

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0196
Valid 21/04/2023

LONGHURST FARM
DIMMINGSDALE
OAKAMoor

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE
OF EXISTING AGRICULTURAL
BARN AND CONVERSION FOR
RESIDENTIAL USE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Approach to rural housing provision and contribution to housing supply
- Impact on the character and appearance of the building and that of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site comprises a former agricultural building constructed from local sandstone with a Staffordshire blue plain clay tiled roof atop that dates from the 19th Century. A number of the existing openings of the building have been infilled with a mixture of brickwork and blockwork over the years and unsympathetic lean-to extensions have also been added.

The building lies at the end of a long farm track that connects the site with Oakamoor village (approximately 1.5 miles distant) via Stoneydale. A large portal framed agricultural building sits directly to the north of the stone agricultural building, but benefits from an extant consent for its demolition and replacement further to the west. An additional portal framed agricultural building lies to the northwest of the stone building, with open fields extending beyond that.

The existing farmhouse is located directly east of the stone agricultural building, and comprises a part three storey, part two storey structure. It is also finished in local sandstone with a Staffordshire blue clay tiled roof atop. It has a narrow range running east / west, with a two storey projection to its north. Open fields extend to the north and east of the farmhouse, sloping gently upwards in a broadly northerly direction.

The site as a whole is located within the rural area. An area of designated Ancient Woodland (Moss Bank) is located beyond the southern boundary of the site, with the landscape thereafter descending down in a broadly southerly direction towards the Dimmingsdale valley beyond. The site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor are there any statutorily listed buildings located nearby. The farmstead is nevertheless recognised as constituting a non-designated heritage asset.

PROPOSAL

The conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building at Longhurst Farm, Dimmingsdale, Oakamoor to create 1no. dwellinghouse.

The proposed dwelling will have a gross internal floor area of 211 square metres with accommodation arranged at ground and first floor level. The accommodation will comprise of an open plan living / dining / kitchen area, utility room, larder, w.c., entrance hall, two bedrooms and family bathroom at ground floor, with a further bedroom, dressing room, ensuite bathroom and study at first floor level.

The proposed development encompasses a number of alterations to the existing building aimed at securing a high quality form of development. These works are detailed on the submitted plans and can be summarised as follows:

- Removal of existing lean-to additions on the southern elevation
- Removal of blockwork lean-to extension on the western elevation
- Provision of new / altered windows and doors
- Insertion of replacement / additional rooflights

Vehicular access to the site is to be taken via the existing track that serves the adjacent dwellinghouse and farmyard, with two parking spaces to be provided alongside the eastern elevation of the building. A bin storage area is to be provided within the existing small outbuilding to the immediate north of the building.

An area of private amenity space and wildflower planting is to be created to the south and west of the building, enclosed by the post and rail fencing to its eastern and western boundaries, with the existing dry stone wall along the southern site boundary retained in situ.

A septic tank with reed bed and outfall is to be provided within the rear garden area as indicated on the submitted plans in order to provide the new dwelling with an appropriate means of foul drainage. Surface water drainage is to be dealt with via soakaways.

Revised info and amendment

The applicant has made the following response to the Conservation Officer's comments:

Window and Door Material:

There is concern raised over the colour and wooden effect uPVC door and window units. We appreciate the note on the drawing may have led to believe a wood colour was proposed however it is the client's intention for the windows and doors to be a solid colour with a timber grain texture. I have attached more information of the exact system, profile, and colour ('Painswick') as the Residence 9 range is what the applicant intends to use (if acceptable) rather than just any uPVC system. They are keen to use triple glazed fittings to mitigate heat loss.

Glazed Doors:

The central ground floor door to the dining area and ground and first floor doors to the gable on the south elevation are proposed as fully glazed. This is to maximise daylight into the living and bedroom areas using the existing openings and following feedback from former Conservation Officer, Gill Bayliss under the Class Q application in 2019 (ref: DET/2019/0033).

We can change the central door to the living space to match the look of that entering the utility room, to be of stable door style with vertical boarding to the lower half.

