

PLANNING STATEMENT

**SPRINGFIELDS FARM
HULME**

MARCH 2024

Site Address:

Springfield Farm, Hulme Lane, Hulme, Staffordshire, ST3 5BH

Applicant:

Mr. C. Taylor

Proposal:

Change of use from retail to mixed use as retail and café

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 18th March 2024

Job Reference: RDP/2024/026

Report Prepared By:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Taylor to seek full planning permission for the change of use of a former agricultural building at Springfields Farm, Hulme Lane, Hulme from its existing use as retail, to a mixed use of retail and café within Use Classes E(a) and E(b) of the Use Classes Order.
- 1.2 The application follows on from the recent grant of planning permission for the change of use and conversion of the existing building to retail use under application SMD/2023/0422. That approved scheme also incorporated the provision of new car parking, along with associated vehicular access improvements.
- 1.3 This revised submission will facilitate the use of the premises as both a retail outlet for the sale of hot and cold food, as well as a café where customers will be able to purchase food and drink from the shop to then consume on the premises. The hot food for sale is expected to encompass items such as paninis, bacon rolls, breakfasts, sausage rolls, pies, toasted sandwiches, baked potatoes etc. The provisions of Condition 2 of SMD/2023/0422 currently preclude the use of the premises for anything other than the sale of cold food and hot pies, plus hot and cold drinks.
- 1.4 No external alterations to the building are proposed, nor will there be any changes to the existing vehicular access and parking arrangements as approved under application SMD/2023/0422, which provide space for the parking of 25no. vehicles.

2 Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a former agricultural building and surrounding land that is located on the eastern side of Hulme Lane. The site lies less than 1km from Werrington.
- 2.2 The existing building the subject of this application comprises a portal framed structure finished in blockwork with vertical timber cladding. It occupies a position set well back from the public highway, and has further agricultural buildings extending to its south. An area of hardstanding is located in front of the buildings, with an access track running along the northern flank of the building connecting to areas of car parking created at the rear of the building.
- 2.3 The applicant's existing farmhouse is located to the immediate southwest of the agricultural buildings and comprises a detached, two storey property finished in white render with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof atop. Agricultural fields extend to the east of the site, beyond which lies a large cluster of buildings associated with Bark House Farm.
- 2.4 A small cluster of residential properties lies approximately 75 metres to the north of the site, beyond the existing field that encloses the northern side of the existing agricultural building. Open fields, enclosed by mature hedgerows extend to the south of the site, with Hulme Lane enclosing the western site boundary.
- 2.5 No buildings within the immediate surrounding area are statutorily listed, nor does the site lie within a Conservation Area.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into account any relevant material considerations. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (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, including starter 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

3.3 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that 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. This will be achieved by:

- Enabling the limited expansion or development of business for employment uses where a rural location can be justified
- Supporting the diversification of existing farm enterprises
- 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

- Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4 Policy E1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Employment Development' and states that new employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs. It goes on to state that in general the Council will endeavour to support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District. The policy furthermore states that schemes involving the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, will be considered favourably where the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings, and that to support the growth of the economy the Council will encourage provision for small-scale and start-up businesses.

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should 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 SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- 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

- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping, as well as noise, odour and light pollution.
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

3.6 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 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and set out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of supporting a prosperous rural economy, safeguarding the Green Belt, maintaining highway safety and securing a net gain to biodiversity. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Growth Strategy

- 4.2 The Growth Strategy identifies lower than average business start-up rates within the Staffordshire Moorlands, and a perception of rural areas being unsuitable and unwelcoming for business growth. It goes on to confirm that employment growth is a key political priority within the Moorlands.

SMD/2023/0422 – Springfields Farm, Hulme Lane, Werrington

- 4.3 The above application granted planning permission for the change of use of the existing premises on the site to retail use, along with the associated formation of a parking area and improvements to the site access. The approved scheme constitutes an established fall-back position that must be taken into consideration in the determination of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Green Belt

- 5.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt, wherein policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development, allowing only exceptions as defined by Government policy.
- 5.2 Paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows for material changes in the use of land, as well as the reuse of rural buildings, provided that they are of a permanent and substantial construction. In either case the development must preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 5.3 The existing building is already established in retail use, having been granted consent for such purposes under application SMD/2023/0422. The conversion and change of use of the building to retail use, along with the creation of the associated parking area and alterations to the site access to improve visibility, were found to constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.
- 5.4 The proposed change of use of the existing retail premises to a mixed use of retail / café will not give rise to any greater impact to the openness of the Green Belt than that which was permitted by SMD/2023/0422 and the building remains of a permanent and substantial construction. The change of use of the premises consequently amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 155 of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.

