

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0117
Valid 02/03/2023

RAKEWAY FARM
RAKEWAY ROAD
CHEADLE

**CONVERSION, EXTENSION,
AND ALTERATION OF
FORMER AGRICULTURAL
BUILDINGS TO FORM 1NO.
DWELLINGHOUSE,
EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS
AND EXTENSION TO
EXISTING FARMHOUSE, AND
THE FORMATION OF NEW
VEHICULAR ACCESS**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development.
The impact on the character and appearance of the area.
The impact on residential amenity.
The impact on the ecological value of the site.
The impact on highway safety.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is in the countryside (but is not in the Green Belt) a short distance to the south-east of the development boundary of Cheadle and lies on the east side of Rakeway Lane, a "C" classified main road and which provides the access to the site which comprises a vacant traditional redbrick Victorian farmhouse and traditional red brick barns to the south of it. The farm now currently appears to be redundant. Further south of the brick buildings and adjacent to the road is a more modern metal sheeted farm storage building. The site is surrounded by open land including to the other side of the road to the west. The field to the north and to the rear (east) and south are within the same ownership as the applicant. The agricultural uses of the farm and land appear to have ceased. The land rises gradually towards the south-east.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the restoration of the farmhouse to be continued to be used as a dwelling and also the conversion of the two smaller brick and tile barns immediately to the side of the house into a two-storey 3-bed dwelling. The barns are placed perpendicular to one another in an "L" shape and a small single-storey link extension would be placed with matching bricks and tiles to link the two buildings. The proposed ground floor floorspace would be interconnected whereas the first floors of each barn would remain separate with separate staircases. One

barn would have a first floor master ensuite bedroom and the other barn would have the other two bedrooms. A modern lean-to at the front would be removed. The existing openings of the barns would be re-used and there would only be one new window in the existing buildings but also a number of rooflights.

The farmhouse would be refurbished and modernised to form a 3-bed house. There is another barn attached to the back of the house in the form of a brick and tile rear outrigger which would also be converted into further rooms for the house and a number of new windows would be placed on the north elevation of this barn projection. A lean-to at the back of the outrigger would be replaced by a larger single-storey extension with matching brick and tiles to provide a utility room. The front porch (facing north) would be removed and new entrance would be created in a single-storey projection on the south side with the new front door facing the road. All new windows would have timber frames.

The existing access would be re-used and improved. This would involve the removal of hedges either side to create visibility splays and a short section of hedge would be replaced behind the splay on the south side of the access. To the north a new driveway would be formed, looping northwards parallel with the road and in front of the farmhouse to a parking area for two cars (and turning head) to the north side of the farmhouse. The remaining garden areas for the farmhouse would be retained and new garden areas for the converted barn formed to the rear (east) and south side of the barns on enclosed yard areas. An area to the front of the barn and to the side of the farmhouse would be used for the parking of two cars for the barn conversion.

The original plans proposed a separate new access off a proposed new cul-de-sac in the field to the north (which formed part of a separate concurrent application for five new dwellings). There was going to be a separate drive off the new proposed cul-de-sac residential road over open land to the farm buildings. This has been removed from the drawings in favour of the improvement of the current access and the deletion of the new access road and drive to the north. The original plans also showed a curtilage extension for the farmhouse to the rear of the building into open fields with boundaries marked by fences. This has also been removed from the final amended plans.

The application includes a Planning Statement, Structural Survey Report, Preliminary Ecological Survey Report and Bat and Bird Survey Report.

On 6.11.23 amended elevation and layout plans of the barn conversion showing a redesign of the link extension which has been changed to a more simple lean-to against one of the gable ends as often seen on traditional brick barns, in place of the more complicated modern domestic looking link structure.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (Adopted Sep 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing

DC1 Design Considerations.
DC2 The Historic Environment
NE1 Biodiversity
T1 Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design), 15 (Natural Environment) and 16 (The Historic Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2023/0116: Concurrent application for five new dwellings in the field to the north. Refused.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 13.4.23
Neighbour consultation period ends: 13.4.23
Press Advert: N/A.