The ground and first floor openings to bedrooms on the south elevation were existing doors and an honest approach would be to maintain as doors, however due to its proposed change of use as a dwelling, the glazed openings allow light into the habitable spaces. Using boarded timber doors to match the existing would not be suitable for its future use.

Juliet Balcony:

Due to safety, a glazed balustrade is proposed within the opening at first floor in front of the glazed doors -to be as unobtrusive as possible. The client is open to alternatives if glass is not considered suitable (eg. Cast iron, stainless steel, timber?)

North Elevation, East Gable:

The Conservation Officer's concerns regarding the infill of existing arched opening are that there is too much glazing. We could reduce the amount of glazing by removing the glazing to the bottom half of the doors and windows and replacing with vertical boarded timber effect (Residence 9) as per the 2-part stable doors on the south and east elevations.

North Elevation, West Gable/Main Entrance:

Following the Conservation Officer's concerns that the door appears too contemporary, we propose to omit the glazed panel, pull handle, letterbox, and instead propose a vertical boarded door with traditional ironmongery.

Mortar Specification

A mortar sample has not been carried out, and therefore we can amend our drawings to note that lime mortar will be used to match existing, and the exact mix can be determined when on site. We appreciate, if necessary, samples can be carried out for approval.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

- S01 Spatial Objectives
- SS1 Development Principles
- SS10 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- H1 Housing
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC3 Landscape Character
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
- NE2 Ecology and biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- DET/2019/0033 Prior approval for conversion and alteration of building to dwelling.
- SMD/2022/0271 Alterations to existing farm shed. APPROVED.
- SMD/2022/0272 Replacement and relocation of existing farm shed. APPROVED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 23/05/2023

Neighbour consultation period ends: 23/05/2023

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Oakamoor Parish Council: Support the application

Environmental Health

No objection. Suggested conditions relative to nuisance during construction, potential risks of ground contamination, and noise nuisance from farming activity.

Conservation Officer

No objection to change of use and conversion. Some concern regarding detail relative to colour of faux wooden windows; large glazing panel in wide opening; glazed Juliet balcony; large opening with arched brick header.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Awaited

Waste Collection

No issue

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application proposes the reuse of an existing rural building within the rural area in order to create 1no. dwellinghouse. Policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan support the conversion of existing buildings within the rural areas to residential use, provided that the building is worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.

The accompanying Structural Survey prepared by Fairclough Consulting Engineers serves to demonstrate that the existing building is in a robust structural condition with no indications of any significant defects and concludes that from a structural point of view that the barn is entirely suitable for conversion to habitable use. The existing building can consequently be held to be worthy of conversion in structural terms. The building can also be readily concluded to be worthy of conversion in architectural and character terms, with the barn having a visually pleasing character and being constructed from vernacular materials.

In any event, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. Therefore, the policies which are most important for determining the application are considered to be out of date. Paragraph 11d of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is engaged. In accordance with paragraph 11d ii) of the NPPF consideration must be given as to whether the adverse impacts of granting planning

permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.

The site occupies a remote, isolated, rural location and sustainable credentials are very limited in those regards. However, that would not amount to an adverse impact that would outweigh the benefits associated, including the reuse of an attractive rural barn with the contribution to housing supply and the compliance with the Local Plan in other respects.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance of the building and area

Overall, the scheme represents the reuse and appropriate/sensitive treatment of a traditional farm building – respecting existing openings and detailing while removing poor quality ramshackle additions, in compliance with the Council Design Guide and policy DC1 of the Local Plan. The conversion would be achieved without enlargement or significant alteration.

Criticism of some of the detailing has been addressed with revision and an amended plan has been submitted to address the comments of the Conservation Officer. A revised plan confirms that the windows and doors would not be 'oak effect' but rather a painted wood effect in a pale/green grey, the design and arrangement of frames from the quality heritage product (residence 9). Annotated notes on the revised plan confirm the use of lime based mortar. A central door to the proposed dining room has been changed from full height glazing to a half timber board base 'stable door' effect. The contemporary design of the entrance door in the small north facing gable has been swapped for a vertical boarded door with traditional ironmongery.

