

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0166
Valid 28/03/2022

STONE BARN FARM
SUTHERLAND ROAD
LONGSDON

**REFURBISHMENT AND
ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING
FARMHOUSE TOGETHER
WITH CONVERSION OF
ADJACENT BARN AND LINK
EXTENSION TO FORM A
SINGLE DWELLING.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

Impact on the Green Belt, character and Appearance of the area, and ecology

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a detached two storey farmhouse with a rectangular form that lies on the eastern side of Sutherland Road. The double fronted dwelling in its original form dates from the 19th Century it is constructed from coursed stone. At some point in its history a two storey red brick addition had been built to the side west facing elevation. To the east of the farmhouse lies a two storey former agricultural building constructed from coursed stone with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof atop. An unsympathetic flat roofed extension projects off its western elevation. The existing farmhouse abuts up to the northern site boundary beyond which lies open fields. A post and rail fence encloses the southern site boundary. Sutherland Road encloses the western boundary of the site, beyond which lies a row of residential properties.

PROPOSAL

The application represents a second attempt following the withdrawal of application SMD/2021/0843 which had also proposed the conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building and formation of link extension, but which raised concerns in respect of the size of the link extension and extent / nature of alterations to the agricultural building.

This application attempts to respond to the concerns raised under that previous application, and incorporates the following works:

- Blocking up of existing doorway in south elevation of dwellinghouse
- Removal of existing lean to extension and erection of a single storey link extension connecting to the agricultural building, with a set back from the south elevation of the farmhouse.
- Demolition of poor quality front extension to the former agricultural building. Insertion of new windows and doors into existing openings on the west elevation of the agricultural building, along with the formation of a new doorway and blocking up of existing opening.

- Insertion of 2no. conservation rooflights to west facing roof slope of former agricultural building and 1no. conservation rooflight into east facing roof slope.

At the request of the officer this original application has been revised with the submission of amended plans received on the 22nd June 2022. With the revisions treatment to the stone barn's existing openings have been improved and the proposed side addition has been reduced in size and cut back. Rather than a shallow hipped roof making a right angled turn to adjoin the stone barn, the side addition would have a full pitch roof and a gable end. The side addition would conceal a narrow corridor link that would be formed, hidden, between the side addition and the farm building.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
 SS1 Development Principles
 SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy
 DC1 Design Considerations
 DC2 Historic Environment
 DC3 Landscape Character
 NE1 Biodiversity
 T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

SMDC Design Guide
 Landscape Character Appraisal

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2021/0843 Extension of dwelling and conversion of farm building.
 WITHDRAWN.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 20th May 2022
 Neighbour consultation period ends: 20th May 2022
 Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Longsdon Parish Council: No Objection

Staffordshire County Council Highways

The Highway Authority are concerned that the access with the C class highway has been widened without consent. They comment that the drive should be surfaced with a bound material rear of the public highway and that it should be drained to a water interceptor. They comment that the access alteration requires the approval of the highway authority and planning permission but it is acknowledged that the access alteration does not form part of this application and is not detailed on submitted plans.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

Where an 'other rural' area coincides with the Green Belt, the Local Plan strategy SS10 effectively defers to the tests of the national policy set out in the NPPF. While the strategy might otherwise provide some support in specific circumstances to householder development to meet housing needs, there is nothing in the strategy that overrides the Green Belt policy in the NPPF.

The site is in the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed list at paras. 149 and 150 of the NPPF.

Three of those exceptions, that might be applicable to the application here, include the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the 'original building' (original building means, for the purposes of the NPPF, a building as it existed on 1st July 1948); the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger; and, the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and the development preserves Green Belt openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The application would enlarge the existing dwellinghouse with a single storey addition that would extend from its side elevation, replacing a corrugated sheet open shelter, and adjoin to an adjacent stone farm building. The farm building would be converted to provide additional living accommodation as part of the dwelling, amounting to an alteration that would also add to the size of the original dwellinghouse.

The farm house, dating from the 19th Century, is a double fronted stone cottage. From those origins it has clearly been added to at some point in its history, with a two storey brick built addition extending from the side elevation to the west. A search of the planning history has not revealed any permission for this pre existing addition, however, aerial photographs and O.S. maps establish it has been built for many years. The dwelling is shown on a pre-1948 O.S. map as having the same sized footprint as it does currently- strong evidence that the brick addition had been built before 1948 and for the purposes of the NPPF should be taken as part of the 'original building'.

