

PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

**PROPOSAL : FULL APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE AND
ALTERATIONS OF DOMESTIC GARAGE TO FORM SINGLE
DWELLING WITH ASSOCIATED AMENITY AND PARKING
SPACE**

**ADDRESS : BAILEYS HILL FARM, OVER THE HILL, BIDDULPH
MOOR, ST8 7LA**

APPLICANT : MR & MRS SIEKACZ

DATE : APRIL 2022 JOB No. : 2022-2667

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr & Mrs Siekacz to prepare and submit a full planning application for the change of use and alterations of a domestic garage at Baileys Hill Farm, Over the Hill, Biddulph Moor to a single dwelling with associated amenity and parking space. The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings numbered 2022-2667-01A, 2022-2667-03B and 2022-2667-04B 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 involve the conversion of an existing permanent and substantial building as permitted by national and local planning policy thereby resulting in a sustainable form of development which would not harm the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt, impact adversely on the character and appearance of the area, prejudice residential amenity or harm highway safety.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application building is a rectangular, one and a half storey detached outbuilding, constructed from timber clad walls with a tiled roof which is currently used as a domestic garage with office above. It is located within the curtilage of Baileys Hill Farm, a 6 acre smallholding which lies down a short private access drive on the western side of the highway. The main dwellinghouse lies to the east of the application building whilst two outbuildings lie to the north and north east on the opposite side of the concrete yard area.

The application building is relatively utilitarian in terms of its appearance with two large vehicular door openings set under the eaves on the northern elevation, a first floor door way accessed via an external timber staircase in the eastern gable, a pedestrian door with roundel window above in the western gable with the southern gable being blank. To the rear of the site is a small embankment which has been planted with a small rockery with steps leading up to it. The area immediately to the front and side of the building is concreted and currently home to a chicken coop and greenhouse.

The site lies in an attractive rural area which is characterised by loose scatterings of dwellings and small farmsteads. For the purposes of the Development Plan the application site lies in the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

3.0 PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks to change the use of the existing domestic garage into a standalone self contained dwelling with associated parking and amenity space. The submitted scheme shows that the application building would provide an open plan kitchen / living space with downstairs shower room and a single bedroom above.

The proposed conversion would see the external staircase, chicken coop and greenhouse removed from the site. Two small dormer windows would be added to the northern elevation of

the building and the existing vehicular door openings would be infilled with fixed full height glazed windows. The existing roundel window in the western gable will be removed and replaced with a larger rectangular window opening. A small patio area will be provided immediately in front of the proposed dwelling with a grassed garden area to the side. The curtilage will be contained with a drystone wall which will link to the existing concrete post and timber panel fence. A single parking space will be provided as shown on the submitted drawing.

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 (para 11) 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 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan which was adopted 9th September 2020. The most relevant policies contained therein are considered to be:

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing
DC1 Design Considerations

For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

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
- Impact on openness and the five purposes of Green Belt
- Sustainability
- 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 SS10 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.

Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other consideration.

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, that is ancillary to the use of the main dwellinghouse being used as a domestic garage with office above. The application building was granted planning permission in October 2004 under application number SMD/2004/1425. It has been constructed from a 140mm blockwork wall with piers covered externally with battens and then horizontally boarded under a plain clay tile roof. It has timber windows and doors and with the exception of minor alterations to the external appearance of the building no significant alterations or extensions are required or sought. The application building can therefore be considered both permanent and substantial in its construction and accordingly the principle of development is considered acceptable in principle in accordance with the provisions of policies SS10 of the adopted Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

The effect on openness and the five purposes which Green Belt serves.

The application proposes to convert an existing ancillary building which already has a relatively domesticated appearance partly because of its size, scale, form and design and how it relates to the other built development on the site.

