

PLANNING STATEMENT

**APESFORD FARM
BRADNOP**

JUNE 2024

Site Address:

Apesford Farm, Bradnop, ST13 7EX

Applicant:

Mr. & Mrs. Harrison

Proposal:

Erection of 2no. dwellinghouses in lieu of the 2no. dwellinghouses
approved by application DET/2024/0005

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 26th June 2024

Job Reference: RDP/2024/055

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. & Mrs. Harrison to seek full planning permission for the erection of 2no. detached dwellinghouses on land at Apesford Farm, Bradnop.
- 1.2 The application follows on from a recent grant of prior approval, pursuant to Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As Amended), for the conversion of two existing timber agricultural buildings on the site to form 2no. dwellings (LPA Reference: DET/2024/0005).
- 1.3 The proposed dwellinghouses are to be finished in natural stone so as to complement the cluster of former agricultural buildings across the wider site, and will have a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof atop. Traditional fenestration and detailing is also proposed, with a high solid-to-void ratio.
- 1.4 The buildings will have a similar footprint / floor area to the approved dwellinghouses, but are to be repositioned within the site, to as to move them further apart from one another, with areas of private amenity space each dwelling sandwiched in between. Neither building will extend beyond the developable area of land approved under DET/2024/0005.
- 1.5 The replacement buildings will stand modestly taller (1 metre) than the existing buildings on the site, on account of the desire to introduce more traditional materials for the roof. The dwellings will each have a gross internal floor area of 133 square metres, and will have three bedrooms.
- 1.6 The means of vehicular access to the site off Apesford Lane is unaltered from that approved via DET/2024/0005, with each dwelling to be provided with two off-street parking spaces.

2 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site is located within the rural area and comprises a parcel of land that is currently occupied by two former agricultural buildings constructed from concrete blockwork / timber cladding and metal sheet roofs along with associated concrete hardstandings. The buildings benefit from prior approval consent for their conversion to form 2no. dwellinghouses by virtue of application DET/2024/0005.
- 2.2 Hardstandings enclose the buildings on all side, beyond which to the east and northeast lie two former agricultural buildings which are in an advanced state of conversion to residential use under application SMD/2019/0687. Further to the northeast lies the existing farmhouse and attached shippon. All of those surrounding buildings are finished in natural stone with a Staffordshire Blue tiled roof.
- 2.3 To the north of the site lies an equestrian manege and cluster of buildings associated with a neighbouring property. Open fields extend to the west and the south, with the landscape to the south sloping steeply downwards towards the valley beyond, before rising up on the opposite side.
- 2.4 None of the buildings within the site are statutorily listed, nor does the site lie within a Conservation Area. Public Footpaths Bradnop and Cawdry 16 and 17 which pass to the east and west of the site, converging to the south of the existing buildings. The works will nevertheless not impinge on those footpaths, nor give rise to any diversions thereof.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration 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 the 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 emissions.

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. The policy confirms that the Council will meet housing requirements by allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policy H1.

3.4 Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that all development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision. It goes on to state

that all new dwellings should aim to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation by seeking to achieve adequate internal space for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space standard and delivered to meet accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations. It also requires that new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings.

3.5 Policy H1 also states that in the rural areas, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted:

- a) Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H3.
- b) A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.
- c) Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.
- d) 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.

- e) Proposals to redevelop previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.
- f) The subdivision of an existing residential dwelling provided it is not in an isolated location.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and 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:

1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area.
2. 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.
3. create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private), landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of Active Design.
4. incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the impact of the development.

5. protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, overbearing development, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution.
6. promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate.
7. provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.
8. require new developments to be well integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle use as well as other sustainable transport links.
9. ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed.
10. ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community.
11. be served by high speed broadband (>30mbps) unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with Next Generation Access Network providers that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable. In all circumstances during construction of the site sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date.

3.7 Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.
2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence.
3. Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds.
4. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape.
5. Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.

3.8 Policy NE1 of the Local Plan relates to "Biodiversity and Geological Resources" and states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development (and having regard to relevant ecological evidence) by (amongst other measures):

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- Conserving, and enhancing regional and locally designated sites. The Council will not permit any development proposal which would directly or indirectly result in significant harm to geological and biodiversity conservation interests, unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) there is no appropriate alternative site available; and
 - b) all statutory and regulatory requirements relating to any such proposal have been satisfied; and
 - c) appropriate conservation and mitigation measures are provided; or if it is demonstrated that this is not possible
 - d) the need for, and benefit of, the development is demonstrated to clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site and compensatory measures are implemented.
 - Expecting all development where possible seeks to deliver a net gain in biodiversity proportionate to the size and scale of the development. In circumstances where adverse impacts are demonstrated to be unavoidable, developers will be required to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards loss of habitat used only as a last resort where there is no alternative. Where any mitigation and compensation measures are required, they should be appropriately scheduled and managed according to the nature, size and scale of the development so as to minimise impacts that may disturb protected or important habitats and species.