The original two storey building therefore, has a footprint of approx. 62 sqm but provides 104 sq m of gross floor area (measured externally to include ground floor and first floor). The single storey addition, as revised to reduce its footprint and width of extension from side elevation, would add 35 sqm to the dwelling's footprint. This would

amount to a 56% increase to the footprint, but just a 33% increase to floor area or volume. Moreover, linking and joining the farm building to the dwellinghouse would amount to an alteration that also increases the size of the original dwelling. Combined, the addition of the side extension and the converted farm building, through both extension and alteration, would be disproportionate over and above the size of the original dwellinghouse. The development would not therefore, be provided for by the extension and alteration exception.

Between the farmhouse and the adjacent farm building, the corrugated sheet canopy provides open shelter and is largely supported by the gable ends to each building with intermediate structural posts. Clearly provided in association with historic farming activity, its replacement with the addition to the dwellinghouse would not be in the same use and, as such, the development would not be provided for by the 'replacement' exception.

The development therefore, would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. However, it is considered that, in this case, that harm would be limited by the single storey form of the addition and its context within a site that contains a tight arrangement of existing buildings. Nevertheless, any harm to the Green Belt must be attributed substantial weight and planning permission should only be granted where other considerations clearly outweigh that harm.

If the conversion, or 'reuse', of the adjacent farm building, were considered on its own, and not part of a dwellinghouse alteration or addition, it would not present any harm to openness and would, in itself, be provided for by the 'reuse' exception. While the replacement of the corrugated sheet canopy would not be provided for by the exception, it would result in the removal of sizeable, rather shabby structures. These structures are apparent from and exposed to wider areas outside of the site and have some impact on the openness of the land, they would be replaced with a smaller structure that would have a more considerate design and relationship with the other buildings on site, and, overall, have a more pleasing appearance from outside of the site, particularly to the rear or north.

Such improvements are considered to be matters that would clearly outweigh the 'limited' harm to the Green Belt that has been identified above.

Design and Impact on the Character and appearance of the area

Policy DC1 of the Local Plan requires all development to be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. The SPD guidance says that *"Alterations need to be undertaken with care. Insensitive changes can easily spoil a building. The key to a sensitive approach is to take note of what is there already before preparing the design and to work with and not against the building's character (All extensions should harmonise with the parent building). An extension should respect the dominance of the original building and be subordinate to it in terms of its size and massing. Setting back the new section from the building line and keeping the eaves and ridge lower than the parent building will help"*.

Where conversions are concerned, the design guide says that *"The guiding principle behind the design of any conversion should be that the character of the original*

building and its setting should be respected and retained. This means that in most cases the barn should afterwards look like a converted barn, and not like a new house. When converting traditional buildings, new uses should not normally require the construction of extensions or ancillary buildings"

The two principle buildings in this case, the stone farm house and the adjacent farm building are, despite a skirt of corrugated sheet canopies that runs between them, two distinctly individual buildings arranged as part of a stone farm stead of some age (19th Century). The farmstead appears relatively exposed, isolated and prominent within the open countryside, particularly when viewed across open ground from the north.

The development as originally proposed would have joined the two buildings with a structure that would have had a very obvious right angled turn, roofed with a shallow hipped roof that would have appeared bulky and at odds with the site's traditional full pitched roofs. The north facing or rear elevation of the development would be exposed and very apparent from the open land to the north. These would not have been alterations or extensions undertaken with an approach sensitive to the existing buildings and farmstead.

With the revision the extent to which the addition would extend from the dwelling's side elevation has been reduced and cut back, minimising the width of its rear elevation. The side addition would have a full pitched tiled roof with a gable end. Rather than breaching and concealing the full width of the farm building's gable with a right angled turn, the side addition would overlap only partially, with enough coverage to provide and conceal a narrow entrance porch that would provide adjoining access into the converted barn. From the north it would not be apparent that the two buildings had been adjoined and for all intents and purposes, the two principle buildings would retain a detached presence as individuals maintaining an arrangement faithful to the origins of the farmstead. The rear of the addition would maintain a strong stone elevation with traditional tiled full pitched roof and be subordinate to and respectful of both buildings.

