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Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Moorlands House
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20 February 2024

Dear Sir

THE HAYBARN, MARSH GREEN FARM, MARSH GREEN ROAD, BIDDULPH, ST8 6QP.

Proposed alterations to an existing vehicular access and the construction of a 4m wide track in the adjoining field to improve access to the agricultural land.

Introduction

1. Please find enclosed a planning application submitted on behalf Mr & Mrs M Davies. The documents submitted with the application include: -

- Application Forms.
- Location Plan – 1:2500@A4
- Drawing TR.1A – Proposed site plan and access detail – 1:500 and 1:1250@A3.
- Drawing TR.2 – Proposed gate and fence detail – 1:50@A4.
- AE01: Site photographs.

Site Location and Description

2. The application site consists of an existing field access and agricultural land situated to the north side of Marsh Green Road. The Applicant's live in the nearby dwelling at The Haybarn which forms part of a small cluster of converted barns formerly associated with Marsh Green Farm. This small group of houses also lie on the north side of Marsh Green Lane and are within the Green Belt. Photographs of the existing access and land are provided at AE01.

The Proposal

3. The proposal seeks full planning permission for the widening of the existing field access and the construction of a 4m wide track that will provide a link between the two fields which are owned by the Applicant. The alterations to the access would result in the construction of a tarmac surface for the first 6m into the field with gates being set back. A 1.5m high timber post and rail fence would separate the access from the field. The proposed track would be 4m wide and would provide a link to the field at the rear of The Haybarn. Until recently the only access to this land was through the

garden of the Applicant's house which is shared with the other houses at The Stone Barn, Marsh Green Farm and The Shippon.

Planning Policy

4. For the purposes of this planning application, the development plan comprises of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020). The following Local Plan policies are relevant to this application:

Policy SS 1 Development Principles.

Policy SS 2 Settlement Hierarchy.

Policy SS 9 Smaller Villages Area Strategy.

Policy SS 10 Other Rural Areas Strategy.

Policy DC 1 Design Considerations.

Policy DC 3 Landscape and Settlement Setting.

Policy NE 2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows.

5. The application site lies within the Green Belt. LP Policy SS10 states that the LPA will maintain the Green Belt within Staffordshire Moorlands. Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government Policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). Section 13 of the Framework provides detailed guidance in respect of the protection of the Green Belt. In summary, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence (paragraph 142). The five purposes of Green Belt remain unchanged. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason in inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Paragraph 155 indicates that engineering operations are not inappropriate if they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Planning Considerations

Access Improvement

6. The application seeks full planning permission for the widening of the existing vehicular access and the construction of a hardcore track to facilitate improved access to the 3 acres of agricultural land as a whole. The proposed access arrangements are shown on Drawing TR 1. The prime aim is to be able to obtain improved access to the agricultural land, particularly the field at the rear of the house. The Applicant's currently graze Alpacas on the original field that was bought with the house. The existing access is somewhat limited in both size and design for modern vehicles so its improvement can only be of benefit for both the site and other road users. It is difficult to get a tractor into the field (for mowing) as the lane is narrow along this section of Marsh Green Road. The "front" field is particularly wet and the proposed track would make it easier to cross and gain access to both fields for mowing and maintenance.

Green Belt and Visual Impact

7. The application site lies in open countryside within the Green Belt. The formation of the new access and track constitutes an engineering operation, and as such falls to be assessed against Paragraph 155 of the Framework. Part b) confirms that engineering operations are not inappropriate in Green Belt provided that they preserve openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

8. The proposed access and track would be used to give vehicular access to the 1.7 acres of adjoining agricultural land. There is no intention to change the use of the land from agricultural.

9. The proposed access and track would be constructed with a surface finish of tarmac and bonded gravel/hardcore with a recessive colour to minimise any visual impact on this area of open countryside. The existing roadside hedge would be reduced in height as shown on Drawing TR.1. The modest nature and scale of this proposal means that it would not significantly harm the openness of the Green Belt or any of the reasons for including land within it. The proposal is reasonably necessary for its intended purpose, is not excessive, and satisfies the requirements of LP Policies SS1, SS5, DC1 and DC3. Between them these are the policies that seek to ensure that new development reflects local character and its landscape setting. The reduction in height of a small section of hedgerow would not be materially detrimental to the rural character of the area. In light of these factors the proposal is not inappropriate development in terms of Paragraph 155 of the Framework and the issue of very special circumstances does not apply.

Conclusion

10. The proposal is an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt and satisfies the requirements of the Development Plan and the Framework for the following reasons.

11. The removal and reduction in height of a short section of hedgerow to form the access would not be detrimental to the rural character of the area. Similarly, the construction of the narrow track across a small section of field would not significantly harm the landscape setting of the site and satisfy the requirements of LP Policies SS1, SS5, DC1 and DC. The proposed engineering operation is not inappropriate in terms of Paragraph 155 of the Framework.

12. For the reasons outlined above, the proposal complies with National Guidance and Local Plan Policy and it is requested that this planning application be approved.

Yours sincerely

Andy Ellis