

Planning Statement

Conversion of former agricultural building to from 1 no.
dwellinghouse and associated works
Catswall Farm, Huntley Road, Denford
For Mr. T. Boote

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Hewitt & Carr Services Ltd. has been instructed Mr. T. Boote to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany a planning application for the conversion of a former agricultural building at Rakeway Farm, Rakeway Road, Cheadle to form 1no. dwellinghouse.
- 1.2. As part of the application, it is proposed to reuse existing openings and insert new windows and doors, along with the insertion of 2no. flush fitting conservation rooflights and 2no. black steel flues. The application also proposes associated alterations to the exterior of the building to provide an area of amenity space and parking. Internal alterations are also proposed, as detailed within the Design & Access and Heritage Statement.
- 1.3. By way of background, the site benefits from an extant consent for the conversion of this building to form 2no. holiday lets under applications SMD/2015/0603 and SMD/2016/0790. Those consents have been implemented by virtue of the smaller building having been converted in accordance with the approved scheme, but the building the subject of this application remains untouched.
- 1.4. The proposed accommodation will comprise of a lounge, kitchen / dining room, utility, cloakroom and hallway at ground floor with stairs leading up to four bedrooms (one ensuite), bathroom and study at first floor. To the rear (north) of the building it is proposed to form an area of private amenity space enclosed by drystone walling at its western end, and by the existing boundary vegetation at its eastern end.
- 1.5. The adjacent garage building to the north is to be retained, with two poorer quality structures on site removed. Parking for 3no. vehicles will be provided adjacent to the existing garage building, with vehicular access to the site taken from the eastern vehicular access, as per the extant permission.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site is located within the rural area as defined by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and also lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The site lies to the east of Catswall Farmhouse and occupies a commanding roadside position to the north of the Huntley Road.
- 2.2. The existing building comprises a Grade II Listed Building in its own right, with the adjacent farmhouse to the west also benefitted from Grade II Listed status. The outbuildings to the north of the building are not listed, but by virtue of their age and use can be held to constitute curtilage listed buildings. A more modern, portal framed agricultural building lies approximately 56m to the north of the existing building.
- 2.3. The land to the east of the site comprises agricultural fields, which also wrap around to the north of the existing complex of buildings within which this building is located. Huntley Road encloses the southern site boundary beyond which lies further open fields.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act require that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Local Plan (Adopted 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, 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 emissions
- 3.3. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that the 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. The Council and its partners will achieve this through a number of actions, including:

- Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H1
- Allowing suitable development which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset in accordance with Policy DC2
- 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
- Limiting uses which generate a substantial number of regular trips in areas that are not well served by public transport
- Encouraging measures which protect and enhance the biodiversity, geological resources and heritage of the District.
- Exercising strict control over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4. Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that:

- All new dwellings should aim to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation by seeking to achieve adequate internal space for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space standard and delivered to meet accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis subject to considerations such as viability and design.
- All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings.

3.5. Policy H1 also confirms that in the other rural areas in the open countryside, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted:

- a) Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H3.
- b) A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.

- c) Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.
- 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.
- e) Proposals to redevelop previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.
- f) The subdivision of an existing residential dwelling provided it is not in an isolated location.

3.6. Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:

- 1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- 2. 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
- 3. create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design
- 4. incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development
- 5. protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution
- 6. promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate

7. provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use
8. require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links
9. ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed

3.7. Policy DC2 of the Local Plan relates to 'The Historic Environment' and states that:

1. The Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.
2. Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.
3. All applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.
4. Where development is likely to affect archaeology, both designated and undesignated, the Council requires the submission of a desk based assessment, and where appropriate, field surveys and trench evaluation by a qualified professional.
5. Where the loss of significance is unavoidable, recording should take place and this should be added to the Historic Environment Record as a minimum, held by Staffordshire County Council.
6. The Council will continue its proactive approach to heritage assets at risk and welcomes development proposals which would result in the sympathetic reuse of these assets in line with NPPF policy.
7. The Council will promote development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements, Archaeological Assessments, Characterisation Studies and Masterplanning.

3.8. 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

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out guidance in respect of various matters, including making beneficial reuse of existing buildings, securing high quality design, and safeguarding highway safety and heritage assets. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Design Guide SPD

- 4.2. The adopted Design Guide sets out guidance aimed at securing high quality design within the Staffordshire Moorlands and provides specific guidance pertinent to the reuse of rural buildings. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

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- 4.3. The above applications granted full planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion of two of the former agricultural buildings on the site to form 3no. holiday lets. The approved scheme has since been implemented by virtue of the smaller of the two buildings having been converted to a holiday let, and as a consequence the previous applications constitute a material fall back position that needs to be taken into consideration in the assessment of this application.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Green Belt

- 5.1. The Town and Country Planning Act requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The application proposes the conversion and alteration of a former agricultural building on the site to form 1 no. dwelling, along with associated external works.
- 5.2. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that the rural 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 through a number of actions, including exercising strict control over inappropriate development within the Green Belt, allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.
- 5.3. Paragraph 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes provision for the reuse of buildings that are of a permanent and substantial construction, provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The Structural Survey accompanying the application serves to demonstrate that the building is of a permanent and substantial construction, and its reuse as a dwellinghouse will not give rise to any material harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it.
- 5.4. In reaching this conclusion we draw attention to the extant consent for the conversion of this building to form 2 no. holiday lets, which granted permission for the formation of a large parking area immediately to the rear of the existing building. The provision of an area of private amenity space in this location will not give rise any greater impact to the openness of the Green Belt than that which has already been granted planning permission and consequently the proposal is held to meet the requirements of policy SS10 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Housing Delivery

- 5.5. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan seeks to restrict new build housing to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with policy H1. Policy H1 of the Local Plan confirms support for the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.
- 5.6. The accompanying Structural Survey demonstrates that the existing building is worthy in physical terms for conversion, concluding that the barn is in a reasonably good structural condition and that there is no structural reason why they should not be converted to habitable use. The vernacular appearance of the building, coupled with its status as a Grade II listed building furthermore renders the building wholly suitable and worthy in architectural and character terms for conversion.