With the revisions there has been some improvements to the way in which the conversion would use and respect original and existing openings. Incorporating stable or coach house door facades where windows are to replace doorways or appear within larger openings.

In all of these regards the revised proposal would comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan and the design guide.

The site is in the countryside and an area of local landscape identified as having the qualities and characteristics of a 'Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys' landscape type. Under the terms of local plan policy DC3 local landscape will be protected and, where possible, enhanced by resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character. Located between buildings and within an existing farmstead the development would not result in a prominent intrusion into the countryside. One of the key characteristics of this landscape character type are stone buildings and walls. The revised proposal would respect the integrity and arrangement of the stone farmhouse and the adjacent stone farm building within the site, and replace shabby corrugated sheet shelters from the edge of the site. In these regards the development would respect one of the key characteristics of this character type

and improve the appearance of the farmstead within the local landscape, thereby respecting and enhancing its character. The development is compliant with the policy in these regards.

Consideration of the site as a heritage asset

As a 19th Century stone built farmstead, consisting of double fronted farmhouse and detached stone farm building set in an L shape arrangement, the site has heritage value. The asset which appears on County record is otherwise non designated. While the stone buildings and farmstead make contribution to the local landscape and the character and appearance of the area, the significance of the site as a heritage asset is diminished by various insensitive additions and alterations that have occurred over the years. These include – two storey brick addition to side elevation of dwelling, corrugated sheet shelters between the two buildings, concrete block flat roof addition to front of farm building. The proposed development would in limited respects enhance the significance of the site as an heritage asset by removing the concrete addition at the front of the farm building and the corrugated sheet shelter between buildings.

Impact on Ecology

A preliminary roost appraisal of the site was undertaken in March 2022 by the applicant's appointed qualified ecologist, both buildings on site were assessed to be of moderate roost potential and further activity surveys were recommended. Follow up emergence surveys were undertaken in May 2022.

A daytime inspection of the farmhouse and barn was undertaken on the 03/03/2022, the barn and house were assessed to be of moderate suitability for roosting bats and two further emergence surveys were undertaken. During the first survey on the 03/05/2022 a single common pipistrelle was recorded emerging from a section of wall on the western elevation of the barn at low level via infra-red video cameras. This bat was then observed making foraging and commuting passes over the site.

During the second survey on the 17/05/2022 a single common pipistrelle was observed emerging from beneath a roof tile on the southern pitch of the house roof, this bat then proceeded to forage over the site on an irregular basis. No bats were recorded emerging from the barn on this visit.

The ecologist concludes that it is likely that a single common pipistrelle bat utilises the two buildings as day roosts and moves between the two buildings, utilising different roosting areas likely as a result of prevailing weather conditions and temperatures. No evidence to suggest any other type of roost or species of bat is present roosting within the site was found during the surveys.

The ecologist's recommendation is that the results of the bat activity surveys confirm the presence of a day roost used by a single common pipistrelle bat within the barn and the house and that, therefore, a licence will need to be obtained in order permit works likely to disturb a bat roost, given the presence of two, day roosts of a common and widespread species, the site, subject to obtaining planning permission, will be eligible for the CL21 'low' impact licence issued by Natural England.

The ecologist advises that mitigation for these types of roost need not be like for like however, given the construction type of the barn and stage of development it is

recommended that a suitable crevice style box is integrated into the redeveloped building and in addition a lead bat tile be added to the roof of the house when re-roofing is undertaken to provide access for roosting bats. A permission could be condition accordingly to ensure that, on the advice of the ecologist and Natural England as licensing authority, the development accords with policy NE1 of the Local Plan.

Impact on Highway

The comments of the highway officer are noted, however, the access alterations do not form part of this planning application and it would not be regulated with a grant of permission in this case. However, an informative could remind the applicant that consents are required and that additional works would be necessary for approval.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development as revised would present limited harm to the Green Belt that would be outweighed by overall improvement that would be made to the site's external appearance and its impact on the character and appearance of the area through good respectful design and the removal of less sensitive works. Conditions can secure mitigation in respect of ecology disturbance and quality details for the conversion works. The development would be compliant with those local plan policies listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 1st July 2022

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council