

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

APPLICATION PROPOSAL: NEW ACCESS & PARKING AREA

**APPLICATION ADDRESS : BUTTERLANDS FARM, BIDDULPH MOOR,
STOKE ON TRENT, ST8 7LF**

APPLICANT : MR ATTENBOROUGH

DATE : FEBRUARY 2024

JOB No. : 2023-2858

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr Attenborough to prepare and submit a full planning application to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for a new access and associated parking area at Butterlands Farm, Biddulph Moor. The application is accompanied by drawing numbers 2023-2858-01B, 2023-2858-03B, 2023-2858-05A and 2023-2858-06, all of which should be read in conjunction with this statement.

2.0 APPLICATION SITE DESCRIPTION

Butterlands Farm lies on the western side of Top Road, Biddulph Moor. It comprises of a dwellinghouse with attached two storey barn set at right angles on the front elevation, which has been converted into a separate self contained dwelling. A range of single span portal framed buildings lie to the south set around a central courtyard area. The application site is used as a well established and very successful equestrian centre. It is set within a very open and exposed ridge top location which is characterised by loose spattering of dwellings and farmsteads. For the purposes of the Development Plan the application site lies outside the village development boundary within the North Staffordshire Green Belt where more restrictive planning policies apply.

3.0 APPLICATION PROPOSAL

This application seeks consent to provide a dedicated access to the main dwellinghouse. In order to achieve this a new access and parking area would be provided off Top Road, to the north of the existing access. The proposed access which would be approximately 3.1m wide would measure approximately 34m long and be formed in limestone chippings to match the existing. A short section of roadside boundary wall would need to be removed and the new access would be formed with a 2.0m x 2.0m 45 degree splayed entrance to the highway. A cobblestone demise would be provided to prevent the stone chippings from spreading onto to the highway. The proposed access would be severed from the agricultural field by black painted metal estate fencing to match the existing on both sides. The proposed access would be gated with an estate style fence gate and the existing field access would be relocated slightly to the south west. Three parking spaces would be provided to the eastern side of a detached ancillary outbuilding which lies to the north east of the main dwellinghouse. These would be located on an existing area of lawn and would be provided using a cellweb system.

4.0 POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

The Development Plan for the area consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020). The most relevant policies are considered to be:-

SS1 Development Principles

SS2 Settlement Hierarchy

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

SD1 Sustainable Use of Resources

DC1 Design Considerations

DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting

T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

The National Planning Policy Framework, as updated in December 2023, sets out the Government's planning policies for England, and how it is expected that these will be applied. It establishes a framework within which local people and planning authorities can produce their own local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The heart of the NPPF embodies, in Section 2 paragraph 11 a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

Paragraph 11d states:-

"Where there are no relevant development plan policies , or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date granting permission unless:-

(i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

(ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole"

The most relevant sections are 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development), 11 (Making Effective Use of Land) , 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places) 13 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment. Again these are not reproduced in full here but referred to below where appropriate.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

Principle

At present the equestrian business and both of the dwellings at Butterlands Farm are currently served by a single access off Top Road. Parking for the converted dwelling and equestrian business is provided within a central courtyard set between the front of the original dwellinghouse and the portal framed buildings. A gravelled track spurs off the main access at right angles and passes along the gable end of a portal framed building providing access to the surrounding agricultural fields and also the rear of the main farmhouse.

Part 6 of Policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (the 'Local Plan') states that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt, only allowing for exceptions as defined in Government policy. Government policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and paragraph 155 of the Framework identifies that engineering operations are not an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt providing they preserve its openness and do not conflict with its purposes.

Whilst the development does not therefore constitute inappropriate development in terms of the NPPF, this is qualified as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Openness and landscape value

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF also requires new development to be sympathetic to the local character, including the landscape setting.

LP Policy DC1 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 be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials

appropriate to the character of the area; and 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.

Local Plan Policy DC3 refers to Landscape Character and states that the Council will protect and where possible enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffs Moorlands by supporting development which respects or enhances the setting of the settlement and conversely resisting development which would lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character of the landscape.

The proposed vehicular access would involve the removal of a short section of roadside boundary wall and the provision of a short (34m) narrow (3.1m) access track which would be provided along the northern edge of an agricultural field. The proposed access would be contained on both sides by metal estate fencing to prevent any encroachment into the surrounding fields. In addition three parking spaces would be provided using a cellweb system on an existing lawned area to the east of a detached ancillary outbuilding. The proposed access provides a more direct route to the existing parking area at the rear of the main dwellinghouse. It also relieves pressure on the existing access which is congested due to the existing equestrian business and use by occupiers of the two dwellings.

The removal of the existing grass from the proposed access track and its replacement with a limestone surface would not have any material impact on openness. Furthermore, the use of limestone chippings rather than a more formal tarmacked entrance drive and use of a cellweb system for the parking area would limit the visual impact of the development on the Green Belt and ensure that it is more in keeping with the rural nature of the application site and its wider surroundings. It would not therefore have an urbanising appearance nor would it affect openness in a visual or spatial sense. Similarly the modest height and length of the realigned stone walls and permeable design of the gates, which would be set well back, would further limit any harm to openness in this respect. The overall design of the proposed entrance has taken its cue from the existing access and within this context the proposed vehicle access, although appearing more urbanising than the existing grass would not appear incongruous. The proposed entrance gates would have a simple design and the stone wall would simply reflect the wall along the frontage of the site. The development would be modest in scale and would not appear excessively prominent. Overall the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the area and would therefore accord with policy DC1 of the Local Plan which aims to ensure development respects the site and its surroundings, and Local Plan policy DC3 which seeks to protect the local landscape.

Highway Safety

LP Policy T1 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 by ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development.

Paragraph 114 of the NPPF states that in assessing applications for development, a safe and suitable access should be achieved for all users. Paragraph 115 goes on to state that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Whilst it is accepted that the existing vehicular access off Top Road would meet current adopted highway standards the provision of a second access would reduce the volume of traffic using the existing access which would be of significant benefit to the occupiers of the main dwellinghouse as it would eliminate the possibility of cars from the equestrian business and occupiers of the converted barn confronting each other at the access. The current access is not wide enough for two cars to pass, so in this scenario, a vehicle may be required to wait partially on the highway to allow a car to leave the access first. This is a very real and existing risk to highway safety and the improvements provided as part of the proposed development are a significant and material consideration.

Amenity

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that all new development protects 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.. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that planning should create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 135 states, amongst other things, that developments should function well and add to the quality of the area, be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, establish a strong sense of place and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Given the semi-rural location of the site, the nature of the proposed development and its spatial relationship with the neighbouring residential properties it is not considered that the proposed development would be prejudicial to residential amenity or detrimental to any neighbouring land uses. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with LP Policy DC1 and paragraph 131 and 135 of the NPPF.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The application proposes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt which by virtue of its modest size, scale, form, design and materials would not adversely affect its openness or visual amenity nor would it detract from the character and appearance of the street scene or the wider surrounding area within which it is located. Furthermore, it would not be prejudicial to residential amenity or conflict with neighbouring land uses or detrimental to highway safety. Accordingly the proposal complies with policies SS10, DC1, DC3, T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Notwithstanding the above it is clear that should the Local Planning Authority consider the proposed development to constitute inappropriate development the improvements to highway safety, which would be secured through the reduction in the competing uses and the removal of vehicular conflicts would constitute very special circumstances which would justify the development.