

# **PLANNING STATEMENT**

**SPRINGFIELDS FARM  
HULME**

**AUGUST 2023**

**Site Address:**

Springfield Farm, Hulme Lane, Hulme, Staffordshire, ST3 5BH

**Applicant:**

Mr. C. Taylor

**Proposal:**

Conversion of former agricultural building to retail use and associated  
formation of parking area and vehicular access improvements  
(part retrospective)

**Planning Statement:**

**Date Issued:** 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Job Reference:** RDP/2023/066

**Report Prepared By:**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Taylor to seek full planning permission for the change of use and conversion of a former agricultural building at Springfields Farm, Hulme Lane, Hulme to retail use, along with the associated formation of a car park and provision of vehicular access improvements. The application is part retrospective.
- 1.2 The shop sells a range of produce, in particular locally produced ice creams, cakes, cheese, pies and soft drinks and has proven to be very popular. The shop is open between the hours of 10:00 and 19:00 daily and employs six members of staff (4 full time equivalents).
- 1.3 The existing shop occupies a floor area of 40.5 square metres, and has an adjacent storage area occupying a floor area of 23.9 square metres. An area of indoor seating is proposed as part of this application, which will encompass an area of 49.9 square metres. The remainder of the building is to be used for ancillary domestic storage purposes associated with the applicant's existing dwellinghouse adjacent.
- 1.4 Vehicular access to the site is taken via the existing access off Hulme Lane, with the application proposing improvements to visibility. The application also seeks consent for alterations to the external appearance of the building along with the formation of associated car parking areas that have been provided to the rear of the building, as well as an external seating area.
- 1.5 The business has been operating from the site since the beginning of May with the applicant believing the works to not have required planning permission. Upon being notified by the Local Authority that planning permission was required he has promptly sought to regularise the situation by submission of this application.

## **2 Site & Surroundings**

- 2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a former agricultural building and surrounding land that is located on the eastern side of Hulme Lane. The site lies less than 1km from Werrington.
- 2.2 The existing building the subject of this application comprises a portal framed structure finished in blockwork with vertical timber cladding. It occupies a position set well back from the public highway, and has further agricultural buildings extending to its south. An area of hardstanding is located in front of the buildings, with an access track running along the northern flank of the building connecting to areas of car parking created at the rear of the building.
- 2.3 The applicant's existing farmhouse is located to the immediate southwest of the agricultural buildings and comprises a detached, two storey property finished in white render with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof atop. Agricultural fields extend to the east of the site, beyond which lies a large cluster of buildings associated with Bark House Farm.
- 2.4 A small cluster of residential properties lies approximately 75 metres to the north of the site, beyond the existing field that encloses the northern side of the existing agricultural building. Open fields, enclosed by mature hedgerows extend to the south of the site, with Hulme Lane enclosing the western site boundary.
- 2.5 No buildings within the immediate surrounding area are statutorily listed, nor does the site lie within a Conservation Area.

### **3 Planning Policy**

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into account any relevant material considerations. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, including starter homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community;
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce;

- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment;
- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations.
- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved by:

- Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified
- Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises
- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape

- Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4 Policy E1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Employment Development' and states that new employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs. It goes on to state that in general the Council will endeavour to support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District. The policy furthermore states that schemes involving the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, will be considered favourably where the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings, and that to support the growth of the economy the Council will encourage provision for small-scale and start-up businesses.

3.5 Policy TCR3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Retailing and other Town Centre Uses outside Town Centres' and states that in determining proposals for retail and other town centre uses of 200m<sup>2</sup> or more (net sales for A1) on sites outside town centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan a Sequential Assessment will be required. Preference will be given to town centre and then edge of centre sites. Where there are no sequentially preferable sites available, sites outside Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle in highly accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre will be considered. An Impact Assessment will be required on proposals for town centre uses of 200m<sup>2</sup> or more (net sales for A1) located outside of the town centres and not in accordance with the Local Plan. Developer contributions may be sought to mitigate identified impacts on defined centres where appropriate. Proposals with a significant adverse impact will be refused.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should 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 SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping, as well as noise, odour and light pollution.
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

3.7 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:



1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

#### **4 Other Material Considerations**

##### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and set out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of supporting a prosperous rural economy, safeguarding the Green Belt and maintaining highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

##### **Staffordshire Moorlands Growth Strategy**

- 4.2 The Growth Strategy identifies lower than average business start-up rates within the Staffordshire Moorlands, and a perception of rural areas being unsuitable and unwelcoming for business growth. It goes on to confirm that employment growth is a key political priority within the Moorlands.

