

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0277
Valid 28/06/2024

MILL FARM GRATTON
LANE
GRATTON

ERECTION OF A NEW
DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area
- Impact on biodiversity habitat

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The 'site' (the building and its curtilage) appear on a wider unit of land that was granted a change of use planning permission in 2003 to provide an excavator training facility. The building is a portal frame lock up agricultural shed with two large roller shutter doors facing out onto the driveway and access to the excavator training facility to the east.

The building backs onto scrub, broad leaf woodland edge and a brook to the north.

PROPOSAL

This application proposes the replacement of the agricultural shed with a dwellinghouse, the dwelling would be built on a different position and footprint some 5 metres into undeveloped grass and scrub land to the west and built to replicate the metal clad shed that it would replace.

As discussed in greater detail below, the replacement would have a squarer footprint and mass, and a greater overall height both at the front, the highest point of a mono pitch roof, and at the rear, the lowest point of a mono pitch roof, than the agricultural shed that would be replaced.

The applicant submits that there are factors which they consider outweigh the Green Belt harm. They point to a recent Prior Approval (DET/2023/0045) granted for the change of use of the agricultural building to a dwellinghouse under Class Q, Part 3 of the GPDO as a 'fall back' position, and suggest that replacing the building with a new build dwelling would deliver particular benefits.

In comparison to the Class Q scheme that has approval, the proposal here would provide additional areas of parking and amenity space on undeveloped land.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)
S01 Spatial Objectives

SS1 Development Principles
SS10 Other Rural Area
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape Characteristics
NE1 Biodiversity
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

11/00853/PNOT_1 Implement storage shed. Prior approval not required.

DET/2023/0015 Change of Use of an agricultural building to form dwelling. PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED & REFUSED

DET/2023/0045 Change of Use of an agricultural building to form dwelling. PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED & APPROVED

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 16/08/2024

Neighbour consultation period ends: 16/08/2024

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Endon with Stanley PC: No objection.

The existing agricultural unit has planning consent for Class Q conversion to a dwelling. The new proposal seeks permission to replace the existing permitted development with a new dwelling, part 2 storey height but in the main of the same style of that permitted earlier this year as a conversion. The choice of materials are a combination of metal cladding and timber which reflect the agricultural buildings although colour proposed is black and not green as the other agricultural buildings on site.

The impact of the new dwelling compared to that permitted is minimal with a nominal increase in ridge height of 500mm while the footprint of the new dwelling is 55.9sq M compared to the converted agricultural unit that was 75sq M. Additional floor space for the new dwelling is formed by creating a first-floor space for 2 bedrooms.

While new dwellings are generally not considered acceptable in the greenbelt in principle, this proposal is on the back of the Class Q permission and while the building position is moved away slightly from the original building's location, the applicant advises that the development is for their adjacent agricultural and commercial premises and any permitted use should be considered on this basis. The use of materials generally reflects the agricultural site although the mixture of black cladding

and timber do give the building a more modern residential appearance. While Greenbelt development is, rightly, strictly governed we would support this application based, on the context of what has been outlined to provide suitable living accommodation of the site of the agricultural and commercial business.

Ramblers Association

The development must not obstruct footpath 49

Environmental Health

No objection subject to suggested conditions to control construction process, unexpected contamination, and artificial lighting.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection. Already approval for a dwelling on site. The development would be well clear of the highway

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Should the application be approved all recommendations within the PEA Report (Elite Ecology June 2024) to be included within a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) document to be conditioned as part of the consent, including plans and supporting information as needed.

Waste Collection

No issue

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on the Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear on the closed lists in the NPPF. Substantial weight should be attributed to any harm to the Green Belt and planning permission should not be granted unless other considerations, amounting to very special circumstances, clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harms that would result from the development.

This application proposes the replacement of an agricultural shed with a dwellinghouse, the dwelling would be built on a different position and footprint some 5 metres to the west and built to replicate the metal clad shed that it would replace.

The replacement building would not be in the same use and would be materially larger than the one it would replace. The existing building is agricultural and is excluded from being previously developed land for the purposes of the NPPF. The development would not therefore be provided for by any of the exceptions in the NPPF and it would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and harmful to the Green Belt.

The applicant submits that there are factors which they consider outweigh the Green Belt harm. They point to a recent Prior Approval (DET/2023/0045) granted for the change of use of the agricultural building to a dwellinghouse under Class Q, Part 3 of the GPDO as a 'fall back' position, and suggests that replacing the building with a new

build dwelling, rather than changing its use, would bring the following benefits to weight in favour of the development:

- The dwelling could be built with more modern and energy efficient building techniques
- The dwelling could be set further back from the track improving living conditions
- The dwelling could be provided with more amenity and parking space
- The dwelling would have a smaller footprint, make more efficient use of land and have only marginally greater height.