Public Comments

Letters were received from one nearby residential property objecting to the plans on the basis of harm to the heritage value of the buildings and the courtyard but also objecting to the new access and road which formed part of the original plans, on the grounds of highway safety impact.

Councillor Haines also objected to the original plans, stating the following:

“The existing buildings consist of a historic farmstead and conversion to dwelling houses has the potential to negatively impact the visual impact of the rural setting. The applicant has not submitted any details about the impact of the proposed development on the historical heritage of the farmstead. The economical benefits of the development do not outweigh the negative aspects as the application currently stands.

The proposed driveway also would result in the destruction of a historic well and removal of established hedgerow. The existing entrance from Rakeway road should be re-developed rather than the current proposed driveway through the field to the east of the property.”

On 10th October 2023, the case officer was verbally informed by Cllr Haines that he would not be calling in the application for a Planning Applications Committee decision in the event of a recommendation of approval and that the application decision would therefore remain a delegated decision despite his objection providing the principle of the development was in accordance with the Local Plan.

In response to the amended plans which removed the new access in favour of the improvement of the existing access, further objections were received from the same property above, raising concerns about the impact on the trees to be retained due to the siting of the new driveway and path and also stating that it would be more environmentally friendly to keep the farm buildings in agricultural use rather than convert/renovate the buildings into dwellings.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection was raised to the original plans. In response to the amended plans, the Town Council stated the following:

No objections to the development of the existing house or outbuilding, however an observation is made to retain the existing access as the primary access to the development.

Local Highways Authority

In response to the original plans which included a new access, no objection was raised subject to conditions and the following was stated:

“The site of the new access will improve visibility for drivers and therefore considered a betterment. The existing access will become redundant and will require reinstatement.”

In response to the amended plans which removed the new access in favour of the improvement of the existing farm access, no objection was raised subject to conditions which require the provision of visibility splays on both sides of the access, the provision of parking and turning areas before the development is occupied, in accordance with the amended drawings and the surfacing of the first 5m of the access back from the carriageway edge with a bound material.

Environmental Health

In response to both the original and amended plans no objection was raised subject to standard conditions normally applied to the residential conversions of farm buildings but also with a condition requiring noise insulation measures for the new dwellings. The section commented as follows:

- *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 agricultural 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.*

- *Noise: The proposed dwellings will be adjacent to a working farm. There is no information provided regarding the noise environment for the development site. We would recommend a site specific noise assessment and sound insulation scheme is submitted prior to development commencing in order that appropriate sound insulation is used to mitigate farm noise. See attached condition. If the proposed dwelling is remaining under farm ownership then this condition might be placed as an advisory.*

Conservation Officer

The original "interim" comments were as follows:

Rakeway Farm is not a listed building, though regarded as having a level of significance noted by the Heritage Gateway as a Monument. Monument UID: MST 21346. HER No: 57235.

Type: Monument.

Summary:

An isolated farmstead laid out around a regular, three sided courtyard with detached farmhouse and 18th 19th additional detached outbuildings. The farmstead was extant by at least the late or early century and appeared to survive largely unaltered.

Grid reference: SK 02154222.

Map Sheet: SK 04SW.

Parish: Cheadle, Staffordshire Moorlands District.

Monument Type:

Farmstead. (Established Georgian to industrial – 1775 AD? To 1834AD (pre)).

Regular Courtyard L Plan. (Established, Georgian to Industrial – 1775 AD? To 1834 AD (pre)).

Full description:

An isolated farmstead laid out around a regular three sided courtyard with main L plan range, additional detached outbuildings and farmhouse set gable-end on to the yard. (HP, 25 Mar 2014). The 19th farmstead is certainly depicted on the earlier century 1" Ordnance Survey mapping (circa 1830s) and may also be noted on William Yates map of 1775. (SB, 10 Apr 2019). The farmstead is still extant. (SB 10 Apr 2019).

In light of this, I am not confident in the proposal as it currently stands. This information noted above is missing from the application. There doesn't appear to be proposed floor plans included, only drawings denoting room sizes in 02884/GF Ground Floor Plans and 02884/FF First Floor Plans and drawings regarding the outbuildings.