Rural Economy

5.5 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential”

5.6 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should enable:

“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”

And

“the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses”

5.7 This guidance is enshrined within policy SS10 of the Local Plan which confirms that the Council will enable the limited expansion or development of business

for employment uses where a rural location can be justified and will support the diversification of existing farm enterprises.

- 5.8 Policy E1 of the Local Plan also confirms that the Council will support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District, and that schemes involving the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise will be considered favourably where the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings. Policy E1 goes on to state that to support the growth of the economy the Council will encourage provision for small-scale and start-up businesses.
- 5.9 The Local Authority's Growth Strategy reflects the above policy provisions and confirms that the Staffordshire Moorlands has lower than average business start-up rates and a perception of the rural areas being unsuitable and unwelcoming for business growth. The existing building is already established in retail use, and the submitted proposal will enhance that existing offer by enabling customers to purchase food from the retail shop and then consume it on the premises. The applicant forecasts that this will reduce the number of visitors to the site, but encourage them to spend more whilst they are there.
- 5.10 The business employs 6 members of staff (4no full-time equivalents) and constitutes a start-up business. The proposal represents the continued diversification of the agricultural holding in a manner that will support the sustainable growth of the rural economy, in accordance with the objectives of the Local Authority's Growth Strategy and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The economic benefits associated with this proposal are consequently held to meet the objectives of the Local Authority's Growth Strategy, as well as the provisions of policies SS10 and E1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

Design & Layout

- 5.11 The proposal relates to the change of use of the building only, and does not propose any external alterations to the existing building, nor any changes to the site layout. The submitted proposal will therefore not have any greater impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area than the works already approved under application SMD/2023/0422. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

- 5.12 The nearest occupiers to the site lie circa 75+ metres to the north of the site, beyond an area of existing field. Given the distance between the site and that neighbouring property, coupled with the proposed planting of a new hedgerow in between (SMD/2023/0422 refers), along with the proposed hours of use which are unaltered from what has already been approved (10:00hrs – 19:00hrs) it is submitted that the proposed change of use of the premises will not give rise to any materially greater impact to neighbouring residential amenity than that associated with the existing approved retail use. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

- 5.13 The previously approved application on the site (SMD/2023/0422) granted consent for an improved vehicular access, principally through the creation of a new visibility splay to the north of the existing site access. Consent was also granted for the retention of a car park to the rear of the building and for some additional car parking at the front of the building. Those works are in the process of being implemented, pending final sign off surfacing details pursuant to DOC/2024/0006.

- 5.14 It is submitted that the proposed change of use will not materially alter or intensify the number of vehicles attending the site. The objective of the application is to facilitate consumption of hot food on the premises that has been purchased from the shop. At present a customer may only purchase cold food and hot pies, plus hot and cold drinks. The proposed change of use will give the applicant greater flexibility as to what can be sold in the shop for consumption on the premises.
- 5.15 The application proposes no changes to the previously approved vehicular access and 25no. car parking spaces will continue to be provided on the site, with no alterations proposed to the site layout. We consequently submit that no adverse harm to highway safety will arise over and above that which has already been granted consent by the Local Authority. The proposed change of use is therefore held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.16 The proposed change of use constitutes an 'exempted development' in respect of delivering biodiversity net gain, since it does not affect more than 25m² of on-site habitat. There is consequently no legal requirement to secure a net gain to biodiversity as part of this proposal. A scheme of biodiversity enhancements has nevertheless be secured as part of the recent approval for the conversion of this building under application SMD/2023/0422.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal entails the reuse / change of use of an existing building that is of a permanent and substantial construction and will give rise to any harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it. The proposal therefore amounts to an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt.
- The proposal represents diversification of the agricultural holding and will support the growth of this existing start-up businesses.
- The proposal will not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area over and above that which already has consent via application SMD/2023/0422.
- The proposal will not result in any harm to neighbouring amenity over and above that which already has consent via application SMD/2023/0422.
- The proposal will not result in any material intensification in the use of the vehicular access over and above that which already has consent via application SMD/2023/0422.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with policies SS1, SS10, E1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.