The applicant seems to suggest that the replacement building would have less impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing building. However, size comparisons don't in any real terms point to advantage in these regards and, rather point to the proposed development, overall, having greater harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The front elevation of the proposed building would be as wide as that of the existing, at around 10m, and it would be 1m taller on the front side (5.5m). The main bulk of the replacement building would have a squarer form with broader side elevations of 5m at each end and a shallow mono pitch roof that would fall less than 1m to the lower height at the rear of the building of 4.8m. The side elevations on the existing building have an angled orientation that give the impression of a slimmer profile at each end and the existing mono pitch roof falls considerably from a height of 4.4m at the front to 3m at the rear.

In these regards a reduction in footprint would be less than apparent, very marginal at best, but more significantly, the replacement building would have an obviously greater mass, bulk and height. Moreover, with this proposal to provide a new build replacement the development and a larger parking area would be pushed further away from the other existing buildings on site into open undeveloped land to the west and closer to trees. In all of these respects this would result in more harm to Green Belt openness in terms of both its spatial and visual aspects.

Those other matters that the application points to as being of 'benefit' – use of modern energy efficient building techniques and improved living conditions for the future occupant, are all matters settled with the Class Q prior approval. With the application under Class Q the applicant presented a case that the pre-existing building was capable of being converted to deliver a building reg compliant property and, under particular scrutiny from the planning officer, that it could provide suitable and acceptable living conditions for the intended occupant who has association with activities on site.

These are not matters that clearly outweigh the Green Belt harm and the other harms resulting from the development and they do not provide clear reasons to favour the application proposal, which is overall considered to be more harmful, over the existing Class Q approval for the change of use.

The development would be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. That harm is attributed substantial weight. The application does not advance considerations that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms that would result from the development. There would be conflict with Local Plan policy SS10 and the terms of the NPPF.

Design and Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

The proposed dwelling would provide a building that would be similar in appearance and character to that of the agricultural shed if it were to be converted in accordance with the Class Q approval. It has clearly been designed to replicate such development and in those regards it would be relatable to the agrarian character of the existing shed on site and those within the vicinity. Apart from some moderate countryside encroachment of the development to the west and some further separation from the other forms of development on the adjacent land, it would not appear overtly intrusive. The proposed development would not have any significantly greater harm on the character and appearance of the area or landscape character than that which would result from the approved conversion development. In those regards there would be no conflict with policy DC1 or DC3 of the Local Plan.

As the proposed development would be similar in appearance to the shed if it were to be converted and it would be designed to have the appearance of a converted portal frame agricultural shed, it would not deliver any particular benefits or merits to the character and appearance of the area that should obviously favour the 'inappropriate development' of the application proposal over that of the Class Q approval.

Biodiversity Impacts

The proposed development would provide a home for the applicant and they are agreeable to an occupancy condition in those regards. It is accepted therefore as a self-build development that is exempt from BNG requirements.

However, as a replacement new build, rather than the conversion of an existing shed, it is clear that the development would, with a different positioning and provision of a larger parking and amenity area, needlessly intrude and impact on undeveloped land to the north and west that provides multiple wildlife habitats as identified in the Elite Ecology Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, submitted with the application. The root protection areas for nearby affected trees have not been surveyed.

The preliminary ecological appraisal survey revealed multiple habitats on site. The following habitats were recorded on site:

- Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland
- Scattered Scrub
- Tall Ruderal
- Running water (Brook)
- Wall
- Buildings
- Hard Standing Ground
- Other habitats (Stone slabs and sand bags)

The application does not demonstrate that the loss of, or impact on, habitat can be readily or satisfactorily mitigated by incorporating and integrating the ecology recommendations into the scheme. In these regards there would be conflict with policy NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed replacement of the agricultural building with a dwellinghouse would be inappropriate development and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. The development would not be provided for by any of the exceptions that appear in the closed lists within the NPPF. The replacement building would appear materially larger than the building that it would replace and because of a greater mass, bulk and height; and, a positioning further away from pre existing development and into undeveloped land, would be harmful to the visual and spatial aspects of Green Belt openness. The considerations that have been advanced by the applicant, including that of the 'fall back' position provided by the recent Class Q prior approval, do not amount to circumstances that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms that would result from the development. In these regards there would be conflict with the terms of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the SMDC Local Plan.

The replacement building would be built on and needlessly adversely impact upon multiple wildlife habitats on site, as identified in the Elite Ecology Preliminary Ecological Appraisal submitted with the application. The root protection areas for nearby affected trees have not been surveyed and the application does not demonstrate that loss of habitat can be mitigated. In these regards there would be conflict with policy NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

Overall the proposal to replace the building with a new build dwelling as proposed, would not deliver benefits that would clearly point in favour of the application proposal as opposed to the approved change of use. Rather, it considered that the development proposed with this application would be a more harmful form of development for all of those reasons set out above.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 22nd August 2024

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council