The Design and Access statement provides little clarity on existing historic fabric or any details regarding the interior and details of 'refurbishment'. This building has evidently remained marginally untouched for a period of time and I do not believe the

supporting documents fully acknowledge the structure as a well survived example of a historic vernacular farmstead.

To conclude; I have no issue in principle with refurbishment/reuse/restoration. However, to be able to paint a more thorough picture of the works and to provide a more sound response I will require a visit to site.

Following the site visit, the following comments were made:

The farmhouse at Rakeway farm is generally in good condition, though barns and former agricultural storage are in an expected deteriorated state. The main farmhouse is of an unusual orientation with no obvious frontage or approach, such a thing is typically seen for example through symmetrical fenestration or obvious entrances. This further adds to its vernacular charm and significance. Access was gained around the property and barns. It appears very little interior features remain, fireplace surrounds appear modern though chimney breast and flue placement in the floorplan are original. Original flooring materials - Quarry tiles in situ at ground floor, possibly laid straight to earth.

Farmhouse roofs and chimneys appear in good condition, lintels, cills and some guttering remain. No decorative bargeboards are seen, there are only basic fascias possibly added at a later date.

Fenestration is of a simple scale and size, no real intricacies or decoration to note. At the barns there is an expected mix of modern materials. It was seen on site large quantities of spare clay roof tiles were stacked up against some walls. Peg holes evident in the pattern of the lip demonstrative of a historic build date, possibly related to the site. Confident if so these can be retained or salvaged for patch repairs if relevant.

The elevations of the barns are basic, some timber shutters and doors remain in the first floors. Timber shutters in slightly better condition to doors. Rhombus brick patterns with alternating holes remain in some elevations, the small ones decorative though larger ones are often demonstrative of small or basic dovecotes or bird entries. One rhombus appears blocked up altogether with cement but still legible.

At the south west elevation of the barns (facing Rakeway Road) a set of stone steps to the first floor of the one barn remains, it was seen a top piece of the steps contains a benchmark masonry symbol.

Evidence of Swifts and or Swallows nesting in the barns was seen on site.

See drwg ref: PL(0)04 Elevations as proposed, there is only a pair of skylights proposed for the south east elevation (the end of this part of the barn) their unit sizes match. As above it is noted there is no clear frontage to the farmhouse but I am content there is not an excessive use of skylights across the farmhouse roofs as this would be quite an alien feature.

On the same drawing, elevation facing Rakeway Road (south west) looks to keep

the ground floor bay window (on site is marginally concealed by weeds) with a new window above paired with matching lintels and cills. I am content with this and believe it adds some cohesion. A door is proposed to the right of this on the one storey outrigger-like portion, this too adds some cohesion to this elevation. No issue with these. Then at the first storey to the left the small traditional window is retained.

At south east elevation, the fenestration appears relatively unchanged. Two doorways are altered to form matching windows, other glazing is altered within existing reveals to obscured glass. The small outrigger-like portion with M-shaped roof and interesting original chimney is retained (this the location of new door noted above at south-west elevation). I am content with this, the existing sees what is essentially quite an oversized chimney for this small outrigger however it forms part of the site's character and rural oddities. Pleased to see its retention.

At north west elevation, what is presumed was used as the main elevation, the proposal sees the retention of these four windows with respective lintels and cills. Proposed is the removal of the modern porch and the alteration of this doorway to a window to match remainder. No issue with this.

Further across this elevation at the barn, new timber window units are proposed and a new utility extension to replace the very small (what is left of) lean-to. See drwg ref: PL(0)02 Elevations as proposed. South west elevation shows retention of stone steps (top pieces with benchmark), remainder of stone gatepost and lintels. Doorway above stone steps to remain, remainder of the barn sees new window and door configuration. Wriggly-tin lean-to canopy removed. No issues.

East elevation sees retention of features including rhombus brickwork, if closed off - typically in Moorlands barns the alternating bricks are Staff Blues. Making for a red and blue brick decorative rhombus.