## **5 Planning Assessment**

### **Green Belt**

- 5.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt, wherein policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only exceptions as defined by Government policy. Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows for the reuse of existing buildings within the Green Belt provided that they are of a permanent and substantial construction. It also allows for material changes in the use of land. In both cases the development must preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework also allows for the extension and alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- 5.2 The application is part retrospective and proposes the change of use of part of a former agricultural building to retail use, along with the formation of a new parking area to the rear of the building for use by customers. The existing building comprises a portal framed structure, finished in blockwork with vertical timber cladding to its upper elevations, and has been present on the site for a number of years, appearing on aerial photographs as far back as 2003. The building is consequently held to be of a permanent and substantial construction.
- 5.3 The reuse of this building for retail purposes will not derive any harm to the openness of the Green Belt, nor will it give rise to any conflict with the five purposes of including land within it, as the use will be confined to within the building itself. The proposed change of use of the building to retail use

therefore constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF.

- 5.4 The formation of the car park amounts to a change of use of the land from its existing agricultural use and makes use of an existing area of hardstanding located to the rear of the building where the parking of vehicles has historically taken place, and which is screened from wider public view by the presence of the existing buildings and surrounding vegetation. The parking of vehicles within that area will have a transient, non-permanent impact, and thus not give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposed car parking area therefore also amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF.
- 5.5 The proposed overflow car parking area is located to the north of the main car park and extends into an area that was previously part of an existing field. That part of the site is only opened up during busy periods, with any impacts from parked cars being transient in nature and non-permanent. The applicant is furthermore agreeable to seeding the existing hardcore surface to grass so that when not in use for parking, the overflow car park will have a green and natural appearance. The applicant is also agreeable to planting an indigenous hedgerow around the perimeter of the overflow car park to soften the impact of parked vehicles when present on the site. The overflow car parking area therefore also constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF.
- 5.6 The external seating area does not have any adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It remains open in nature, save for some moveable picnic tables which can be easily removed from the land. No adverse impact to the openness of the Green Belt consequently arises, nor does it derive any

conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The applicant is nevertheless agreeable to planting a new hedgerow along the northern perimeter of this area, tying in with that which he is willing to plant along the northern and western flanks of the overflow car park. The proposed external seating area therefore also constitutes an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 150 of the NPPF.

- 5.7 The proposed alterations to the building will not materially increase its size of over and above the size of the original building and consequently those external alterations also constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in accordance with paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

### **Rural Economy**

- 5.8 Paragraph 81 of the NPPF states that:

*“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential”*

- 5.9 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should enable:

*“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”*

And

*“the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses”*

- 5.10 This guidance is enshrined within policy SS10 of the Local Plan which confirms that the Council will enable the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified and will support the diversification of existing farm enterprises. Policy E1 of the Local Plan also confirms that the Council will support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District, and that schemes involving the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise will be considered favourably where the proposed use does not harm the building’s character and/or the character of its surroundings. Policy E1 goes on to state that to support the growth of the economy the Council will encourage provision for small-scale and start-up businesses.

- 5.11 The Local Authority’s Growth Strategy reflects the above policy provisions and confirms that the Staffordshire Moorlands has lower than average business start-up rates and a perception of the rural areas being unsuitable and unwelcoming for business growth. The application seeks consent to regularise an existing retail use that has been formed via the conversion of part of the existing building on the site, and which has proven very popular.

- 5.12 The business employs 6 members of staff (4no full-time equivalents) and constitutes a start-up business. It also represents diversification of the agricultural holding in a manner that will support the sustainable growth of the rural economy, in accordance with the objectives of the Local Authority's Growth Strategy and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.13 In terms of retail impact considerations policy TCR3 of the Local Plan states that a sequential assessment and impact assessment will be required for all retail uses of 200 square metres or more on sites outside town centres. The policy reflects the provisions of paragraph 89 of the NPPF which states that the sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.
- 5.14 The submitted proposal entails a cumulative gross floor area of 114 square metres and therefore does not invoke the need for a sequential assessment or impact assessment to be carried out. The proposal consequently derives no conflict with the provisions of policy TCR3 of the Local Plan or paragraph 89 of the NPPF.
- 5.15 The economic benefits associated with this proposal accord with the objectives of the Local Authority's Growth Strategy, as well as the provisions of policies SS10 and E1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF, and as such weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development.

