

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0152
Valid 27/09/2022

HILLCREST FARM
WOOTTON LANE
FARLEY

COU BARN CONVERSION TO
DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the change of use in this location.
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity.
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside close to the “hamlet” of Farley (to the west) and is on the north side of Wootton Lane, immediately to the north of the northern boundary of Alton Towers, with Alton Towers Drive running parallel to the lane. It comprises a single-storey brick and tile L-shaped agricultural storage building in the form of a traditional milking parlour or a stables building. It is derelict. It is in a backland plot behind (to the rear of) a traditional detached farmhouse within the same ownership which faces the lane. There is an access drive off the lane running along the west side of the farmhouse leading to the plot and onto a large yard area in front of the farm building. There are two dwellings to the east of the farmhouse also facing the lane. A strip of woodland running alongside the lane lies to the west of the site. Open fields lie to the north of the site which are also within the same ownership as the application site. The site is flat but the land to the rear slopes gradually downwards towards the north.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application to convert the building into a single-storey 4-bed dwelling which would not involve any extensions and where all the current openings would be re-used as windows and doors, replacing like-for-like with timber replacements. Although one of the standard windows in the north elevation would be replaced with a larger French windows full height opening, as shown on amended plans, in place of a much wider proposed opening which was considered out of keeping with the building. The access would remain the same. The existing hard-standing to the east of the building would be used as a parking and turning area.

An Ecology/Bat Report accompanies the application and a Structural Survey Report was later submitted by the applicant.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy

H1 – New Housing

DC1 – Design Considerations

NE1 – Biodiversity

T1 – Transport

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 8.11.22

Neighbour consultation period ends: 8.11.22

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Parish Council Comments

None received.

Local Highways Authority

No objection subject to a condition requiring the hedge along the farmhouse frontage to be reduced to a height of 0.9 metres to improve visibility at the access.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions applied to conversions of agricultural buildings into dwellings.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

SWT advises the Council to refer to SWT standing advice on assessing ecological impact.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Policies SS10 and H1 allow the conversion of rural buildings into residential uses where the building is physically and architecturally suitable for a conversion and also must be in keeping with the area. I consider this proposal passes the tests. The Structural Survey Report concludes that the building is in a stable condition worthy of a residential conversion, despite the loss of small parts of the roof (tiles and purlins) although these can be easily replaced and also some repointing and repair of cracked masonry and lintels are recommended. The proposed works, which externally would involve just window replacement and the enlarging of a current opening, would not destabilise the building. Architecturally, it has the form and design of a traditional rural building, possibly a milking parlour or stables, with red bricks and a tiled pitched roof. For this reason, it is also in keeping with the area due to its rural location and the presence of similar traditional brick farm buildings in the general surrounding area of the countryside. There are several brick and tile buildings nearby including adjacent to the site.

The proposal would not lead to the loss of any valuable agricultural floorspace as the building looks incapable of any new agricultural use and is sited very close to neighbouring dwellings outside of the property which may be more affected by new agricultural usage than a residential use.

The curtilage as shown on amended plans has been fairly tightly drawn around the building and would not result in any encroachment into open land of domestic paraphernalia or outbuildings which might affect its rural setting. A condition can be applied requiring details of the boundary treatments in order to properly contain the residential curtilage. There is sufficient space for a garden area of decent size and parking and turning would be provided on the yard space on the opposite side of the building to be fields.

The windows would be replaced with appropriate new timber windows replicating the traditional style of the current windows. A new pair of French windows with timber shutters would be provided on the north elevation, an enlarged opening but one which does not significantly harm the character and appearance of the building which has timber doors of similar size to the proposed shutters. A condition would be added requiring new roof tiles to match the existing. Overall, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area.

With regard to residential amenity, the building is an existing single-storey structure so the proposal would not harm the residential amenities or living conditions of nearby residents immediately to the south-east. The light provision and privacy of the existing residents would not be harmfully affected. The building is already existing so no issues of overshadowing would occur. A window is proposed in the south gable facing the neighbour but this would ace the blank gable of the neighbours outbuilding.

With regard to the future occupants, the proposed dwelling floorspace (130 sq.m) would exceed the threshold set out in the governments Nationally Described Space Standards for a single-storey four-bed 8-person dwelling (117 sq.m) and therefore the future occupant(s) would have sufficient space in respect of their living

conditions. With regard to outdoor space, the Council's Space About Dwellings Standards require a garden length of 10.5m and overall area of 65 sq.m. The length cannot be achieved but the area threshold would be far exceeded and I consider this would compensate for the shortfall in length.

Overall, the proposal can be delivered without harming the residential amenities of the area.

With regard to highway safety, the local highways authority consider the access to the site is safe for the vehicle movements associated with a new 4-bed dwelling and would in any case probably be less than the number of vehicles using the access if the site was to be re-used for agricultural purposes instead of residential uses. There is sufficient turning space on the yard for the parking and turning of three cars in line with the Council parking standards. A condition can be added restricting the hedge height along the road within the same property to 0.9 metres to improve visibility at the access. It is currently not much higher than that. Overall, the proposal would not harm highway safety.

Finally with regard to the impact on the ecological value of the site, a survey was undertaken to establish if bats were present in the building or the site, as required due to the potential for bats to use such rural buildings. They are a protected species and planning policies seek to ensure they are protected from development proposals. The survey revealed that no bats were present and therefore would not be harmed by the conversion works. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have not raised any objections to the application and the proposal is in line with the SWT Standing Advice for such proposals. A Net Biodiversity Gain can be achieved via the provision of bat tiles, details of which were put forward by the applicant, along with bat boxes and native planting, as required by a planning condition.

Overall, the proposal would not harm the ecological value of the site.

CONCLUSION/PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is acceptable in principle in this location and would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area of the surrounding environment in general including the ecological value of the site. It would not be detrimental to highway safety. The proposal therefore complies with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 6.1.23

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council