



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Change of use of three holiday cottages to Residential Dwellings (C3) at Bank Top Farm, Bank Top Road, Dilhorne, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST10 2PN

**Written and prepared by Planning By Design on
Behalf of Philip and Kathleen Davenhall**

Introduction

Planning By Design (the agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Kathleen Davenhall (the applicant) to submit a planning application to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (the Local Planning Authority) for the Change of use of three holiday cottages to residential Dwellings (C3) at Bank Top Farm, Bank Top Road, Dilhorne, ST10 2PN.

In support of this application, the following Planning, Design and Access Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy along with supplementary design guidance.

Site Context and Location

Bank Top Farm is a Grade II Listed Building located in rural Staffordshire. The holiday cottages are located to the northeast of Bank Top Farm and are also Grade II listed. The properties currently share a 'managed space' outdoors with another holiday cottage, owned by someone else. The properties are also located within the Green Belt.



Fig.1 Site location plan

Proposed Development

The proposal is for the change of use of no.3 red brick holiday cottages at the site from C1 usage to residential C3 usage as they have proven to be no longer economically viable to the clients as tourism accommodation. The cottages at the site which this application applies to are:

- Laura Cottage – two-storey cottage, featuring external (front door) entrance into living room, with the kitchen/diner located to the rear on the ground floor, and one bedroom and one bathroom on the first floor.
- Severn Cottage – two-storey cottage, with external entrance (front door) into living room leading to separate kitchen, an additional living space and a large bedroom on the first floor.
- Corner Cottage – two-storey square shaped cottage, with external entrance (front door) into open planned kitchen and living room on ground floor, one bedroom, storage space, and one bathroom on first floor.

The applicants intend to retain the remaining four cottages for holiday let usage to ensure they are maintaining a tourism facility.

There will be no alterations to the external elevations or internal floorplans as a part of the proposal. The specifics of the floor plans, dimensions and design of the cottages can be found within the accompanying planning drawings.

Context of the proposal

Regarding the reason for the proposed change of use, the applicant has written the following in support of the application:

“We have been running the cottages since 1994 but in the last 3 years profitability has fallen significantly, we feel this is due to several reasons; Alton Towers have increased their accommodation offerings with their hotels and woodland lodges, there is also greater competition locally and there has been an increase in Air BnB accommodation that is available.

We feel as though these factors alongside the cost-of-living crisis are having a major effect on the business and we can see that because of this we are having far fewer guests staying for more than one night compared to before covid when guests would commonly book for 2-3 nights. Being holiday lets we also only open from mid-March to mid-November due to the weather and also the fact that Alton Towers closes during this period and that is where many of our guests are visiting when they stay with us, so this also affects our bookings and forces us to close.

In the last few years, we have also had numerous enquiries from local people asking about renting one of our cottages, but we have been unable to rent any of them out long term due to them being holiday lets.

We will be retaining 4 of our cottages as holiday lets as we feel this number of holiday lets is workable and we plan to refurbish one of these cottages in the near future, the other 3 cottages can then be changed to residential use and produce an income.”

Planning History

- SMD/1991/0649 Feb 1991 - Material landfill site – Approved.

- SMD/1991/0652 Mar 1991 - Listed building consent for replacement windows erection of 2 porches and removal of paint from 2 elevations- Approved
- SMD/2002/0389 Mar 2002 -Change of use of holiday units to 4 dwellings -Refused.
- SMD/2003/0620 Apr 2003 - Change of use from holiday units to residential -Refused.
- SMD/2003/0621 Apr 2003 - Conservation area consent for change of use -Outcome not available
- SMD/2005/0243 Apr 2005 - Change of use from holiday cottages to short term rented accommodation - Refused.
- DET/2020/0035 July 2010 Erection of agricultural building - Refused.
- DET/2022/0012 Feb 2022 - Agricultural mono-pitch building for storage of fodder/implements - Approved.
- SMD/2022/0315 June 2022 - The proposed building is a purpose-built agricultural livestock building, which will be utilized to house the cattle in the holding at Bank Top farm. The building will be of portal frame construction, measuring some 75ft x 40ft, with a 12ft eaves height. The building will be finished with concrete panels to 2 meters in height with metal clad thereafter – refused.

Planning Policy Designations

- National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

Relevant Policies and Sections

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development,
- Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes,
- Section 11: Making effective use of land,
- Section 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places.
- Section 13: Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020)

- Policy SS1: Development Principles
- Policy SS2: Settlement Hierarchy
- Policy SS10: Other Rural Areas Strategy
- Policy E4: Tourism and cultural development
- Policy H1: New Housing Development
- Policy DC1: Design Considerations
- Policy DC2: The Historic Environment

- Policy T1: Development and Sustainable Transport
- Policy C1: Creating Sustainable Communities

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD
- Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD
- Space about dwellings

Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

This application requests the material change of use of three of the cottages at the site to Use Class C3. The principle of this proposal should be supported by the Council, the reasons of which are outlined below.

According to Policy SS2 the site is categorised as “Other Rural Areas”. Policy SS2 defines ‘Other Rural Areas’ as *“the open countryside where development is normally unacceptable and Green Belt where further development is generally inappropriate. Within these areas there are some groups of houses and hamlets which are not identified as ‘smaller villages’ because of their predominantly open character and loose-knit nature. They also contain major developed areas which may be suitable for appropriate development or redevelopment.”*

Policy H1 goes on to state the following:

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

- a) Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H 3.*
- 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.*

When development is located in the Green Belt, national Green Belt Policy will apply.”

It is arguable that the property falls under the type of development described in point D above. The building is functional as a residential dwelling and will ensure the optimal viable use of a heritage asset.