Whilst a separate self contained dwelling has the potential to introduce a higher degree of residential paraphernalia it is not considered that there would be any significant changes which would lead to harm being caused to the character and appearance of this part of the open countryside. The removal of the chicken coop and greenhouse would result in some improvement and net gain to the openness of the Green Belt and the provision of a small enclosed patio/garden area and single parking space would not raise any concern given the existing use of this area for parking domestic vehicles. In fact the case officer's report in assessing the garage under application number SMD/2004/1425 usefully confirms that due to site constraints "no one apart from the applicants will see the garage".

Having regard to the five purposes set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF, the proposal would not result in urban sprawl and does not involve any merging of neighbouring towns. Nor does it encroach into the open countryside since it lies within the residential curtilage of Baileys Hill Farm. It does not affect any historic setting and the last bullet point is not relevant. It is therefore considered that the appeal proposal would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and again there would be no harm caused in this respect.

Sustainability of the site

The application site does not lie within any defined settlement boundary within the settlement hierarchy for the District. It is therefore considered to lie within a countryside location. However the application building, farmhouse and barns form a discernible group. This arrangement of buildings is relatively common and the form of development within the vicinity of the application site is characterised by sporadic and dispersed groups of farmhouses and their outbuildings.

Notwithstanding its relatively rural location the application site lies just 150m due north of Biddulph Moor, the nearest designated settlement, which provides a range of shops and services to the south. The new single house would be in as sustainable a location as the existing dwelling. There is a distinct difference between a home in the designated open countryside and a really isolated home in the countryside and sustainability is not just reliant on location. In economic terms there would be benefits relating to the construction of the house, payment of council tax and ongoing patronism of local businesses and services once occupied. The proposed development would also result in a new dwelling at a time when the council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and there would be no negative impacts on the social or economic threads set out in the NPPF. The proposed new dwelling and its residents will help support local facilities, bus route, shops nearby and thus local employment. In conclusion therefore whilst the site may lie outside any identified settlement it is not considered that the physical location of the application site itself, makes it so unsustainable as to render it unacceptable in this particular location.

Design & Appearance

The specific design policies of the LP also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good

design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

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 without any extension. All existing openings would be reused and the only alterations relate to the addition of two small dormer windows and alteration to an existing first floor gable window. 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 Policy DC1 of the adopted Local Plan 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.' The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Space About Dwellings' details standards that should be considered and met to ensure privacy for existing and proposed residents.

Given the location of the application site and the fairly sporadic spattering of farmsteads and dwellings and the juxta position of the application building with the main farmhouse it is considered that the proposed scheme would respect the amenity of the main farmhouse and provide an adequate degree of amenity to the occupiers of the proposed unit.

The proposed conversion exceeds the minimum requirements for a one bedroomed dwelling as set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards with a floorspace of 58 sq metres being required and 60 sq metres being provided, using the calculation criteria set out in the NDSS. The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with policy DC1 of the adopted Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF in this respect.

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 Local Plan Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

Having regard to the previous use of the application building and the fact the application proposes the creation of a single one bedroomed dwelling, it is not considered that the proposal would give rise to any material intensification of the use of the existing vehicular access. Adequate parking and turning facilities are provided within the site and replacement parking for the main farmhouse can be accommodated adjacent to that dwelling as shown on the submitted block plan. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with CS policy T1 and guidance contained within the NPPF.

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 paragraph 146 of the NPPF. 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 of policies SS10, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the re-use of the existing rural building for residential purposes.

AMOUNT

The proposal is for a modest one bedroomed dwelling.

LAYOUT

The layout of the proposed dwelling is shown on the submitted plans.

SCALE

The application building will be converted within the shell of the existing building without any extension or enlargement. The only alteration relates to the provision of 2 dormer windows in the northern roof plane, the alteration of the existing roundel window in the western gable and the provision of fully height fixed windows in the existing openings where the vehicular doors currently are.

LANDSCAPING

Hard and soft landscaping works proposed as part of this application are shown on the submitted block plan.

APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the external character and appearance of the application building.

ACCESS

Pedestrian access will be as shown on the submitted plans. Dedicated parking provision will be provided for the dwelling and replacement parking facilities provided for the main house as shown on the submitted plan.