

Dear Sir / Madam,

23-12: Prior Approval application for Barn Conversions at Shaw Farm, Alton

1.0 Description of the Site

- 1.1 The proposals are associated with the existing agricultural farmstead, Shaw Farm. The site is accessed via Cheadle Road, a 'B-road' which runs from East to West between Cheadle and Mayfield respectively. The site is located alongside the Peakstones Inn, between the hamlet of Threapwood and Gallows Green in Alton. The local authority is Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, referred to as SMDC hereafter.
- 1.2 Modern day Shaw Farm comprises a large, traditional Farmhouse and six agricultural barns and various smaller sheds / animal shelters. The farmstead and house are seen to exist in the 18th century and historic maps provide evidence of the traditional barns and farmhouse in 1879.
- 1.3 Most of the Barns are traditional in construction method. Often using Coursed Stone Walls. The Roofs are mainly Staffordshire Blue Plain Clay Tiles. The Barns can be described as follows:
 1. **Barn 1** – Two storeys, comprising Stone Walls predominantly and a Staffordshire Blue Roofing Tiles, Stone Parapets, and corbelled kneelers. King Post Trusses internally. To the front a modern steel Portal Frame structure also exists which uses Blockwork Walls to low level and Corrugated Panels to the upper / roof.
 2. **Barn 2** – Single storey, comprising Stone Walls with buttresses to front and rear. Staffordshire Blue Roofing Tiles with 'Crow Step Parapet' to one side. King Post Trusses internally. Barns 1 & 2 are joined by a curved rubble walled structure with 'Lean-to' roof and Barn 2 has a Flat Roofed Car Port to the North side which is also built of Stone rubble.
 3. **Barn 3** - Single storey, comprising Stone Walls predominantly with some use of Blockwork and Render to the Northern, angled section. Staffordshire Blue Roof Tiles.
 4. **Barn 4** – Two storeys, walls built in Concrete Block and Rendered at low level. The block has weathered to look reasonably attractive, and this provides a similar colour to the local stone. Staffordshire Blue Roof Tiles.
 5. **Barn 5** – Smaller, single storey Barn with two large vehicle sized openings. Attractive historic stone walls with a large central pier built from Red Brick with chamfered bricks used to the corners. Steeply pitched roof with Staffordshire Blue Tiles. King Post Trusses internally.
 6. **Barn 6** – Large, open-sided Dutch Barn, the walls comprise ten large square red brick columns / piers with stone plinths arranged in five bays. The roof uses five timber trusses, with two purlins to either pitch, and Staffordshire Blue roofing tiles.
- 1.4 Barns 1-4 are suitable for conversion using 'Prior Approval: Change of use - agriculture to dwellinghouses'.
- 1.5 Barn 5, whilst attractive and robust in construction, is too small to create a suitable detached dwelling (35m² Gross Internal Area). Barn 6 has no walls as such, only brick columns (circa 770-880mm square) with 3.7 - 4.6m between each column. This has not been incorporated into the proposals for conversion.