#### **Design & Layout**

- 5.16 The works that have already been undertaken to convert the existing building to retail use are not considered to be unduly controversial. Some additional vertical timber cladding has been introduced at ground floor level, covering

over the blockwork that previously existed, with a small access door created into the retail unit off the existing area of hardstanding.

- 5.17 The application proposes to extend that timber cladding across the remainder of the front elevation of the building, with new matching metal cladding above, and the existing metal door removed. Two smaller doorway openings are to be added to match the pedestrian door already in situ, which will give the elevation a more pleasing aesthetic. The works proposed will retain an agrarian feel to the appearance of the building and are not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 5.18 The proposed car parking area is located on an existing area of hardstanding at the rear of the building and will be well screened from public view by the existing buildings to its west and surrounding vegetation. The overflow car park, when in use, is more visually conspicuous but is seen against the backdrop of the cluster of buildings associated with Bark House Farm in the background and associated boundary vegetation, which serves to limit the visual intrusion of parked cars. The applicant is furthermore agreeable to planting a new indigenous hedgerow around the northern and western perimeters of the overflow car park and the external seating area to soften their respect impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- 5.19 Some alterations to the site frontage will be required to facilitate the improved visibility splays (discussed in more detail below) which will entail the removal of most of the existing hedgerow on the northern side of the site access. To mitigate for the loss of that hedgerow, a new hedgerow is to be planted behind the new visibility splays which once established will give the streetscene a not dissimilar appearance to that which currently exists. The verge in between will be seeded to grass or wildflowers in the interests of



enhancing biodiversity. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

### **Highway Safety**

- 5.20 The site benefits from an existing access point off Hulme Lane which serves the existing farmyard. The dwellinghouse has its own separate access immediately to the south. The access to the site has poor visibility on egress onto Hulme Lane, particularly to the north owing to a slight bend in the road and the presence of the existing hedgerow. The road has a 60mph speed limit at this point.
- 5.21 The applicant has commissioned Staffordshire County Council to carry out a speed survey to accompany the application which serves to demonstrate that the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of traffic travelling along Hulme Lane is as follows:
- Northbound – 32mph
  - Southbound – 34mph
- 5.22 Traffic is consequently travelling along Hulme Lane much slower than its actual 60mph speed limit, and consequently a lesser degree of visibility splay can be justified.
- 5.23 The submitted site plan demonstrates that a visibility splay of 72 metres can be accommodated to the north of the site access, with the existing hedgerow to be removed and planted behind the new splay. To the south of the access a splay of at least 105 metres and potentially up to 120 metres can be provided which is what would normally be required for a 40mph road. The levels of visibility to be provided are considered to be acceptable having regard to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of traffic using the access.

- 5.24 In terms of parking provision, the rear parking area provides space for the parking of at least 10 cars, with the overflow parking area providing additional spaces (circa 15) for when demand arises from additional visitors to the site. The adopted car parking standards require the provision of one space per 20 square metres of gross retail floorspace up to 1000 square metres. The gross retail floor area of the development will extend to some 114 square metres, which gives rise to a need for 6 parking spaces.
- 5.25 The submitted proposal demonstrates that adequate parking to meet the adopted parking standards can be provided on site, and therefore no severe residual impacts to highway safety will arise as a consequence of the development. The submitted proposal is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal entails the reuse of an existing building that is of a permanent and substantial construction, along with the change of use of the adjacent land and neither element will give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The proposal also entails the alteration of a building that will not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The proposal therefore amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt.
- The proposal represents diversification of the agricultural holding and will support the creation of new start-up businesses within the District and generate additional employment.
- The proposal will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- The proposal is acceptable from a highway safety perspective and provides sufficient parking to meet the needs of the proposed retail use.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with policies SS1, SS10, E1, TCR3, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.