The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

- 5.7. Support for the proposal is also afforded by paragraph 120 of the National Planning Policy Framework which confirms that planning decisions should:

“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained”.

- 5.8. The Local Authority's Housing Land Supply Statement (up to April 2022) confirms that the Local Authority is unable to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (3.71 years supply) and consequently there continues to be an unmet need for new housing within the District. The submitted proposal will make beneficial reuse of the existing building to deliver 1no. dwellinghouse in accordance with the objectives of paragraph 120 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Layout

- 5.9. The application adopts a sensitive approach to the conversion of the existing buildings, making beneficial reuse of the existing openings, and restricting the provision of new openings to the insertion of 2no. flush fitting rooflights. The stonework is to be repaired and repointed where necessary using lime mortar. A small area of rebuilding is likely to be required around the tie rod ends. The existing ventilation slots are to remain visible externally and blocked up internally. Two black metal flues are also proposed to serve the kitchen and log burner that are proposed.
- 5.10. Internally it is proposed that the modern stabling and concrete floors will be removed to allow for investigation of the foundations, underpinning and remedial damp proofing. A new solid floor will then be constructed. A new first floor is also to be constructed, owing to the inadequate construction of the existing floor which has been subjected to rot and beetle attack. Its existing level will be unaltered. Repair and replacement of some roof timbers is also proposed. These proposed works will serve to preserve the agrarian appearance of the building and are not materially different to the alterations approved to the building under the extant permission on the site.
- 5.11. To the rear (north) of the building it is proposed to create an area of private amenity space for use by the occupiers of the new dwelling. Under the extant approval this was to be provided as car parking for the holiday lets. The amenity space is to be enclosed by dry stone walls to provide enclosure and privacy for future occupiers and will not have any materially greater impact on the character and appearance of the area than the extant permission.
- 5.12. Having regard to the considerations set out above it is concluded that the proposed development will not detract from the character and appearance of the existing building, nor the wider surrounding area, and as a consequence will

meets the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF and adopted Design Guide SPD.

Heritage Impact

- 5.13. The alterations to the fabric and setting of the building are assessed within the accompanying Heritage, Design & Access Statement. The alterations to the building itself are the same as those approved under the extant permission and therefore concluded to be acceptable. The proposed layout of the site will differ from that extant permission in order to provide amenity space for the occupiers of the dwelling. A sensitive approach to this has been undertaken, with traditional dry-stone walling utilised to enclose the amenity space, along with sympathetic landscaping to ensure that the development harmonises with its context.
- 5.14. Any impact to the setting of the building is considered to be clearly outweighed by the benefits of bringing this building into beneficial reuse. As the heritage statement concludes, in order to secure the survival of the building, it will require a degree of adaptation, and its approved use as holiday accommodation is not a viable proposition. A viable end use is required in order to fund the repair and future maintenance of the building.
- 5.15. The conversion of the building to a dwelling will breath life into the building and ensure it is safeguarded into the future. The public benefits of doing so will clearly outweigh any perceived harm to the setting of the building. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy DC2 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Residential Amenity

- 5.16. The nearest neighbour to the proposed dwelling is the existing farmhouse which lies to the immediate west of the site. The farmhouse has a ground floor window in its side elevation that faces towards the gable end of the building proposed for conversion, which is a secondary window to the kitchen. The proposed window in the gable end serving the first floor bedroom will not cause any unacceptable degree of overlooking or loss of privacy to that window, and as such the development will not have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. The inter-relationship between the two openings is furthermore no different to that between the extant permission and the farmhouse, which also showed that window serving a bedroom.
- 5.17. The proposed dwelling will be afforded an acceptable level of private amenity space and will have a gross internal floor area that will far exceed the required floorspace for a four bedroomed dwelling, as set out in the DCLG Technical Housing Standards. The proposed development will consequently provide an acceptable level of residential amenity for future occupiers of the dwelling and meets the requirements of policies H1 and DC1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

- 5.18. The wider Catswall Farm site is served by two vehicular access points off Huntley Road, one located in between the farmhouse and the application building, the

other being located at the eastern end of the building. The extant permission on the site showed the eastern access to be used to serve the approved holiday lets with the western access serving Catswall Farm.

- 5.19. The submitted proposal adopts the same access arrangements, with the new dwelling to be served via the eastern site access, with parking for three vehicles provided alongside the small garage building that lies to the north of the main building. The western vehicular access will continue to be used by occupiers of the farmhouse.
- 5.20. The geometry of the vehicular access, along with its associated visibility is not materially different to that of the extant permission, and the number of vehicles movements from the proposed dwelling will be commensurate with what could have been expected from the 2no. approved holiday lets. The proposed development will therefore not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety and meets the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:
- The building proposed for conversion is worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.
 - The design and layout of the development serves to safeguard the character and appearance of the existing building and the wider surrounding area.
 - The proposed development will not give rise to material harm to the significance of the building as a heritage asset, and any impact is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the building back into beneficial reuse.
 - The proposed development will not give rise to any issues in respect of residential amenity.
 - The proposed vehicular access will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety.
- 6.2. The submitted proposal consequently meets the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, T1, DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and policies set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.