3.9 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 sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of securing high quality design, delivering rural housing, safeguarding protected species and achieving a net gain to biodiversity, and maintaining highway safety. The provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework constitute material considerations in the assessment of this application.

SMDC Design Guide SPD

- 4.2 The adopted Design Guide SPD provides advice aimed at securing the delivery of high-quality built development within the District, including new build dwellings. The content of the Design Guide SPD constitutes a material consideration in the assessment of this application.

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- 4.3 The above application granted prior approval for the conversion of the existing buildings on the site to form 2no. dwellinghouses, and remains an extant permission. The approved scheme constitutes a material fallback position to be taken into consideration in the assessment of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application proposes the erection of 2no. dwellinghouses on a site located within the rural area, in lieu of the 2no. dwellings previously approved on the site under application DET/2024/0005 as a conversion of the two existing buildings.
- 5.2 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan allows for housing development within the rural areas where it accords with policy H1 of the Local Plan. Policy H1 sets out a list of appropriate type of housing development that will be permitted within the rural areas and it is acknowledged that the proposed development does not fall into any of those categories. It is consequently recognised that the proposal derives some conflict with policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan in this regard.
- 5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compensation Act 2004 (As Amended) nevertheless requires that consideration also be given to any relevant material planning considerations. In this case there is an established fallback position that must be taken into account in the assessment of this application, that being the extant prior consent to convert the two existing buildings on the site to form two dwellinghouses (DET/2024/0005). That consent has established the principle of there being two additional dwellings on this site.
- 5.4 The judgment of *Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council [2017]* serves to confirm the legal considerations for determining the materiality of a fall-back position as a planning judgement, and confirms that a prospect only needs to be a possibility, rather than probable or likely, in order to constitute a fall-back position. The weight attributable to that fall-back is then one for the decision maker.

- 5.5 In this case the applicant wishes to improve the appearance of the site and has proposed dwellings that will relate more positively to the immediate surrounding area. It nevertheless remains a fact that if consent for this proposal were to be refused there is a strong prospect of the approved prior approval scheme being implemented – the applicant having already gone to the time and expense of securing permission for the works – and consequently the extant permission is considered to carry substantial weight as a fallback position.
- 5.6 We submit that the proposed development will give rise to a number of improvements comparative to that extant permission. The first is the proposed materials of construction. The existing buildings on the site are utilitarian in appearance and their materials of construction (timber cladding / concrete blockwork / metal sheeting) do not comprise of vernacular materials. The application proposes to remove those buildings from the site and replace them with new buildings constructed from vernacular materials.
- 5.7 The elevations are to be finished in natural stone, whilst a steeper pitched roof is to be provided so as to allow the use of Staffordshire blue roof tiles to tie in with the other buildings across the site, including those immediately to the east / northeast. Whilst the resultant buildings will be modestly taller than the approved scheme under Class Q Permitted Development, they will also occupy a modestly reduced floor area (133m² compared to approved 136m²).
- 5.8 We submit that the alternative materials palette and modestly reduced size of the buildings will represent a considerable visual enhancement to the surrounding area compared to the metal sheet roof and concrete block / timber cladding of the prior approval scheme. Such benefits weigh heavily in favour of planning permission being granted.

- 5.9 The proposal also encompasses the re-siting of the buildings. The existing buildings are sited close to one another, and by resultant effect the approved prior approval scheme (DET/2024/0005) includes the creation of areas of private amenity space on the outside of those buildings, to their east and west. Their associated parking areas are also located in these areas. The areas of private amenity space will be readily visible from the nearby public footpath network and give the site a somewhat domesticated appearance.
- 5.10 This proposed development, by contrast, moves the buildings further apart, and consolidated the areas of private amenity space and parking spaces in-between. By resultant effect the domestication of the site arising from the creation of the amenity space will be largely screened by the presence of the two new buildings which will flank down either side. The proposed development will be less visually conspicuous and harmful in views from Public Footpaths Bradnop and Cawdry 16 and 17 as a consequence.
- 5.11 The total extent of built development, inclusive of amenity space and parking, will furthermore not extend beyond the developable area established by the extant prior approval consent. The submitted proposal will therefore not give rise to any greater degree of encroachment of built development into the countryside than that which already been approved under DET/2024/0005.
- 5.12 The erection of the new dwellings will also enable a more sustainable form of building to be constructed, as the dwellings will be built to the latest building regulations standards, rather than the prior approval scheme which involves retrofitting the existing buildings. New build dwellings will have a much greater thermal efficiency that could otherwise be achieved via the conversion of the buildings, and we submit that such environmental benefits also weigh in favour of the proposed development.