South east elevation and north east elevation roofs both see two differing sizes of rooflights. I am not sure the combination of both a slim and wider unit is quite right. Conservation rooflights are fairly successful and for barns of this size I would suggest perhaps matching size units. If we could have some sizes of these units we can decipher which would suit the small roofscapes best.

A query has been raised in regard to potential evidence of a Well impacting the proposed vehicular access. I have since discovered 1888 OS Maps show Rakeway Farm and respective barns a short way south from a body of water on Moss Lane. Later, a map dated 1900 denotes a Well, 'W' at the suspected location, with 'P' Pump.

To conclude; overall I am content with the proposal and don't foresee any heritage issues arising from the application. Further investigation into the suspected Well is advised. Would like to invite conditions regarding the following:

-Door and window joinery types including colour code and glazing type.

-Conservation rooflight details and unit sizes TBC.

-Retention of large drystone wall at south west elevation (facing Rakeway Road).

-Material palette and details regarding new utility extension/link structure.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

SUMMARY – *Objection/ Holding objection -further information required.*

Required prior to determination:

- 1. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal covering the application site, impacts to habitats and any protected/ priority species on/ near to the site*
- 2. Outline drainage plan*

Secure via condition should approval be granted:

- 3. Method statement for bat precautions*
- 4. Bird nesting mitigation plan*
- 5. Lighting plan*
- 6. Landscaping plan to provide a net gain for habitats.*

NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK

Local priority habitats and wildlife corridors include traditional orchards, native hedges, ancient woodland and unimproved neutral grassland. The proposals should seek to strengthen such habitats within the design.

HABITATS

Habitat Survey

The PEA Report - August 2022 by Evolution Ecology does not apply to the site but to the adjacent application for 5 houses. The application site has not been covered other than the roadside hedgerow which will be impacted by the new access. A survey is required to take account of the grassland and hedgerows within the site that will be altered.

The roadside hedge is species-rich and a section will be lost. A section of the hedge to the north will also be lost to the access road. No mitigation is proposed- ideally the hedge shrubs would be translocated to form a new hedge feature.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 paragraph 5 in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Adopted September 2020, expects that 'all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative'

The proposal could result in a net loss, without hedgerow replacement and some habitat enhancement as part of landscaping.

In order to maximise wildlife value of landscaping, the following should be considered: Short flowery lawn mix for amenity grassland, climbers, fruit trees, new native hedges on boundaries, enhance existing hedges with trees/ additional

species, re-seeding disturbed areas with wildflower meadow mix, and creating wetland features for surface and treated water discharges.

Drainage

No surface water drainage scheme has been provided. A well-designed, easily managed and resilient SuDS scheme is likely to influence layout and landscaping design, so needs to be incorporated into the design at this stage.

We advocate an integrated approach that maintains existing site hydrology, makes the best use of water in the landscape and maximises biodiversity value. Permeable surfaces as well as ditches and ponds would be suitable here, as well as water butts on all buildings.

An outline of location/type of surface and foul drainage is required.

SPECIES

Bats and Birds

The Bat and Bird Presence Absence Survey Report - August 2022 by Evolution Ecology found that Brown long-eared and Common Pipistrelle bats are roosting in the south elevation of the breezeblock wall (hollow) inside the modern prefabricated barn which is outside the development boundary and will not be developed. No bats were seen emerging from the other buildings.

While no direct impact would occur to known bat roosts, all the buildings have high bat potential and so precautions should be employed during work to the farmhouse and barns – a method statement should be secured via condition.

Swallows and wrens were nesting in some of the buildings to be re-developed and replacement nesting features are required- the recommendations within the report.

A lighting plan will be required as a condition.

Tree Officer

Summary: no objection – including to anticipated likely tree removal – subject to conditions including for a landscaping scheme to provide significant landscape and biodiversity enhancements beyond one for one replacement and for the retention of all other trees and hedges on site not requiring removal in order to accommodate the proposed development.

