



SMYTHEMAN
ARCHITECTURAL



PLANNING STATEMENT

for

**The Grange
Eaves Lane
Whiston
Staffordshire
ST10 2JB**

December 2024

Introduction

This statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the erection of a barn for agricultural use at The Grange, Whiston Eaves Lane, Whiston, in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The application is submitted by Smytheman Architectural, on behalf of Mr and Mrs John Foster. Other parties with an input to the application are BiOme Consulting for PEA and BNG reports, and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for nature recovery advice.

Site Description

The Grange is a homestead on Whiston Eaves Lane, with a total landholding extending to approximately 5.29 acres. It is in the vicinity of the village of Whiston, bordered by Whiston Eaves lane to the southwest, with arable fields and Whiston Golf Course forming the remaining borders. The Grange stands within the green belt, it is not listed, does not form part of any conservation area, and there are no trees on site subject to preservation orders. The Grange comprises a dwelling and two outbuildings and all are accessed from Whiston Eaves Lane. This access also forms the main access into the fields behind which as stated earlier are in ownership.

The overall contour of the land slopes upwards to the northeast from behind the main dwelling, with the main dwelling sitting on a slightly raised position to Whiston Eaves Lane with the land to the main dwelling, its associated outbuildings, and its gardens running parallel to Whiston Eaves Lane which can be seen in the below google image and also the 3d View as figures 1 and 2 respectively.

The landholding at The Grange is currently used for grazing and has had little maintenance carried out for a number of years. It comprises of two fields with drystone walls and hedging in parts creating the boundary, which have fallen into disrepair in a number of places. There is a public footpath dissecting the right-hand field (which contains the application site) from the golf course to a neighbouring farmland, and on to Whiston Eaves Lane.

There is an isolated open fronted barn to the rear right of the main dwelling which used to store the farm machines

Proposal

The application proposes to erect a purpose-built barn for mixed agricultural use, which includes storage of machinery to manage the landholding, livestock, and in support of future agricultural demands at the homestead. The proposed barn would have a footprint of 25m x 10m, with an eaves height of 4.8m, and a ridge height of 7.8m. It will be constructed from a steel portal frame with concrete panels to a height of 1.8m. The walls above this height will be in composite colour coated cladding, with the roof of similar composite cladding with translucent sheets. The southwest elevation would have a pedestrian access door and vehicle access door at the western end, and the southeast elevation would have a larger vehicle access door, both served by a yard accessed from a farm track off the existing main entrance to the homestead. The proposed barn finished ground level would be on the same level as the existing yard serving the homestead, with the northeast and northwest elevations dug into the slope of the field to accommodate the building at a low level.

Justification

A key objective of the applicant during their ownership of The Grange is to make good and effective use of the assets for management of the land, with the intention to:

- Improve habitat for wildlife
- Enhance biodiversity in the area
- Contribute to the rural conservation and regeneration of the area
- Contribute to the mitigation of climate change

It will be achieved through meeting the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, and further measures taken voluntarily by the applicant to enhance the ecological value of the site.

The existing outbuildings are of an age where they were not designed for use with modern machinery, or are considered inadequate to store such items securely. With the public footpath running through the landholding, there is an increased security risk which would be mitigated by the proposed barn in its design and function for machine storage.

The Grange is registered with DEFRA under the CPH number 37/028/0301. Its landholding is currently rented out and used for local dairy cattle grazing. It is the intention of the applicant to add to this, reverting a primary function of The Grange to that of a smallholding, providing a supplementary income from the effective use of the land and assets. Land management for nature recovery on the site would be enabled by the proposed barn, along with the potential for enterprise and farm diversification, enhancing the local rural economy.

Nature Recovery, PEA and BNG

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain report in relation to this application, have been compiled by BiOme Consulting. The final reports can be found as supplementary evidence in support of the application .

The PEA has been produced from the results of an extensive site survey and desk study carried out in October 2024. The site survey identified any potentially valuable habitats, plant species, and the presence and /or potential of protected or controlled species. The desk study identified any applicable legislation, and any designated sites, granted EPS licences and GCN surveys and licences within 2km of the site. The conclusion of the PEA is that the site is considered to be of limited intrinsic ecological value for habitat, the application will have no impact on nearby sites of ecological interest, and no further surveys are required.

