

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0709
Valid 09/11/2021

HIGHER BROWN EDGE
FARM NEWTOWN ROAD
NEWTOWN
BIDDULPH

ALTERATIONS AND
EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING
DWELLING AND CONVERSION
OF REDUNDANT BARN TO
FORM ANCILLARY
ACCOMMODATION

(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt and character and Appearance of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a detached two storey, double fronted stone farmhouse facing Newtown Road. The double fronted dwelling in its original form dates from the late 19th Century it is constructed from random coursed stone. The dwelling and its farmstead outbuilding essentially remain in their original 19th Century form. The dwelling has a T shape footprint with a two storey gable that extends from the rear. Each of the dwelling gables has an integral chimney stack. To the rear there is an imposing stone farm outbuilding with a hay loft in roof space, that encloses the rear of the dwelling, and between the two, on the western flank of the property there is a brick built out rigger with a tiled mono pitch roof. The three buildings together, enclose a central yard area to the rear of the dwelling.

The small grouping of farm buildings are surrounded by open farm land.

PROPOSAL

The original proposal was presented across two applications SMD/2021/0708 and SMD/2021/0709. It was proposed to convert the stone outbuilding to ancillary accommodation with a large gable extension to the rear and a two storey gabled addition to the side of the dwelling incorporating contemporary architectural detailing.

At the officer's request, and in agreement with a newly appointed agent, the proposal has been revised. The revised proposal is to extend the dwelling with a slim profiled two storey addition to the side that would sit sensitively beneath and aligned to the dwelling's main roof with a mono pitch roof that would replicate the form of a small catslide. The stone farm building at the rear would be converted to provide additional accommodation without further extension; and the brick outrigger that runs between the rear of the dwelling and the barn would be increased in height with a glazed roof section and elevation on the enclosed yard side to provide habitable space and a linking corridor between the dwelling and the barn.

****ADDENDUM**

5th June 2023 A Bat Activity survey was received relating to the building to be converted.

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

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 31/12/2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 31/12/2021
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Biddulph Town Council: No Adverse Comments
Rushton Spencer PC: No objection

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on 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.

Two 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); and the reuse of a building provided the building is of permanent and substantial construction.

The farm house, dating from the 19th Century, is a double fronted stone cottage. From those origins it has not been altered or enlarged. All buildings on site are as 'original'.

The development, would in the main use existing building structure that is of permanent and substantial construction with limited alteration and enlargement. Additions to the dwelling and outbuilding would not disproportionately increase the size of the original buildings. It would be provided for by both exceptions and not be inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance

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"*.

The peripheries of the building group and the side elevation of the stone dwelling are exposed and apparent across open countryside, prominently visible from public vantage on Newtown Road and public footpaths to the north. They appear as a small unaltered 19th Century stone farmstead.

The original proposal to introduce a competing second gable to the side elevation with contemporary architectural detailing has been dropped from the scheme. With the revision the side addition would be modest in size and form and work sensitively with that of the original dwelling. It would provide additional floor space at ground floor and an ensuite above with the space of a catslide style roof running off from that of the main dwelling. To achieve additional floor space in other respects, the proposal would enlarge and alter the brick outrigger increasing its height modestly so that from the outside of the site, the side wall and mono pitch of the outrigger would, for all intents and purposes, retain the form and character of the existing elevation (there is reclaimed matching brick from the loss of a small outbuilding on site). The alterations on the other side of the outrigger would be enclosed and concealed from view. Essentially as a link between buildings it would be subordinate and an element of separation would remain.

The conversion works to the stone farm building would sensitively use existing openings and involve limited alteration. At the rear a ramshackle nissen shed would be removed to make a small enclosed amenity space behind a surrounding stone wall that would give the rear of the site enclosure and containment.

Alterations to the external form of the buildings would be kept to a minimum and there would be no harm to the character and appearance of the area as a result of policy compliant development. In all of these regards the revised proposal would comply with policy DC1 of the Local Plan and the design guide.

Impact on amenity of neighbours

The dwelling and old farmstead grouping stand-alone within open countryside, the nearest neighbours lie across open field - 70m to the north west, 200m to the north east, and 130m to the south east. The development would not have any impact on the living conditions/amenity of its nearest residential neighbours.

Impact on Ecology

The application proposes the use of and works to old under used or unoccupied outbuildings – the brick out rigger and stone barn/farm building. The application was held in abeyance because the buildings had not been surveyed or inspected by a qualified ecologist and the application does not include an ecology survey or report.

The buildings have cavities and crevices which could be used opportunistically by individual bats. However, the buildings are relatively isolated and exposed on an open Moorland/Hillside location, there is no obvious nearby woodland or tree cover.

**** ADDENDUM**

On the 5th June 2023 a Bat Activity survey was received relative to the building to be converted. The report was produced by qualified ecologists at Elite Ecology.

The Ecologists found that the dwelling and outbuilding had moderate potential and that the Anderson style shed was of negligible potential. They conducted three separate activity surveys throughout the month of May.

No evidence of bats was found during the daytime inspection. No bats were detected emerging or re-entering the buildings at any time during the activity surveys. Therefore, it is considered that all efforts have been made to establish that no negative impact will occur to roosting bats.

The site provides some food for bats little activity was evident during the activity surveys. Although the buildings will be replaced, flowering and tree features will be created which will maintain foraging for bats.

The development will incorporate a total of two bat boxes: where possible, developments should include small access points suitable for bat access and/or wall mounted bat boxes ('1FQ' style bat boxes), positioned onto the new housing. It is recommended that bat boxes, such as the Schwegler 1FQ, are installed onto a selection of housing or on the existing barning in a south facing position, with one

Schwegler 2F boxes attached to existing buildings, the installed bat boxes will be sited at least 7–8 metres above the ground.

One Schwegler 1FQ bat boxes will be installed to provide summer and hibernation opportunities, and Schwegler 2F bat boxes will be installed for regular and mixed use.

Boxes will not be placed in an overly exposed position on the new builds. Crucially, the box entrances should face south-west to south-east.

Checks for droppings or observations at dusk during the summer for emerging bats will indicate if they are being used.

If a box is not used after two years, it will be relocated to an alternative situation.

Once discovered, a bat roost is protected by law and must not be disturbed.

It is envisaged that bat box monitoring should be undertaken by the site owners who will require a licensed bat worker to inspect the boxes in order to conform to current guidance and legislation.

In the report there are also recommendations for nesting birds.

Overall the ecology survey confirm that the works will not harm protected species and the development works will incorporate features to improve biodiversity, thereby meeting the requirements of Policy NE1.

Highway Safety

Existing three bedroom dwelling, the alterations and additions would not increase bedroom numbers. There is already space within driveway and yard to provide standard compliant parking. The application does not make a proposal to alter the access with the highway.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The development would not be inappropriate and not cause harm to the Green Belt. The alteration and replacement would relate well to the oldest stone part of the original dwelling and serve as an improvement in those respects. Conditions can secure mitigation in respect of ecology disturbance and quality details for the development. The development would be compliant with those local plan policies listed above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 06/06/2023

X *J Colley*

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council