The application does not appear to include a tree survey/arboricultural impact assessment report, although there is a significant group of trees at the site frontage to the south-west of the existing farmhouse; however, I appreciate that as submitted the application originally proposed a new access off Rakeway Road c.55m north-west of the existing farm gateway with a new a drive looping around to the rear of the site and these trees would not have been affected at all by such arrangements and hence at that stage a tree report would arguably have been unnecessary.

The proposed alterations and extension to the existing farmhouse would not themselves directly affect existing trees/hedges. There is a reasonable need anyway to consider some pruning work to a mature Walnut tree in the garden, situated approx. 5m from the south-west corner of the dwelling due to direct encroachment/contact with the roof, but this applies irrespective of any development

proposals. In addition, the Walnut is not presently in good condition, showing extensive foliage browning/shrivelling/dieback apparently due to Leaf Blotch. To a certain extent this may be only an aesthetic problem, and may be notably bad this year due to the wet summer providing optimal climatic conditions for the fungal disease to prosper, but repeated and/or heavy infection may also cause shoot death in addition to partial defoliation and lead to more significant effect on tree health and longer term decline in overall condition.

The proposed alterations/extension/conversion of the existing barns would not themselves directly affect existing trees/hedges.

The amended access arrangements as now set out on Drg. No. 01248/PL(0)05 Rev E would take a new drive off the existing farmyard access to serve the existing farmhouse, routed across the front of the dwelling and through the group of trees to the parking/turning area. Whilst in theory a new drive to a single dwelling could be constructed over tree root systems using no-dig cellular confinement system specification, in this instance given extremely close proximity of the new drive to tree stem positions and existing localised small-scale changes in ground levels in the current overgrown garden where the trees are situated, such special measures drive construction specification would be impractical, ultimately ineffective and therefore inappropriate (notwithstanding the “existing trees retained” annotation on the site plan). Realistically the proposed access arrangements would be anticipated to require the loss of the group of trees (including the Walnut), or have significant adverse impact on their condition such that their removal became inevitable anyway within a short period of time. That said, although the group forms a significant combined feature on the site frontage, in detail it comprises: the Walnut in poor condition (this year at least); a mature Lawson Cypress substantially topped beneath the overhead wires and consequently of little/no amenity value; 2 further mature Lawson Cypress both appearing somewhat moribund with sparse straggly foliage and anyway somewhat out of keeping in the rural area; and an early-mature Manchurian Cherry which would be of no great significance if retained on its own.

It is therefore considered that it would not be appropriate to raise objection to the application on the grounds of the in practice likely loss of this group of trees, and in the event that the application is approved it would be better in the longer term, and important, to secure by condition a suitable mitigatory planting scheme.

It is noted that the access improvement would require the removal of a short (c.8m) stretch of existing frontage hedgerow immediately to the south-east of the existing farmyard gateway off Rakeway Road, which given its limited extent, and its relationship with the farm access/buildings would be of relatively little wider adverse impact and readily replaced behind the visibility splay as indicated on the plan.

It is also noted that to achieve the required highway visibility to the north-west of the access position would necessitate complete removal of the existing roadside hedge to the front garden of the farmhouse (c.30m of principally non-native hedge – Snowberry), together with complete removal of the existing roadside field hedgerow between Rakeway Farm and Windy End (c.63m of mixed native species hedgerow). Such an extent of hedgerow being removed could have quite a marked immediate impact on local landscape character especially in this rural area outside the Cheadle

town development boundary and just beyond the last straggle of semi-rural ribbon development, although it is noted that the site plan again indicates planting a replacement hedge behind the required visibility splay. The existing field hedge has evidently been kept close trimmed at c.1.5m above road level (although seemingly not for the last year or two – no doubt related to the cessation of occupation of Rakeway Farm) and contains no hedgerow trees, so on that basis a newly planted hedge might be expected to achieve a similar amount of structural visual presence after around 5 – 10 years. However, the existing hedgerow is long-established and relatively species-rich; for comparison I have given it an initial cursory (not fully detailed) inspection against only the landscape-related assessment criteria of the Hedgerows Regulations (not a requirement in the context of development proposals, and removal would anyway be authorised in the event that full planning permission is granted, but nonetheless informative) and in this context it is likely that the hedgerow would not, quite, qualify as “Important” under the landscape criteria – although potentially still could do under other Hedgerow Regs criteria such as historical/archaeological/ecological. Whilst a replacement hedgerow set back behind a wide new grass verge to the highway would produce a different, more open character to this stretch of Rakeway Road, it would be difficult to argue this in itself would be significantly out of keeping given the similar existing situation along the south side of the road directly opposite the application site.