- 5.13 The proposal is also in accordance with paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the creation of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of a limited number of specific circumstances apply.
- 5.14 This proposal will not result in the creation of isolated homes in the countryside, as the new dwellings will lie immediately adjacent to the existing buildings to the east / northeast which are in an advanced state of conversion to residential use, as well as the existing farmhouse, and neighbouring properties to the north. No conflict with paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework will therefore arise.
- 5.15 Collectively we submit that the aforementioned benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh its conflict with policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan, in particular the enhancement to the character and appearance of the area that will ensue. As a consequence the principle of development is held to be acceptable.

Design & Layout

- 5.16 The proposed scale of the buildings will be taller than the existing structures on the site, but only modestly so (1m taller). This is a deliberate design choice in order that the resultant dwellings may be finished with Staffordshire Blue tiles to match the buildings around them. We consider such roof materials to be preferable to the steel sheet roofing that is otherwise approved under the extant prior approval application.
- 5.17 The rectangular form of the buildings is the same as the existing buildings on the site, and the new dwellings will both have a low, ground hugging form, with strongly defined eaves and ridge lines, emphasised by gables. Traditional hopper style windows and conservation style rooflights are to be provided,

along with simple stone header detailing, in order to further local vernacular. A high solid-to-void ratio will also be achieved.

5.18 We consider the design of the proposed dwellings to represent a substantial enhancement to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, being preferable to the existing buildings on the site which are otherwise utilitarian in character and which exhibit a palette of materials that is not reflective of local vernacular.

5.19 The palette of materials proposed in the application is, by contrast, wholly in keeping with the adjacent former agricultural buildings to the east / northeast of the site and will provide consistency of materials across the site. The design and layout of the development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan in this regard, as well as meeting the objectives of the adopted Design Guide SPD.

Residential Amenity

5.20 Each dwelling is to be served by an area of private amenity space that will be sandwiched in-between the two buildings. Each area of amenity space will extend to some 68 square metres in area which exceeds the recommended minimum standard of 65 square metres.

5.21 The dwellings have been designed so that neither property will have principal windows facing the other, thereby avoiding the potential for overlooking / loss of privacy to occur. Boundary treatments are also to be provided in between the amenity areas so as to allow for those areas to remain private.

5.22 The gross internal floor area of the dwellings (133 square metres) furthermore exceeds the minimum required standard for a three bedroomed / six person dwelling (95 square metres) as set out in the National Described Space Standards. Future occupiers of the dwelling will therefore have an acceptable

level of amenity, in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, H1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

- 5.23 The application site is served by the existing vehicular access off Apesford Lane to the north / northeast. The access serves not only this site, but also the nearby farmhouse, its attached shippon and a range of adjacent outbuildings which all have consent for conversion to dwellinghouses.
- 5.24 The proposed means of access to the site is unaltered from that approved under application DET/2024/0005 with the only difference in highways terms being the relocation of the parking spaces, which have been repositioned to reflect the re-siting of the buildings.
- 5.25 A total of two parking spaces will be provided for each of the dwellings, and this level of provision meets the adopted car parking standards for three-bedroomed properties. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology

- 5.26 The originally submitted prior approval application (DET/2024/0005) was accompanied by a bat survey which concluded that the existing buildings on this site have negligible potential for roosting bats. A copy of that bat survey has been submitted to accompany this application, and serves to demonstrate that the proposed demolition of the existing buildings will not give rise to any harm to protected species.
- 5.27 In terms of biodiversity net gain, the development falls below the threshold for having to demonstrate a 10% net gain, as the proposal will not result in the

loss of more than 25 square metres of habitat (the area surrounding the buildings is already laid to hardstanding / occupied by buildings).

- 5.28 A net gain to biodiversity will nevertheless be achieved by virtue of incorporating integral bat boxes into the new dwellings. Such enhancements can be secured via an appropriately worded planning condition and in doing so the development will meet the requirements of policy NE1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6 Conclusion

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

- The proposal involves the erection of two new build dwellings in lieu of the two dwellings approved via application DET/2024/0005.
- The design and layout of the development will represent an improvement to the character and appearance of the site and wider surrounding area compared to the extant prior approval scheme.
- The proposed development will provide a satisfactory level of amenity for future occupiers.
- The proposed development will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety.
- The proposed development will safeguard protected species on the site and provide appropriate mitigation and enhancement to deliver a net gain to biodiversity.

6.2 Whilst the proposal entails some conflict with elements of policies of SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan, this conflict is considered to be clearly outweighed by other material considerations. The proposed development is otherwise held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS10, H1, DC1, DC3, NE1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, and guidance contained within the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD.