

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0589
Valid 07/09/2021

SPRINGFIELD FARM
CONSALL LANE
WETLEY ROCKS

CHANGE OF USE OF
FARMHOUSE ANNEXE,
STABLES AND BARN INTO A
4-BEDROOM DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES:

- Whether or not the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- The principle of the development
- 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 site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The site lies within the Green Belt a short distance to the south-west of Consall village. It comprises of a small holding farm of about 6 acres in total which is located on Consall Lane off the A522 (Leek Road). As existing there is a farmhouse, as well as attached barns to the existing dwelling, the land is surrounded by open land and fields.

PROPOSAL:

This is a full planning application for the conversion of a barn into a residential dwelling. The existing farmhouse is attached to the barns. One of the buildings was approved to be converted into an annex to the existing dwelling via a 1998 approval. The reason for this new full planning application is to convert the existing unused barns and create a separate 4-bed dwelling for immediate family to live in.

The proposed development will refurbish the existing buildings whilst ensuring that the external appearance is restored to its original condition. Amended plans have been submitted omitting proposed dormer windows. The only other change is alterations to openings.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES:

Local Plan (Adopted September 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing
DC1 Design Considerations

NE1 Biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework – Revised July 2021

- Section 12 (Design)
- Section 13 (Green Belts)
- Section 15 (Natural Environment)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/1988/0452 – Conversion of park of farm building to extra living accommodation – PERCON.

SMD/1998/0664 – Change of use/ conversion of farm building to form living accommodation - PERCON.

CONSULTATIONS:

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 02/11/2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 02/11/2021
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No comments have been received.

Town / Parish Comments

No objections.

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

Environmental Health

Potential Areas of Environmental Concern

1. Construction Impacts (condition)
2. Land contamination (condition)
3. Lighting Impacts (condition)
4. Drainage (Building Regulations)
5. Noise transfer between units (Building regulations)

General Comments

- Asbestos: A Demolition or refurbishment asbestos survey and risk assessment should be carried out prior to the demolition/renovation of the existing buildings. The enforcing authority for this type of work is the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and it is recommended that you contact them directly to discuss their requirements: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>
- Contamination: The site has historically been used as an out building / hardstanding and may have some associated contamination (chemicals / asbestos from old buildings). A full contamination assessment would appear to onerous, however, it would be advisable that all soft landscaped / garden areas are tested for contaminants (including Asbestos screen) to ensure suitability of use areas conditions are recommended.

If permission is granted then subject to conditions.

Severn Trent Water

No drainage proposals for the application and therefore no comment has been received.

Staffs Wildlife Trust

No objection – subject to consideration of 3 tests for bat impacts and subject to conditions.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development and impact on the Green Belt

Policy SS10 states that other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

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 includes new residential development in accordance with Policy H1

Policy SS10 (6) states the importance to maintain the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands. Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

Policy H1(5) allows for:

(d) The conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets

Policy H1 (6) states When development is located in the Green Belt, national Green Belt Policy will apply.

Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The relevant criteria for this application is:

- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

The submitted application is supported by a structural appraisal report which concludes:

“There is movement visible within the existing front wall, however this is historical and no longer ongoing, being due to under-design in the rafters and ridge support. The suggested repairs within the as outlined in the paragraphs of the structural appraisal can be carried out without wholesale demolition taking place. As such we are confident that the conversion from agricultural use to residential use is perfectly feasible”.

This is a full planning application for a change of use for a farmhouse annexe, stables and barn into a 4-bedroom dwelling. The proposal would comply with Policy SS10 as the buildings remain permanent and substantial (in accordance with the Green Belt tests) and also remain physically, architecturally and in character terms worthy, of being converted into dwellings (meeting the tests in Policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan.

The proposed development is not extending any of the existing buildings and therefore there is not an increase in floor space and the proposed works are considered acceptable. The proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the green belt over and above what is already existing on site.

Impact on character and appearance of the area

Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy refers to design considerations. It states that new development should be well designed to reinforce local distinctiveness and complement the special character and heritage of the area. Development should be of high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area.

Paragraphs 126 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) state that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, and that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

The size of the proposed residential curtilage which would be divided between the existing and proposed dwellings is the same as the existing curtilage for the

farmhouse and all of this is contained within existing boundaries of the complex of farm buildings and would not encroach into open fields. The proposed block plan illustrates the boundary between the existing farmhouse and that of the new dwelling, separating parking areas and amenity spaces. There is one existing access which will be shared for both dwellings. A landscaping scheme and boundary treatment will be implemented as part of a new planning condition. The proposed curtilage would therefore not harm the character and appearance of the area although it would be prudent to add a condition to define the extent of the curtilage.