Policy 13 of the NPPF seeks to control and protect the Green Belt from inappropriate new build development, which harms the openness of the area. As the proposal is for a conversion of an existing built development, which are already viewed within the context of other built forms at the site, the proposal cannot be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The policy also in turn complies with Policy H1 and given the local interest in the cottages for living accommodation there is arguably a local need within the local area and community for further housing.

Notwithstanding the above, as of the most recent 'Statement of Five-Year Housing Land Supply (1st April 2023)', the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply and has only demonstrated a housing supply of 3.58 years. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11 of the NPPF) should be applied when assessing development proposals. As will be discussed further below, the proposal can be considered sustainable development. The proposal will contribute to providing new market housing and contribute to a diverse housing mix in the area, whilst providing a modest amount of necessary housing within its rural location to serve local need. The proposed usage is also not expected to negatively impact the character of the area. The property is served by the public transport network and will provide acceptable levels of residential amenity for neighbouring occupiers, as well as provide suitable internal and external amenity as per the status quo.

The applicants also acknowledge the benefit tourism accommodation can bring to an area and, in accordance with Policy E4, the applicants wish to retain no.4 of the cottages as tourism accommodation.

Therefore, the principle of development should be considered acceptable in this instance as it complies with national, local and neighborhood planning policy. Further comment on this is provided below.

Visual Impact and Character

The change of use will not harm the visual amenity of the property or the character of the surrounding area, as there are no alterations proposed to the external elevations of the cottages. The heritage implications of the proposal are also considered within the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment.

Impact on Amenity

Whilst there are some nearby neighbouring occupiers to the proposed site, neighbouring amenity is unlikely to be impacted any more than the existing use of the cottages. The nature of the proposal will not infringe upon surrounding uses and the character of the area will therefore not be altered by the proposed usage. As such, overbearing, overlooking, and overshadowing are not expected to be a significant concern for this development.

Regarding waste, the current bin storage facilities will ensure appropriate storage and recycling of waste. And as with any dwelling, the applicant will take responsibility for sorting and recycling of waste, having regard for the council's residential waste removal services.

Concerning housing quality and amenity for existing and future occupiers, the proposal will result in no.3 reasonably sized cottage living units. The three properties will feature one bedroom and large living spaces, including ample storage, that align with nationally described space standards. The proposed units benefit from private access and contain windows, providing adequate light and ventilation for future occupiers, as well as some external amenity space.

It can be considered that the proposal offers an acceptable level of amenity in line with policies TD1, C1 and H1 of the Local Plan and guidance within relevant SPDs. We welcome any conditions or modifications requested by the case officer to ensure the proposal can be fit for purpose and can exist in this area.

Highway / Parking / Transport Matters

Whilst the site is located within the open countryside and Green Belt, the site is within two miles of Dilhorne, which is an ancient parish and village. The site is located five miles from the market town of Cheadle and some seven miles from the city of Stoke-on-Trent, all where residents can find services and amenities. The residents of the cottages can also find a bus service (32 service) to Stoke on Trent and Cheadle from outside the nearby New Park Farm located on Kingsley Road, an approximate 20-minute walk.

The parking arrangements for each cottage is as follows:

- Laura Cottage – one parking space available outside the property
- Corner Cottage – one parking space available outside the property, and further parking can be provided on the grass area behind the property
- Severn Cottage – two parking spaces

As the properties will house one or two residents, this is deemed sufficient. In addition, further parking can be provided in the shared area in front of the property if required.

Due to the small, scaled nature of the proposal, the change of use is also not expected to have a significant impact upon the local highway network. As such, highway and parking matters are not considered to be significantly impacted by the proposals.

Therefore, whilst the cottages are rural, they are not cut off entirely from the public transport network, and it is also not expected that the proposal will cause any greater harm to highways than the existing holiday cottages development at the site. Therefore, the proposal can be considered compliant with sustainable development, and policies of the Local Plan.

Other Matters

In addition, it is assumed the cottages will be required to meet EPC regulations for Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations if the applicant wishes to rent the units out. We welcome conditions and guidance related to this from the council.

The proposed minor development is unlikely to exceed the guidelines for water usage and does not fall within a Flood Risk Zone, or a critical drainage area.

Planning Balance

Economically, the scheme supports a mix of housing locally and will provide economic benefits to the local area, economy and housing , market by providing new housing. Providing local homes can also boost the economy in the area through local spending and connecting people to jobs locally.

Environmentally, the proposal will not affect the character of the surrounding area, and there are no anticipated risks to public environmental health. The proposal will also not impact neighbouring amenity in a detrimental manner.

Socially, the scheme will provide a socially sustainable use to the locality and will stimulate a diversification of uses and housing mix within the area and wider region it is situated within.

The proposed development will be in line with sustainable development and assist in delivering the housing objectives set out by section 5 of the NPPF through the creation of additional housing units to this area and the advancement of a diverse housing mix by adding no.3 new homes to the council's property market. Likewise, the proposal is in line with section 11 of the NPPF as the proposal will maximize effective use of the existing property / land by converting the site into no. 3 housing units.

On balance and based on current policy the proposal can be considered an acceptable development, and should not warrant a refusal in this instance.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposal presents an appropriate use that will not lead to any adverse impact to the surrounding area and will contribute to the council meeting housing needs within the locality. The proposal represents sustainable development which is in line with local and national planning policy and guidance. The proposal will deliver significant social and economic benefits to the applicants, and the local community, while not resulting in any detrimental harm to the surrounding area.

We kindly request that the Council supports this application. Should the Council have any further questions in relation to this proposal, do not hesitate to contact Planning by Design. For decision making, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should look to approve sustainable development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.