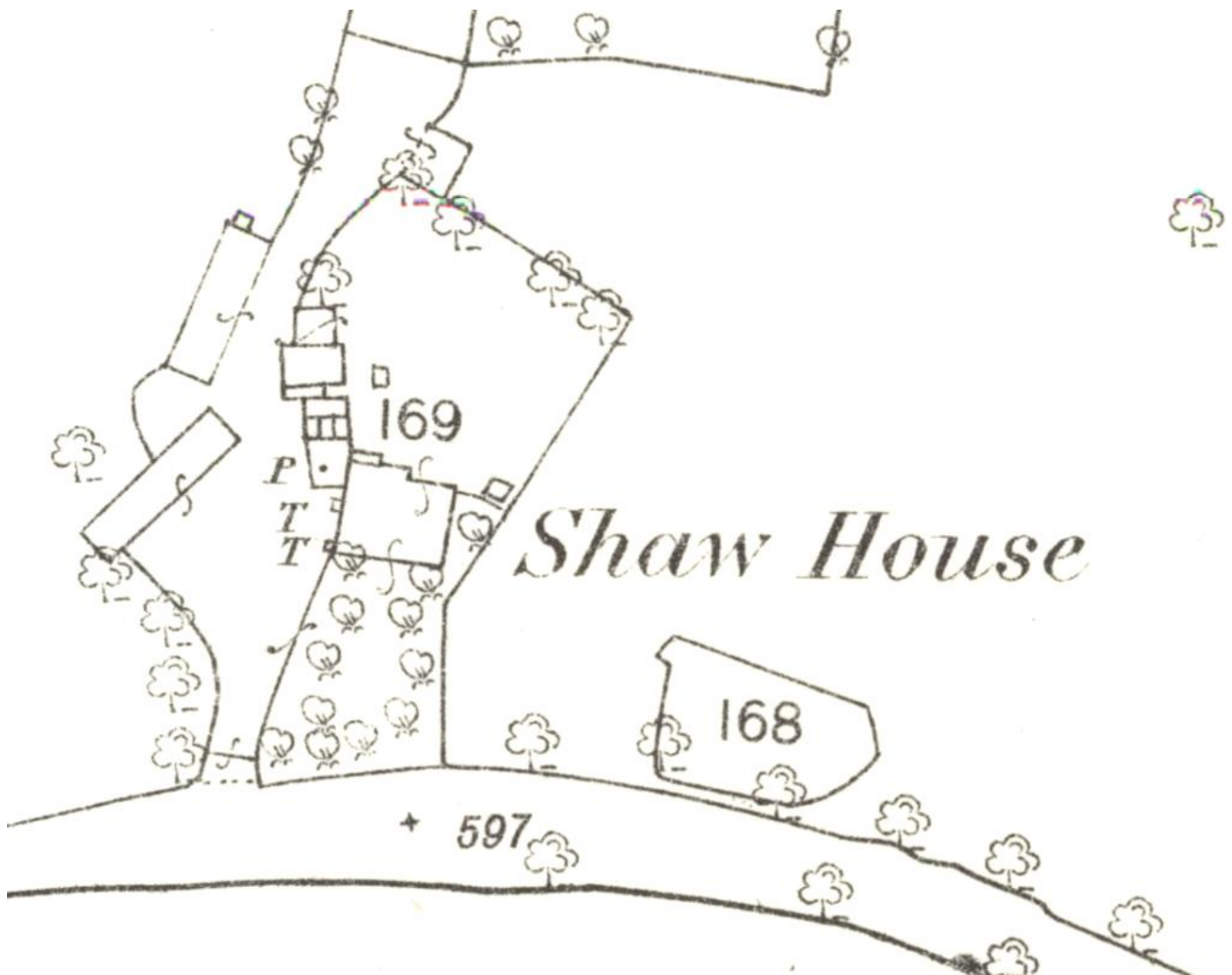


Figure 1: Photo extract from the 1879 OS Series Map records

- 1.6 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Part 3, covers 'Changes of Use'. Class Q covers 'barns and agricultural buildings to residential' use. To be eligible, the agricultural building must have been in a use solely for agricultural uses for at least the last 10 years. All Barns which are proposed to be converted (Barn 1-4), are present on the 'Millenium Map' series by MAPSERVE. As a result, it is certain that all the Barns qualify with Class Q GPDO.
- 1.7 The site is Rural, beyond the village of Alton. As such, the land is not 'Green Belt', it is Open Countryside. The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no nearby Listed Buildings.
- 1.8 To the North and West there is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ancient Woodland, but this designation is an adequate distance from the application site for it to not be a consideration. The site has no Protected Trees and there are no planning constraints imposed on the site when using the SMDC Interactive Map guidance.

2.0 Description of the Proposals

- 2.1 The proposals look to gain 'change of use' of the existing agricultural buildings to create 5 No. of dwellings using a form of 'Prior Approval' known as 'Class Q'. The proposals seek permission for both Q(a) and Q(b):

Q. Development consisting of—

- (a) *a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order; and*
- (b) *building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.*

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

- 2.2 The site can demonstrate an agricultural use solely for over 144 years. No erection, extension or alteration has been carried out to the building(s) since 20 March 2013 and there are no agricultural tenants now or within the past year.

- 2.3 To be eligible for Class Q:

- No more than a total of 5 dwellinghouses can be created (including no more than 3 larger dwellinghouses).
- No single dwellinghouse can exceed 465m² of floor space.
- The total combined floor space of all the larger dwellinghouses developed cannot exceed 465m².
- Up to 5 smaller dwellinghouses can be created. These are limited to 100m² each.

