

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0664
Valid 19/10/2021

LAND AT THORNCLIFFE
LANE
BLACKSHAW MOOR
LEEK

CONVERSION OF THREE
EXISTING LOCAL HERITAGE
BUILDINGS TO FORM A
SINGLE DWELLING HOUSE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Visual Amenity and significance of the NDHA
- Impact on Neighbour Amenity
- Amenity of Future Occupier
- Highway Safety
- Drainage
- Ecology/Trees

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application relates to a group of buildings located within Blackshaw Moor. The buildings at Camp 3 of the Blackshaw Moor Former US Army camp are a highly distinctive cluster of brick WWII buildings and associated landscaping, dating from 1943. They are prominent buildings seen from Thorncliffe lane. They have a linear form and regular rhythm of structures all built in line, on a north-south axis with a similar form, scale and details.

The site is located within the Open Countryside.

PROPOSAL

Consent is sought to convert the three buildings to form a single dwelling. The dwelling will be accessed via the existing access off Thorncliffe Lane.

Building A will provide a home cinema/games room, guest bedroom and home working area with wc.

Building B will provide the main living accommodation proposing 3 bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen, dining room and living area.

Building C will be used as a domestic workshop and storage area with wc.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
SS10
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
H1

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 11,12 and 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2018/0775 - Co Housing development comprising the Erection of 5 new low impact dwellings, conversion and extension of existing buildings to provide further 2 low impact dwellings, conversion of 2 other existing buildings to provide cohousing facilities, erection of new site services building, shared car parking area, productive organic gardens and sustainable drainage system set in ecologically enriched landscape. – Refused 01/07/19 (appeal dismissed.)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: expired
Neighbour consultation period ends:expired
Press Advert: expired

Public Comments

9 comments have been received objecting to the development for the following reasons:

The site is isolated and therefore unsustainable
The development would affect the historical importance of the buildings
The access to the site is narrow and not well maintained.
Harm to wildlife that exist on the site
Impact on the living conditions of occupants due to nearby shooting range/centre

Town / Parish Comments

Tittesworth Parish Council have no objection to the application

Environmental Health

No objections subject to conditions.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection submit to conditions.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

No objection subject to conditions.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Policy SS 10 states that the other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.

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 Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with Policy H 1;

5) In the other rural areas in the open countryside, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted;

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.

The buildings derive considerable significance from their landscape setting, in part because of their associations with the wider Anzio Camp and other US Army and late Polish Resettlement sites in the adjoining landscape and their local visibility, where they are appreciated from public view. The LPA Conservation officer states that the buildings hold intrinsic historic and architectural value they also have high communal value as how they are perceived by the public. The site is therefore considered to be a non designated heritage asset and the retention of the buildings is supported.

The application is supported by the submission of a structural report which concludes that the buildings are structurally sound and do not require significant intervention to allow for their conversion to residential use. As such the principle of converting the buildings to a single dwelling is acceptable.

Impact on Visual amenity and significance of the NDHA

Policy DC 2 states that the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance.

This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

The application is supported by a heritage statement which concludes that the buildings do not hold any architectural interest.

The Conservation Officer concluded that the buildings may not be of great architectural merit, but they do not agree with the presumption that the buildings do not hold architectural merit at all. The historic interest is embodied in the surviving utilitarian fabric and the external form and their collective value is particularly sensitive to change.

Following the submission of amended plans the LPA conservation officer had no objection to the scheme subject to a number of conditions.

Policy DC 1 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.

The amendments required above were also required in relation to the visual and landscape impact of the scheme. As part of the negotiations it was requested for the residential curtilage associated with the dwelling to be reduced significantly and for the main garden area to be located behind the buildings away from the adjacent highway. Any boundary treatment visible from the highway is low level either stock fencing or a low stone wall and the existing area of hardstanding to the north west of the buildings will be left to rewild. The existing water tank will remain in place and a new safety fence will be erected and these details will be submitted and agreed in writing. To the south the main garden area is proposed to be enclosed by a stock fence with an open grassed area behind and a meadow retained. The existing hardstanding will be altered to provide residents and visitor parking. To the west the existing structures and pond will be retained and a management plan is proposed to improve the existing woodland.

In terms of alterations to the existing buildings the development has made use of the existing openings on the buildings and some additional openings are proposed that are sensitive to the simple design of the buildings. The materials proposed are considered appropriate but further details are required secured via condition.

Whilst the concerns of objectors are noted, it is considered, that these have been addressed through amended plans. As such the development is considered to have an acceptable impact on the character and significance of the site as a Non designated heritage asset and the development has been sensitively designed to ensure minimal harm to the visual amenity of the area.

Neighbour Amenity

Policy DC 1 states that development must protect 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.

The site does not benefit from any immediate neighbours that have the potential to be affected by the development. As such the development would have minimal impact on neighbour amenity.

Amenity of future occupier

The development proposes a five bedroomed dwelling split over three detached buildings. The development is compliant with the NDSS that requires a minimum of 112sqm of floor space for a single storey dwelling. The development exceeds this minimum. Similarly, a sufficient amount of private amenity space for occupiers is proposed.

The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment as a shooting ground is in the vicinity and therefore shooting noise has the potential to have the amenity of the future occupier of the dwelling. The LPA environment health officer has reviewed this assessment and has no objection to the development subject to conditions. Whilst the objections of the shooting club are noted, in the absence of any objection from the Council's EHO, it is not considered that a refusal on amenity grounds could be sustained.

Highway Safety

Policy T 1 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.

The development proposes makes use of an existing access that will be altered as required by the conditions recommended by the highway authority. As such the development would not cause any highway safety concerns.

Trees and Ecology

Policy NE 1 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).

Policy NE 2 states that the Council will protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration. This will be achieved by:

Requiring that existing woodlands, healthy trees and hedgerows are retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh their loss.

The application is supported by an Ecological Appraisal, and Bat and Barn Owl Survey and a net gain metric to ensure net gain is achieved on the site.

The development proposes several biodiversity enhancements and mitigation required by the ecology surveys. Bat B contains a Bat roost and therefore works can not commence until a bat license is granted by Natural England and that works can not commence until after August 2024 and updated surveys would be required. The creation of habitats and long-term management of these habits would be secured via condition and a CEMP would also be secured by condition as well as the other recommendations within the surveys.

The trees to be removed from the site are require to facilitate the development and several trees will be planted on site to off set the loss of these trees.

Other matters

Concerns have been raised by nearby residents regarding the location of the site and concerns regarding the loss of the historical significant of the buildings. As part of the application process amendments have been made to the scheme to overcome concerns raised by the conservation officer and it is now considered that the buildings will preserve the historical interest of the buildings. In addition the principle of converting these buildings in the countryside is supported by the local plan. The development would not set a precedent for new development in the countryside as any other scheme would have to meet policy requirements.

With regard to the comment that the site is isolated and therefore unsustainable, the impacts associated with journeys to and from a single dwelling would be minimal, especially compared to the larger scheme which was previously refused and dismissed at appeal. Whilst the scheme would be largely car-dependent due to it's location, it is considered that this harm would be outweighed by the benefits of bringing a non -designated heritage asset back into a viable long-term use.

Concerns regarding the access, harm to wildlife that exists on the site and impact on the living conditions of occupants due to nearby shooting range/centre have all been addressed in the report above.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

It is for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that the application is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve with conditions

Case Officer: Rebecca Bowers

Recommendation Date: 31st July 2024

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council