However, boarding the full height openings in the large two storey south facing gable would disproportionately restrict light and outlook to the rooms and the quality of the living conditions. The use of 'Resi 9' heritage door openings would respect the arrangement of the openings and the character and age of the buildings. There was also some debate over how the first floor doorway would be balustraded, the conservation officer would obviously prefer there to be no Juliet style opening, the applicant offered to change the flush glass barrier for an iron or wood bar. It is however, considered that there are merits in retaining the glass balustrade it would be light in structure and appearance.

The front or north facing gables contain large cart openings under segmented brick arches. The largest of the 'openings' in the two storey gable is currently blocked up. The application proposes large full height glazing feature within that opening framed by a light arrangement of vertically orientated glazing bars. The Conservation Officer's criticism of the arrangement, might amount to a point of subjective preference or opinion, it is considered alternatively that the approach respects successfully and restores the form of the cart opening, making a feature of it. Any harm to the non designated heritage asset would not appear to demonstrably and significantly outweigh the benefits. The applicant offered to introduce half boarding to the bottom of the opening across its width, however they were dissuaded from making such an amendment because given the width and aperture of the opening, this might look odd or contrived.

Amenity

The only neighbouring property to the proposed development is the existing farmhouse that lies to the east of the existing stone agricultural building. The existing farmhouse has two secondary windows in its western elevation looking out towards the existing building, which serve a living room at ground floor (the main window being located on the front elevation), and bedroom 4 within the roof space.

The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the occupiers of the existing farmhouse, and vice versa, as the farmhouse lies 22 metres distant from the eastern elevation of the building, and consequently will not give rise to any conflict with the Local Authority's space about dwellings standards.

Future occupiers of the new dwelling will also be provided with a good level of residential amenity, with a large area of private amenity space to be provided to the rear of the building which exceeds the minimum requirement set out in the space about dwellings standards. The gross internal floor space of the dwelling also exceeds the minimum requirement set out within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards.

The extent to which the surrounding site would remain part of a working agricultural holding is unclear. Recent planning permissions have been granted to alter an existing farm shed and to relocate and rebuild a replacement for an existing shed. The application is for an open market dwelling and could be occupied by a person not involved with or associated with activities on site. The previous Class Q prior approval was granted without occupancy restriction but was discussed in the Env Officer's comments and the delegated report as being for a person involved in the holding. The planning permissions granted for the relocation of the farm barn would move it from the front of the application barn and further away, opening outlook and potentially taking potential noise nuisance further from the new barn conversion dwelling. With this application the Environmental Health Officer recommends a condition requiring a site specific scheme for protecting the proposed residential units from farm noise.

Highway Safety

The application site will be accessed via the existing track that currently serves the site, and which has previously been found to constitute an acceptable from a highway safety perspective under the previous prior approval consent (DET/2019/0033). Whilst that consent has since lapsed, there has been no material change in circumstance since that previous approval was issued, and it is consequently submitted that the proposed development will have no greater impact on highway safety or vehicular movements than that which has previously been approved.

The application also proposes the provision of two parking spaces to serve the proposed dwelling which meets the requirements of the Local Authority's adopted parking standards. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology and Biodiversity

The application is accompanied by a Bat Survey prepared by Elite Ecology which has assessed the building for potential roosting opportunities for bats/evidence of bats, including a series of bat activity surveys. The survey concluded that the building is in use by roosting bats, as well as by nesting swallows, and that consequently it has a

high ecological value. By resultant effect a bat licence from Natural England will be required in order to carry out the proposed works.

The bat survey goes on to recommend a series of bat mitigation/enhancement measures that should be carried out, including the provision of a bat box, bird boxes and the preservation of existing gaps between the stonework (or provision of bat tubes if these need to be repointed for structural reasons). Such mitigation/enhancement measures can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition, and in doing so the development will meet the requirements of policy NE1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal relates to a building that is worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion to residential use, and which has previously benefitted from consent for conversion to residential use under application DET/2019/0033.

The design and layout of the development will preserve the agrarian character of the existing building and not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, SD3, DC1, DC2, NE1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 15/06/2023

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council