Overall it may be difficult to sustain objection and refusal of this application solely on the grounds of the initial loss (with subsequent full replacement) of the existing highway frontage hedgerow to the site including visibility splay hedgerow removal. However, in the short to medium term there would be some notable visual impact arising from such removal, and in addition to actual replacement the development, if approved, should make provision for significant landscape and biodiversity enhancement rather than simply replacement/mitigation, so opportunities to provide more than would be removed should be taken. An obvious first suggestion would be to also provide new mixed native species hedgerow to the boundaries of the rear gardens to the existing dwelling and barn conversion where they would abut open field landscape.

Severn Trent Water

No objection.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No issues regarding waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the countryside and Policy SS10, the strategy for the countryside aims to protect its character and appearance but whilst generally resisting new-build dwellings, it does allow for new dwellings via the conversion of appropriate rural buildings. Policy H1 requires such buildings to be physically, architecturally and in character terms, suitable for a residential conversion. The buildings comprising a traditional brick and tile Victorian farmhouse and an adjacent traditional typical brick barn from the same era would be classed as being architecturally and in character

terms suitable. A Structural Survey Report for both buildings was submitted. The farmhouse was of course designed as a farmhouse and a significant amount of refurbishment is needed to enable modernisation but is still physically capable of being continued for use as a residence. The report outlines some significant works required to convert the agricultural barn, actually two separate barns joined at the corner, into a single dwelling. Despite the deteriorated appearance of the barns, the report concludes that the barns are fairly robust apart from the single-storey lean-to but this would be removed (along with a “flimsy” front canopy lean-to structure) with the walls becoming a garden enclosure. Approx 5% of the external wall would need to be rebuilt and some roof repairs are required but complete roof replacement is unnecessary. Most of the significant structural works would be internal and require a new first-floor and new ground floor surfacing materials along with the required insulation works, but the barns are in general, physically stable and capable of accommodating standard residential conversion works.

There is further weight in support of the proposal in that there is still currently a shortfall of dwellings in the District as a five year land supply cannot be demonstrated and therefore the proposal would at least make a small contribution to addressing housing need. The site is also in a fairly sustainable location as although it is in the countryside, it is 400m from the boundary of Cheadle and the town centre is just over 1km away and can be reached, along with public transport, via a lit footway along Rakeway Road which starts directly opposite the site. This helps to reduce the reliance on the car to reach workplaces, shops and services and help reduce emissions. Overall, the principle of the conversion of the buildings into two dwellings is therefore acceptable.

With regard to the impact on the rural character and appearance of the area, the farmhouse alterations would not harm its traditional farmhouse character and appearance with limited use of new rooflights and the small number of new windows in the elevations adding “cohesion” to the appearance of the building rather than appearing as alien features which harm its domestic farmhouse character. The conversion of the barns works with the existing openings with only one new small window on the rear (north-east) elevation which would not be visible from the road. A number of rooflights are added but these are small Conservation-type rooflights on the rear and south side elevations and which would not harm the character of the barns or detract from their form or appearance. Small extensions would be added to both the farmhouse and barns but these would be small single-storey extensions in the rear elevations where they would not be visible from the road and would have a brick and tile design. The traditional features of both buildings would be largely retained.