In comparison the proposals will create 3 No. of 'Larger Units' and 2 No. of 'Smaller Units', to meet the limits of **5 Units in total**. Each unit will have the following floor space:

Unit 1 (two storey): large unit	168m ²
Unit 2 (two storey): small unit	100m ²
Unit 3 (single storey): large unit	110m ²
Unit 4 (single storey): large unit	126m ²
Unit 5 (single storey): small unit	78m ²
Large Units Overall Floor Space:	404m ²
Overall Combined Floor Space:	582m²

- 2.4 A report is provided demonstrating the construction methods seen in the host buildings. The conclusion of this is that the buildings are capable of conversion without external 'development' beyond that which is 'reasonably necessary' to convert the building for use as a dwelling. The existing structures will be largely retained with no more than partial re-construction works in some localised areas.
- 2.5 Generally the materials selected to carry out the conversion will closely align with or will re-use the existing. Where possible, the original openings will be re-used or even reinstated where they have been blocked up historically. The modern corrugated steel structure connected to Barn 1 will be removed as will some of the lower quality rubble additions. From a philosophical perspective this is thought to be positive, and the applicant wishes to retain the sites heritage and authenticity.

3.0 Submitted Documents / Information

3.1 This statement and the following drawings relate to the proposals.

3.2 Existing Plans / Drawings

23-12-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0105_Rev-_Location_Plan_A3
23-12-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0106_Rev-_Site_Visibility_Splay_A2
23-12-b3-01-XX-DR-A-0201_Rev-_Barn_1_Existing_A1
23-12-b3-02-XX-DR-A-0202_Rev-_Barn_2_Existing_A1
23-12-b3-03-XX-DR-A-0203_Rev-_Barn_3_Existing_A2
23-12-b3-04-XX-DR-A-0204_Rev-_Barn_4_Existing_A2
23-12-b3-05-XX-DR-A-0205_Rev-_Barn_5_Existing_A2
23-12-b3-06-XX-DR-A-0206_Rev-_Barn_6_Existing_A2
23-12-b3-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0301_Rev-_Existing_Site_Sections_A1
23-12-b3-XX-ZZ-VS-A-0400_Rev-_Existing_Site_Massing_A1

3.3 Proposed Plans / Drawings

23-12-b3-XX-XX-DR-A-0104_RevA_Proposed_Block_Plan_(Q)
23-12-b3-01-XX-DR-A-0207_RevA_Barn_1_Proposed_A1
23-12-b3-02-XX-DR-A-0208_RevA_Barn_2_Proposed_A1
23-12-b3-03-XX-DR-A-0209_RevA_Barn_3_Proposed_A2
23-12-b3-04-XX-DR-A-0210_RevA_Barn_4_Proposed_A2
23-12-b3-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0302_RevA_Proposed_Site_Sections_A1
23-12-b3-XX-ZZ-VS-A-0401_RevA_Proposed_Site_Massing_A1

3.4 The proposals show that the extent of building work under Class Q(b) complies with the requirement of Q.1(i). This policy does not permit external 'development' other than the following:

(i) the installation or replacement of—

(aa) windows, doors, roofs, or exterior walls, or

(bb) water, drainage, electricity, gas or other services,

to the extent reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse; and

(ii) partial demolition to the extent reasonably necessary to carry out building operations allowed by paragraph Q.1(i)(i);

3.5 Internal works are not seen to be 'development' and as such new floors can be inserted where appropriate.

4.0 Planning Policy Background & Discussion

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 In Staffordshire Moorlands, 'The Local Plan' was adopted on 9th September 2020 and sets out the council's vision and strategy for the district until 2033.
- 4.3 National guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.
- 4.4 Given that the proposals represent a form of 'permitted development' under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 3 which relates to 'Class Q – agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses' the proposals are thought to be acceptable in principle. The compliance with the eligibility requirements has already been demonstrated within the previous sections of this report. There remains 'Conditions' to the Permitted Development and local and national policies may apply to Q.2-(1) (a-g).
- 4.5 The following policies are relevant to the proposals, and these will be appraised in the following section of this report:

5.0 Local Plan

- 5.1 The Local Plan sets out how SMDC would like to see the district develop by 2033. Section 5 sets out Spatial Aims and Spatial Objectives.
 - Spatial Aim SA1 has the aspiration to create "distinctive, sustainable, self-supporting settlements".
 - Spatial Aim SA2 outlines policy should meet "the needs of our communities."
 - Spatial Objective SO8 looks to "To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the district."
 - Spatial Objective SO9 looks to "To conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources."
- 5.2 Policy SS10 is a Strategic Strategy for 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' within Staffordshire Moorlands. Policy states: SMDC will allow "the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H1".
- 5.3 Policy H1. Paragraph 5 (d) supports: "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".
- 5.4 Policy DC3 relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' policy states the council will resist proposals which have a "prominent intrusion into the countryside".
- 5.5 To be eligible for Class Q no form of enlargement to the building is possible. Additionally, it is the conversion of a rural building which both Policy SS10 and H1 both support within the open countryside.

