should be in accordance with the Masterplan. Within this area particular support will be given to the following forms of development and measures:

- *short stay and long stay visitor accommodation;*
- *the expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities;*
- *measures to enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley;*
- *measures to remediate and restore derelict land, buildings and features including the appropriate redevelopment of sites;*
- *actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the valley, including the maintenance, buffering and connection of designated sites and actions to mitigate climate change. measures that support and integrate the heritage transport infrastructure of the valley, sympathetically with enhancing and developing links to strategic footpaths, cycle and horse riding routes.*
- *measures to improve connectivity and accessibility to and within the Churnet Valley by sustainable transport means.*

Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and demonstrate strong sustainable development and environmental management principles. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximize opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.

Complementary and sensitive highway improvements to access routes and/or measures to support other alternative means of access will be required to serve any developments which generate significant additional demand for travel.

4.7 Policy E4 – Tourism and Cultural Development

New tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS 5 to SS 10 and and Churnet Valley Strategy Policy SS 11.

1. New tourist, visitor and cultural accommodation, attractions and facilities should be developed in locations that offer, or are capable of offering either:

- a) good connectivity with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling; or*
- b) in locations in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available; or*
- c) in areas specifically identified for tourism development in the Churnet Valley Masterplan or other relevant documents.*

2. Developments in other locations may be supported where a rural location can be justified. New accommodation, attractions and facilities should:

- A. support the provision and expansion of tourist, visitor and cultural facilities in the rural areas where needs are not met by existing facilities; and*
- B. all development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.*

5 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The site lies within the Churnet Valley, an area which the Council has identified as being suitable for sustainable tourism development, including the provision of tourist and visitor accommodation.
- 5.2 The Churnet Valley Masterplan identifies the site as lying within the Peak District Fringe. The Masterplan sets out key actions for the character area, including the development and enhancement of existing attractions.
- 5.3 The provision of new visitor accommodation within existing buildings is generally supported by planning policy, and in this instance the applicants are aware of the success of similar uses nearby. The proposed converted building will support the diversification of the farm holding, whilst providing additional accommodation in line with the requirements of the Churnet Valley Masterplan.
- 5.4 The site lies within an area popular with visitors. It is within close proximity to Alton Towers, as well as the Peak Park and other areas popular with walkers. Additional tourist accommodation in the area would provide a boost to local services such as nearby public houses and restaurants.

- 5.5 The proposed development makes use of an existing building which has been present within the landscape for a significant period of time and therefore contributes to the character of the area. The subject building makes a positive contribution through its traditional form, which is well preserved, and is typical example of a Staffordshire stone barn. Delivering a tourism use within the building ensures the future use of the building and its retention within the streetscene. It is therefore inherently sustainable.
- 5.6 The National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that sustainability also encompasses economic and social considerations. The proposal would meet an identified shortfall in tourist accommodation in the district, and would provide employment in terms of management, administration and cleaning. The proposals would attract visitors to the area who would spend money at local attractions and in local pubs and restaurants.
- 5.7 In addition, criteria B of Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework supports schemes for the '*diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses*'. The applicants have found that income from the farm enterprise has become volatile over recent years, and this diversification scheme will help to level out the income stream of the holding to support the ongoing family farming business which is key to the local community and local landscape.
- 5.8 The proposals are therefore highly sustainable in economic terms.
- 5.9 In light of the current Covid 19 pandemic, there has been increased demand in the short to medium term for domestic holidays. Consumers have been put off flying and there is uncertainty as to the longer-term sustainability of airlines and travel companies. The proposals would deliver a social benefit in providing a quiet holiday location off the beaten track for walkers and outdoor activities, as promoted by the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

- 5.10 In accordance with Policies E4, SS10 and SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and Paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the broad principle of the proposed development is therefore acceptable.

Character and Appearance of the Area

- 5.11 The proposed external changes are minimal and propose the installation of 3 x rooflights and the incorporation of new windows and doors in existing openings.
- 5.12 The key to a successful conversion scheme is to avoid belying the character of the original building. The scheme therefore aims to retain the agricultural character and appearance of the building as far as possible whilst making it an attractive place to spend time.
- 5.13 Only very subtle alterations to the exterior of the building are proposed, and as such it will retain much of its traditional agricultural character and appearance. New windows and doors will be sensitively sited within existing openings and will not harm the agricultural form of the building.
- 5.14 The proposals therefore enhance the character and appearance of their surroundings in accordance with Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Amenity of Neighbours

- 5.15 The barn to be converted is attached to the existing dwelling (which is occupied by the applicants) and therefore no concerns with regards to a loss of light or overlooking will occur, the proposals will have the same relationship as a semi-detached dwelling. The conversion will be completed to the necessary building

regulations standards and it will be ensured that noise insulation is provided both between the existing dwelling and the holiday let, and between the holiday lets themselves.

- 5.16 The holiday lets will only be provided with a single bedroom, and it is likely that occupiers will be couples, or walkers who want to explore the local walking and hiking routes and the natural beauty of the area, rather than larger groups who are more likely to cause intrusion in this rural area.

Highway Safety

- 5.17 Given the relatively small size of the accommodation there is only likely to be a maximum of two additional vehicles associated with the proposal. There is sufficient room within the existing yard, for these vehicle as well as for the cars associated with the residential dwelling, in addition the application proposes the provision of a EV charging point.
- 5.18 The existing access is wide and afforded with good visibility in both directions along Dukes Lane and onto the A523. The additional vehicle movements will not therefore detrimentally impact the local highway network.

Other Matters

- 5.19 The Environment Agency shows the site lying entirely within Flood Zone 1, where the annual probability of flooding from rivers or the sea is less than 1 in 1000. The proposed development would not therefore be at unacceptable risk from flooding and neither would they exacerbate flood risk elsewhere.
- 5.20 The scheme is supported by a Bat Survey Report and bat emergent surveys. These confirm that 'despite the rural setting in which the site was located and good

conditions during each nocturnal survey, bat activity was consistently'. There are no other impacts on protected species in the locality.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed change of use of the underutilised and traditional stone barn to 2 small holiday lets will bring this attractive resource back into functional use within this sought-after location close to local tourist attractions, whilst supporting the objectives of the Churnet Valley Strategy.
- 6.2 The proposal would bring forward economic benefits, both in terms of occupiers of the holiday let supporting local facilities, as well as the ongoing support the additional income stream will bring to the existing agricultural holding.
- 6.3 In accordance with Policy E4 the proposal is unlikely to result in disturbance relating to noise or traffic.
- 6.4 The proposals would not harm ecology and biodiversity or the safe or efficient use of the highway network.
- 6.5 The proposal therefore constitutes sustainable development which accords with Policies E4, SS10 and SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.