The BNG baseline habitat definition assessment was carried out using the UK Hab system for classification, and DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric guidance for condition, in October 2024. The habitat has been assessed for linear and area habitat value, and enhancement will be achieved through hedgerow and area units. Post construction enhancement of habitat is detailed on Figure 3 of the BNG report and is calculated to result in a net gain of 13.41% for area and 452.18% for hedgerow. Enhancement area would be species rich wildflower mix EM3F Special General Purpose Wildflowers, and additional hedging would be a species rich

native hedging mix with a far superior ecological value to the Laurel on other areas of the site.

On acquisition of The Grange the applicant approached Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for advice. A site visit was arranged with David Cadman, Head of Nature Recovery Networks and a series of suggestions were made to enhance biodiversity on the site. In addition to the requirements for BNG, the applicant proposes:

- To plant an orchard covering approximately 250m²
- To install to the proposed barn 2 bat boxes, one owl nest box at ridge level with 4 swallow and swift nest boxes positioned under the eaves for various species of bird and bats
- Restore dry-stone walling in disrepair on the site

The steps taken as part of this application, exceed the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain legislation. This is in line with the applicant's key objective to improve the ecological value of the property. The applicant is committed to carry out works lawfully and in such a manner to minimise ecological impact in line with the recommendations of the PEA and BNG reports.

Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

With reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the following chapters are considered to be relevant to the application:

- 4. Decision Making
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well designed spaces
- 13. Protecting green belt land
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

With reference to the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020), the following policies are considered to be relevant to the application:

- SS1 Development principals
- SS9 Smaller Village Area Strategy
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- SS11 Churnet Valley Area Strategy
- SD2 Renewable / Low-carbon Energy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources

Churnet Valley Masterplan

Threats identified in the Churnet Valley in general include the potential negative impact on local biodiversity, and loss of historic features in the landscape. Whether that be as part of ongoing developments or from other activity in the valley past and present. It is considered that these threats could be relevant to this application, but are mitigated by the proposed steps to enhance biodiversity and repair & conserve features already on site.

This application has been developed with the NPPF, Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and Churnet Valley Master Plan at the forefront, and the proposals therein intend to comply with the applicable policies as identified in the following paragraphs.

Assessment

The planning policy and local guidance is consistent in highlighting the Government's commitment for a positive response to planning proposals that would deliver sustainable enhancement of the environment and rural economy. The primary objective for the applicant is to implement improvements to the landholding for the benefit of wildlife and environment, whilst making good use of the land. The barn would provide a functional, purpose built mixed use secure structure for storage of equipment and machinery (tractor, trailer, roller, mower, topper, etc) as well as livestock and feed (hay, straw, etc). The proposal would be supported in principal by NPPF chapters 4, 11, 13, 14 and 15, and Local Plan policies SS9, SS10, SS11 and SD2 as a building essential in the countryside, supporting effective land use, enabling protection and enhancement of biodiversity and development of rural enterprise.

The proposed barn has been positioned to the northeast, behind and in close proximity to the existing buildings and garden, and therefore does not appear as a standalone or sporadic structure. It has a modest width and height (to accommodate farm machinery and animal feeds), has been positioned and cut into the land to ensure that its visual impact is limited and that its overall massing within the landscape is reduced.

The barn has been specifically designed for the purpose of mixed use agriculture and uses standard construction techniques and materials. The use of colour coated profile cladding from the Juniper Green, Moorland and Olive green range of the plastisol coating as shown in the below image, ensures that its visual appearance is appropriate and in keeping with its rural location.



Considering the relatively isolated location of the application site, the location of the proposed barn in relation to the existing structures, planting and finished ground level, it is not considered that the proposal would have an unreasonable negative impact on amenity, neighbouring properties, or neighbouring land use. As part of the application, the planting of native hedgerow and orchard, along with an area of enhancement aims to deliver a net gain to biodiversity which is in exceedance of the BNG legislative requirements. The proposal is considered to comply with the NPPF chapter 12 and Local Plan policies SS1, DC1, DC3, NE1 and NE2 which aim to secure good design and conserve the landscape.

The barn would be accessed via a farm track off the existing entrance to The Grange with no requirement for additional access to or from Whiston Eaves Lane. The proposal would not result in significant intensification of the use of the site, it is considered that there would be no conflict with Local Plan policy T1, or the guidance of the NPPF.

Conclusion

In conclusion the barn is modest in size and commensurate with the agricultural and land management needs of the smallholding, for the purposes of agriculture to ensure that the applicant can manage the landholding effectively, while conserving and enhancing the environment. The applicants recognise their responsibilities in proposing a quality development, which compliments The Grange historically and environmentally along with its surrounding area and in line with local and national policies.