

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0276
Valid 19/06/2024

GORSTY HILL FARM
GORSTY HILL ROAD
UPPER TEAN

PROPOSED REPLACEMENT
DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of the development
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area
- The impact on residential amenity
- The impact on the ecological value of the site

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is in the open countryside within a mile to the north-east of Upper Tean village (but is in the Cheadle ward and not Checkley). It comprises a traditional red-brick two-storey farmhouse on an existing working farm on the west side of Gorsty Hill Road, a narrow country lane which also provides the access to the site via a short farm access road which leads to the farmyard with the farmhouse to the south of it. Single-storey traditional barns or stables can be found to the north and a mix of traditional brick and also metal sheeted large farm livestock and storage building to the west. The farm is on slightly elevated ground above the road and on a crest of a hill where the land slopes down towards both the south and the north from the farm buildings. The farm is not in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a replacement farmhouse, also with two storeys and which would be built in the same part of the site as the existing and would occupy much of its current footprint. The proposed dwelling would have the same number of bedrooms as existing (three). A Design and Access Statement has been included which states the following:

The existing dwelling is in a poor state of repair with evidence of significant, differential settlement, general movement and damp issues caused by high ground levels. The proposed replacement dwelling will be smaller than the existing.

The existing dwelling has an overall footprint of 115m², an internal ground floor area of 101.60m² and a first floor area of 80m².

The proposed dwelling has an overall footprint of 103m², an internal ground floor area of 87m² and a first floor area of 58m².

The proposed dwelling will be built with the ground floor 'finished floor level' 150mm higher than the Existing. The overall height of the building when viewed from the publicly visible south side is just 200mm higher than the existing dwelling.

The external walls of the dwelling would be in facing brickwork to Local Authority approval. The roof would be covered with Staffordshire Blue plain tiles. Eaves and verge details will be brick corbels. Windows and external doors would be UPVC.

The existing farmhouse has a front/primary elevation towards the south, turning its back on the farmyard to the north. The new proposed replacement dwelling, however, would have a front/primary elevation facing the farmyard (where the main entrance is located) but amended plans were received to add another entrance door in the centre of the rear elevation of the main part of the house (with canopy porch over) to give the impression of it being the primary elevation, consistent with the original orientation of the farmhouse.

An adjacent outbuilding would be replaced with a brick and tile open fronted double car port with a similar sized footprint. This would have a similar traditional design approach to the farmhouse.

Further amendments to the proposal were made on 30th September 2024 which put forward a simpler farmhouse style of design rather than a country cottage, with standard two-storey height eaves, the removal of the half-dormer features, the removal of the bay window, the recessing of the side projection behind the main front and rear walls and the reduction in the roof pitch of the car port to reduce its height.

There would be no other alterations to curtilage of the dwelling. There is current garden area to the south of the dwelling which would remain and there is car parking available in the yard which would also remain.

The application also included a Bat Survey Report dated June 2024. Later on in the process, a revised Bat Survey Report (dated 25th July 2024) was submitted.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- H1 New Housing
- DC1 Design Considerations
- NE1 Biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 15 (Natural Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

In 2023 there were two planning permissions granted for large new livestock and storage buildings including the replacement of the traditional brick range of farm buildings to the west of the yard.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 30.7.24

Neighbour consultation period ends: 30.7.24

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None received.

Local Highways Authority

No objection

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions applying to new dwellings on agricultural sites.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Original consultation response: *"A holding objection is recommended until further information is provided to confidently rule out maternity roost presence given the early season surveys and accumulation of droppings in the roof void. Similarly, further information is needed to clarify the correct level of hibernation potential in line with current guidance. Should any adjustments be made to the roost status/type suitable mitigation/compensation measures should also be made."*

Further consultation response following the receipt of a revised Bat Report which includes the information requested above:

"Following the receipt and review of the documents relating to a protected species, we wish to remove our holding objection and no further comments."

OFFICER COMMENTS

The replacement of dwellings in the countryside is not unacceptable in the countryside providing they would not be of a scale and design which would be

harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area. There is no conflict with the Local Plan in this respect.

The new dwelling would be a similar size and height to the existing, which the applicants wants to remove due to its deterioration and a poor structural condition. It would also be placed in the same part of the site as the existing. In terms of design and appearance it is of sufficient quality to approve. The current dwelling has a traditional farmhouse character and this is replicated to some extent in the amended plans received on 30th September 2024 and maintains red brick materials, Staffs blue tiles appropriate to rural-style fenestration and traditional features to ensure it respects the rural qualities of the area.

Conditions would be added requiring more specific fenestration and eaves and verge detailing to ensure the proposed dwelling would be entirely in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the existing farmhouse. The windows would be UPVC whilst the current windows are timber. However, the site is not in a Conservation Area or within the setting of listed buildings. It is a stand alone new dwelling and it is not considered the use of uPVC as a material for this particular new-build in this area would amount to any significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, especially given that the overall style, design and form of the new dwelling would still succeed in appearing as a traditional rural dwelling in keeping with the character of the area.

The proposed car port would be in keeping with the new dwelling, is an appropriate size and form and would amount to an improvement on the appearance of the current outbuilding it would replace.

There is a considerable distance between the proposed dwelling and the nearest dwellings outside of the property and the proposal would not harm the residential amenities of the area.

Finally with regard to the impact on the ecological value of the area, a bat survey was undertaken of the existing house to be demolished and the presence of long eared brown bats was found. SWT issued a holding objection as it needed more info on a maternity roost and reasons why this was discounted. This has been achieved and the holding objection has been removed. SWT has concurred with the methods of ensuring the bats will be safe during the demolition and development process and also the mitigation measures put forward. SWT also considers that bat boxes and bat tiles should be provided on the new development and I consider this should be added as a condition attached to the approval.

Although bats were discovered, the Ecology "3 Tests" do not need to be applied to the determination of the application as this is for a replacement dwelling and therefore falls under the exemptions for such tests to be applied. The applicant will need to apply for a Natural England licence before works commence to ensure that bats will not be harmed by the development process.

No other protected species were identified at the survey phase including birds within the current house.

There is no requirement for the new development to lead to a Biodiversity Net Gain as although bats were discovered in the existing farmhouse, these habitats are not listed as "Priority Habitats" and there would be no loss of "potential habitat" of over 25 sq,m elsewhere because although there would be encroachment of development to the north of the current footprint of the house, this would be onto a current hardstanding yard area and no potential biodiversity habitat at all would be lost. The proposal would therefore not meet the criteria for obligatory BNG and is exempt from this requirement.

No highway safety concerns are raised.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is acceptable in principle and would not harm the visual or residential amenities of the area and would not lead to any harm to the ecological value of the site. It would therefore comply with the policies of the Council's Local Plan and would also be in line with the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore the proposal is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 3.10.24

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council