

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0033
Valid 22/01/2024

CRONEY BANK FARM
BAGNALL ROAD
BAGNALL

RETROSPECTIVE
APPLICATION FOR CHANGE
OF USE FROM
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO
RESIDENTIAL

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether or not the works amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- The principle of development
- The impact on the character and appearance of the rural area
- The impact on residential amenity
- The impact on highway safety
- The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within the Green Belt and the open countryside about half a kilometre to the south of Bagnall village. It comprises a brick and tile former outbuilding of two-storey height which forms part of a former farmstead and is reached via a farm access track off Bagnall Road to south-west. It was built in the beginning of the 20th century. The former farmhouse and attached barns which have recently been converted into ancillary accommodation and extensions for the farmhouse lie immediately to the north-east where the farmyard/courtyard is located. The farm track is immediately to the south-west. The former farm buildings are surrounded by open land. The former outbuilding on site was converted a couple of years ago into a separate dwelling. The former farmstead is well screened by mature tree belts which surround the grouping of buildings.

PROPOSAL

This is a full retrospective planning application to retain the unauthorised change of use of the building into a dwelling. It was formerly used as a farm workshop on the ground floor and further habitable accommodation for the farmhouse on the first floor. The building has not been extended. The ground floor workshop has been converted into a living/kitchen space and the first floor (where there was a living area and kitchen) turned into two bedrooms and a bathroom via the insertion of internal partition walls. The windows and doors have been replaced but there are no new openings or rooflights. There is a timber lean-to structure to the north-east which would be retained. A garden area to the north-west of the building and a parking area for two cars, to the south-west, have been formed on existing hard-standing areas. There has been no rebuilding of the walls or roof.

The application includes a Design and Access Statement.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design), 13 (Green Belts).

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted Sep 2020).

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy

H1 New Housing

DC1 Design Considerations

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

The most recent application relating to the wider site are as follows:

SMD/2021/0131. Barn conversion to be linked with and form part of the main dwelling house. Approved.

SMD/2021/0128. Extensions to farmhouse. Approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 5.3.24

Neighbour consultation period ends: 5.3.24

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Parish Council

No objection.

SCC Highways

No objection subject to a condition to retain the parking area.

COMMENTS

The site is in the Green Belt and the strategy for the countryside, Policy SS10, requires strict control over inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF lists the exceptional forms of development in the Green Belt which are not inappropriate. The change of use of a building is listed but providing it is permanent

and substantial. I consider that before the works were carried out it would have been permanent and substantial. It is clearly built as a robust and solid brick and tile farm outbuilding. The development is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and complies with the NPPF and Policy SS10 in this respect.

Although the site is not in sustainable location, Policy SS10 also does allow the conversion of buildings into residential uses in the countryside where they are physically, architecturally and in character terms, suitable for such a conversion. It is already established it was physically capable. Due to the particular traditional brick-and-tile form, shape and size of the building together with its materials and overall design and appearance, I am also satisfied the building was architecturally and in character terms suitable for the change of use and can be described as being in keeping with the surrounding rural area.

Overall, the conversion is acceptable in principle and complies with the Local Plan and NPPF in this respect.

The design of the works is also acceptable. The external works have been restricted to the insertion of replacement windows and doors and those have a traditional rural design and appearance which harmonise with the building. As a result of the conversion works, the building has not lost any of its character or form and remains in keeping with the area. The impact on the overall character and appearance of the area is acceptable.

With regard to residential amenity, there would be no harmful level of overlooking of the neighbouring enlarged farmhouse from the windows of the new dwelling as the farmhouse and converted barns are at an obscure angle when viewed from the upper windows of the new dwelling. Furthermore, they are all within the applicants ownership according to the location plan. The floorspace of the new dwelling exceeds the thresholds set out in the governments Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) applying to two-storey two-bed dwellings. There is also a private garden of adequate size provided to the north-west (rear) of the new dwelling. The conversion would result in acceptable living standards for the occupants. Overall, the works have not led to any harmful residential amenity impacts.

With regard to highway safety, the new 2-bed dwelling would not lead to any significant increase in traffic despite the unsustainable rural location. The access onto Bagnall Road is safe. Parking provision for the new dwelling is adequate.

Finally, with regard to any biodiversity impacts, protected species (bats) frequently use rural buildings especially with roofspaces. Although the building may appear to have potential as a bat roost before the works, the roof void was always open and lit by existing windows and this area was later converted into an additional kitchen and living area for the farmhouse which reduces the potential for a former use by bats. However, I consider it reasonable that as the conversion works have taken place without a proper assessment of ecological impact and such works are complete, the biodiversity value of the site should be increased via the use of measures such as the imposition of bat boxes, bird boxes and native hedge planting to encourage biodiversity. These can be achieved via the use of a planning condition to be provided within a set time limit.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The conversion works undertaken are acceptable in principle and are not deemed to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. They do not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area or lead to any other environmental harms. The development therefore complies with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore retrospective planning permission can be granted to retain the unauthorised development.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 15.3.24

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council