6.0 National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

- 6.1 Chapter 2 of the NPPF relates to 'Achieving sustainable development':
- 6.2 Paragraph 8 defines 'sustainable development' and states; "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)".
- 6.3 Paragraph 8 describes how forms of 'sustainable development' can have an 'economic objective', 'a social objective' or an 'environmental objective'. The proposals have predominantly economic and social benefits. However, by re-using existing resources (building stock) to create dwellings this also has a positive environmental effect by meeting housing demand without the need for Green Belt release or using other virgin land.
- 6.4 As result of paragraph 6.2 and 6.3, the proposals are thought to be 'sustainable development'. The NPPF Paragraph 11 states that local authorities 'decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- 6.5 Chapter 5 of the NPPF relates to 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes'. Paragraph 82 states "in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs."
- 6.6 Paragraph 84 (c) also supports proposals where the "development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting".
- 6.7 Chapter 12 of the NPPF relates to 'Achieving well-designed places'. Paragraph 131 states that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work". Paragraph 135(b) states that planning authorities should support developments which "are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping".
- 6.8 Paragraph 137 states "Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals." Paragraph 139 states "Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design".
- 6.9 Chapter 13 of the NPPF relates to 'Protecting Green Belt land'. Paragraph 142 begins by stating "The government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open". Paragraphs 152 – 156 relate to 'Proposals affecting the Green Belt'.
- 6.10 Paragraph 155(d) states that "Certain other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it" such as (d): "the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction".
- 6.11 Chapter 14 of the NPPF relates to 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change'. Paragraph 157 states local authorities should "encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings".

7.0 Class Q – agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses

- 7.1 Conditions of eligibility (Q.2) outlined in Schedule 2, Part 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 are as follows:
- 7.2 Q.2— (1) states that where the proposals involve development under Class Q(a) and Class Q(b), development is permitted subject to the condition that prior to any development, an application must be submitted to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to:
- (a) transport and highways impacts of the development,
 - (b) noise impacts of the development,
 - (c) contamination risks on the site,
 - (d) flooding risks on the site,
 - (e) whether the location or siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the building to change from agricultural use to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order,
 - (f) the design or external appearance of the building and
 - (g) the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses.
- 7.3 The final condition applicable to the proposals is that 'Development' under either Q(a) or Q(b) must be completed within a period of 3 years starting with the prior approval date.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposals "amount" is within the eligible unit numbers and floor areas permitted by Class Q. The host buildings are of substantial and permanent construction and the existing building fabric is suitable for conversion within the requirements of Class Q.
- 8.2 Although the site is Rural, both the Local Plan and the NPPF would support and advocate the re-use of these existing buildings.
- 8.3 The drawings show that the conversion to a habitable use can respect and retain the host buildings proportions and re-use almost all historic openings with minimal new window / door insertions. The result is that every habitable room receives a window for natural light and escape purposes where necessary; this meets another condition of Class Q Permitted Development.
- 8.4 The buildings are located on a well-established rural road a short distance from the settlement of Alton (1.4 miles to the centre). This is close enough that an occupant could cycle or even walk.
- 8.5 From an access perspective the sites existing established access can be used. This has served the farmstead for three generations and is suitable for large farm vehicles and frequent use. The access has adequate visibility in both directions.
- 8.6 Flood risk and contamination risk have been assessed in the application forms and no threat is posed.
- 8.7 The proposals provide 5 No. of desirable dwellings of various sizes, these will have adequate parking levels, gardens, and ample floor area to meet government space standards. The conversion is sustainable from an 'embodied energy' perspective and each unit will be an energy efficient conversion fit for modern living needs and compliant with all Building Regulations.
- 8.8 For the reasons rehearsed above it is anticipated that the proposals can be **supported**.

Yours Faithfully,



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on behalf of applicant: Mr T. Eyre & Ms A. McDermott