The proposed materials are to match those of the existing building and therefore are considered acceptable. The amendments to fenestration and the addition of rooflights are not considered to raise any design concerns. Standard barn conversion conditions relating to windows, doors, materials, rooflights etc are recommended

Overall, there are no design concerns.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

The use as two dwellings rather than one dwelling would lead to no impact on the residential amenities as there are no immediate neighbours within the vicinity other than those two dwellings.

Given the plot size and location of the development, the proposed extension would not adversely impact neighbouring properties.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The existing application site is proposed to have two dwellings rather than one.

The size, shape and layout of a property has a direct effect on how comfortable it is to live in. Internal layout is important as it dictates how the space in a dwelling is used and makes rooms attractive and usable. The Government has produced the Nationally Described Space Standard. For a three-bedroom property the total floor space is to be 84m² and for a four-bedroom property the floor space should be 97m². The plans provided do not indicate any measurements stating the floor area, however the dwellings meet the minimum size for dwellings that are large enough to live comfortably in.

The amenity space for future occupiers should also be considered. The availability, accessibility, utility and size of outdoor amenity space or gardens has an impact on the living conditions of a property. The new separate dwelling which is proposed through the change of use of the farmhouse annexe, stables and barn will have sufficient outdoor amenity space to the rear of the dwelling and then also addition space to the side, there may be less privacy to the side, however this can still be used. The main farmhouse has a large plot of amenity space to the rear of the dwelling which is considered acceptable.

Due to the layout of the main farmhouse and the new proposed dwelling being in an L-shaped layout, there are no privacy or overlooking concerns from any windows to the other property.

The only extension proposed are dormer windows at first floor level and will not have an impact on any loss of daylight.

Impact on Highway Safety and Parking

Although the proposal would result in two dwellings (one three-bedroom dwelling and one four-bedroom dwelling), as there is ample car parking in the yard there are no highway safety concerns.

Impact on Ecological Value of the Site

The current value of the site is moderate in terms of bat presence in buildings B1 and B3 and low in B2. Policy NE1 would require their protection from development and mitigation measures put in place as part of the development. A Net Biodiversity Gain from the development is also expected in the policy for all development. A Bat Method Statement with measures to remove roosts and protect bats during the demolition and conversion process has been approved by Staffs Wildlife Trust (SWT). Mitigation involves working within a timeframe that avoids bats and under supervision from an ecologist to check crevices for bats before potential roost areas are impacted. Bat boxes and bat access tiles are proposed and shown within the report. These appear suitable. Where possible, an integrated bat box should also be provided to replace potential roosting spaces in wall cracks. These measures were ultimately approved by SWT as appropriate mitigation measures, whilst they also considered that a Net Biodiversity Gain can be achieved via soft landscaping scheme required under the planning condition.

The local planning authority must also consider if a bat licence is likely to be issued by Natural England. Three tests need to be passed in order to gain a bat licence. These areas follow:

1. the activity (i.e. the proposed development) must be for a certain purpose – for example, for scientific research or in the case of development, ‘preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment ‘
2. there must be no satisfactory alternative that will cause less harm to the species
3. the activity must not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

The SWA state in the response that they consider test 3 would satisfy. Due to the mitigation measures proposed, Test 3 would be passed. A government update on 22nd December 2022 states that Reasoned Statements to demonstrate that Test 1 and Test 2 can be passed are needed to accompany a Bat Protection Licence but that there are exceptions to this requirement. There is no requirement to submit Reasoned Statements to gain a Bat Protection Licence for this development. Therefore the Council does not need to consider if the proposal would pass the three tests. I therefore consider that as appropriate protection and mitigation measures

have been approved by SWT that the proposal would therefore comply with Policy NE1.

There would no significant harm to the ecological value of the site or surrounding area with the safeguards and appropriate conditions put in place.

Other Matters

It is considered appropriate to remove permitted development rights (Class A,B,C,D,E,F,G and H) relating to the two new dwellings in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the original farmhouse and new attached dwelling.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The principle of the proposed change of use is acceptable. The proposed change of use of the barns to residential do not propose and design concerns, no concerns with regard to impact on neighbouring amenity or future occupiers, there are no ecological concerns or any highway safety or parking concerns. The proposal therefore complies with the Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the NPPF and therefore a full planning permission for the complete conversion scheme can be granted.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Nicole Quinn

Recommendation Date: 25/08/2023

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council