With regard to the works around the buildings, the plans have been amended to remove the new access and rear parking areas which harmfully encroached across open fields. Instead the existing access would be improved and adapted. This would involve the setting back but not the removal of the long frontage hedge to create visibility splays but this would not amount to significant harm to the street scene and there are other green verges along the road in front of hedgerows to the highway works would not be out of keeping. The amended plans also reduce the size of the proposed residential curtilages which no longer encroach into the open fields to the rear. The new driveway and parking bays in front of the farmhouse would lead to the

loss of large trees, visible from the road, which is unfortunate. However, the trees have been assessed by the Council's Trees and Landscape Officer as being of limited worth and quality and without a significant further lifespan. In any case, because the new drive and proposed parking spaces would be within the residential curtilage of the farmhouse, these are works that could be undertaken under permitted development at any time without requiring planning permission (along with any required tree removal). There is plenty of scope for replacement planting via a robust new tree planting and landscaping scheme and a condition requiring this would be appropriate. The parking area for the barn dwelling would utilise part of the existing yard and the footprint of the untidy discordance front lean-to canopy attached to the north wing of the barn.

Overall, with the safeguard of conditions which require amongst other things further details of the joinery and rooflights, the traditional character and appearance of the buildings would be retained and the proposal as amended would not harm the character and appearance of the area.

With regard to residential amenity, the nearest dwellings outside of the property would be a considerable distance of the site and there would be no overlooking or loss of privacy concerns affecting existing residents. With regard to the future residents of the farmhouse and barns, the farmhouse windows facing the barns would be secondary windows only and obscured glazing can be inserted into those by way of a planning condition. Both new dwellings would meet the governments Nationally Described Space Standards and the new occupants would therefore have acceptable living conditions. The garden areas allocated for each dwelling are also acceptable in terms of size and layout. Overall, the proposal would not lead to any residential amenity harms.

With regard to the ecological value of the site, the Holding Objection from Staffs Wildlife Trust is noted. However, this was in response to the original plans which showed a new access road and considerable new hard-standings in the neighbouring fields. SWT did concur that the only bats present were in the modern barn to the south of the brick buildings and this building can be retained. Swallows and wrens were found in the brick barns but no harm would result from the scheme providing replacement nesting features are installed as recommended in the Ecology Reports submitted and this can be achieved by way of a planning condition. SWT also state that hedges should be replaced and the amended plans show this. The objection also appears to be on the basis that a Net Biodiversity Gain has not been demonstrated. However, whilst Policy NE1 states that this should be provided "where possible", there is no obligatory policy requirement for this in such development proposals as yet and the application cannot be refused on this basis. Furthermore, there is easy potential for the ecology value of the site to at least be enhanced via new tree and hedge planting, the latter of which could be undertaken along the proposed curtilage boundaries instead of post and rail fencing, as appropriate to rural area. A condition can be added requiring this. Drainage could make use of the existing farmhouse infrastructure but a condition can be added requiring details of proposed surface water and foul drainage. Overall, despite the objection, there would be no harm to protected species as a result of the proposal and with the safeguard of conditions and the ecological value of the area can be protected and enhanced via new planting and appropriate drainage.

Finally with regard to highway safety, an improved existing access to serve the development is acceptable to the local highways authority. The recommended visibility splays required to allow safe entry and exit for the predicted increase in vehicular movements are achievable within the confines of the property and can be created by the setting back of the existing hedgerows. The design of the proposed parking and turning areas for both dwellings are also acceptable to allow cars to enter onto the road in forward gear. The parking provision of two spaces per dwelling is in line with the Council parking standards for 3-bed dwellings but there are also additional yard areas for any excess parking where needed. The revised access and the impact on highway safety are acceptable.

With regard to the letters received from the local community, the points of concern mainly relate to the impact on the heritage value of the buildings and rural setting and also the original proposed new access across the fields. These matters have been addressed in the report above. The historic well referred to is in the field to the north of the farmstead which was the subject of a separate application for five dwellings and an access road which passed close to the well. This application has been refused.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

The principle of the proposal is acceptable and conforms with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposal as amended and with the safeguard of conditions would also not lead to any significant harms to the character, appearance and heritage value of the buildings and would not lead to any overall visual or residential amenity harms or any other environmental harms such as those affecting the ecological value of the site. The new access is acceptable and would not be detrimental to highway safety due to the proposed access improvements. All aspects of the amended proposal comply with the Local Plan and NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 8.11.23

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council