

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0106	WHITEHOUGH COLEY	PROPOSED STRUCTURAL
SMD/2024/0107	HOLE	WORK AND RENOVATION/
Valid 12/03/2024	IPSTONES	ALTERATIONS TO CHANGE
		USE OF BARN FROM
		AGRICULTURAL TO C3
		DWELLING
		(FULL - MINOR)
		(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT)

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the proposal
The impact on the character and appearance and historic fabric of a Listed Building.
The impact on the setting of other listed buildings
The impact on the visual amenities of the area in general
The impact on residential amenity
The impact on highway safety
The impact on the ecological value of the area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is within a mile to the north-west of Ipstones village and is in the countryside but is not in the Green Belt. It comprises a vacant historic Grade II listed stone barn which is in the middle of a historic farmstead and former Whitehough Hall estate, which lies to the north of Church Lane, a country lane which provides the access to the farm via a long farm track. There are three adjacent listed farm buildings to the west and south-west including a Grade II* listed farmhouse. There are more modern larger farm buildings to the north, south and east. The farmstead is surrounded by open land and fields. The modern farm building immediately to the north of the old listed barn is also included within the site. The old barn became vacant in 2021.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application and accompanying Listed Building Consent application, submitted and validated in March 2024, for the change of use of the old listed barn into a 3-bed dwelling involving internal and external works but no extensions other than the rebuilding of a “porch” projection on the north elevation which would raise the roof ridge level with the main ridge of the building, using matching stone and tile materials. The existing openings would be re-used with some enlargement but no new openings other than a number of new rooflights.

The wider north section of the building would be used for the new dwelling with the narrower south section retained for domestic storage purposes but new fixed glazing would be inserted into existing openings along with other external improvements. The ground floor of the dwelling would be mostly a large open plan kitchen/dining/living space. The Bird and owl boxes would also be fixed to the walls. The drawings show the new windows would have dark grey aluminium frames.

The yard area to the west would be resurfaced to become a parking area for three cars. New dry-stone walls would be placed around the perimeter of the site which would separate the plot from the other farm buildings which appear to now be in different ownership. A small garden area would also be provided on an existing grass area to the front of the building (to the west).

The application as originally submitted included a Design, Access & Heritage Statement (produced by the applicant's agent), Structural Survey Report and Bat & Bird Report.

Amendments were received in July 2024 along with a letter from the applicant's Ecologist in response to concerns raised about bats by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. This included more details of bat roosts at the site and mitigation/compensation measures.

Further information and amendments were received in August 2024 and again in November in 2024 which also included a revised Design, Access & Heritage Statement (Revision A), again produced by the agent, which gives the initially proposed description of works as follows:

The proposed change of use and refurbishment/repair works seek to retain all external elements to the roof and walls i.e. the plain tiles and the coursed stone. Rainwater goods (which are missing or poor) are to be replaced with cast iron goods and window and door openings are to be reformed and made good as per the submitted elevations. Frame materials and colour are to be agreed with the Conservation Officer as part of deliberations or as agreed by condition.

Internally the 'open' two storey element is to be retained as an open space and all walls are to be made good and the existing internal brick walls and floor over are to be retained.

All roof timbers in the two storey element are to remain and only essential remedial works are to be undertaken following closer inspection once the roof coverings have been removed and set aside.

Within the two storey element of the milking parlour/cattle feeding area the existing roof timbers and large trusses are to be retained, with only essential repairs being undertaken – the original first floor boarding is to be replaced, and any salvageable timbers are to be re-used to sub-divide the open plan ground floor into living areas i.e. no internal partitions at that level.

At first floor the accommodation is to be formed within the existing roof space, using the trusses and purlin timbers as features – any additional salvaged timbers from the

first floors are to be re-used where possible in these partitions as door heads, etc. There will be some minor trimming for the four rooflights being introduced. Given the age and construction of the building the client proposes to use natural building materials such as lime plaster, hemp/lambswool insulation and other such materials such as sisal board. This approach will enable the building to 'breathe' and 'stretch' without any significant harm to the structure.

In addition, the client does not propose to install any form of damp proof course or polythene membrane to the ground floor areas – he proposes using a limecrete type floor and screed, with underfloor heating, fed from a new air source heat pump. This will give a more even temperature to the structure.

Around the exterior of the building there will be a french drain, in order to reduce water pressure around the main walls and new lime based repointing will allow the walls to breathe and dry out through evaporation, etc. The external repointing is essential, given the very poor condition of the existing jointing, as evident on the external photographs accompanying this application.

The proposed design for the dwelling has sought to minimise the alterations to the barn, save the single storey lean to porch to the rear of the property (which replaces a former part visible structure, which used to connect the two barn sections. In addition, the works proposed seek to re-use all available materials and minimize any changes to external features, save the installation of new roof lights to the first floor accommodation – new window openings have been resisted.

Further amendments and information was submitted in April 2025 along with a 58-page detailed Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment carried out by Mel Morris Conservation. The amended scheme involves less structural alterations and replacements such and the key changes include the retention of the first floor and the removal of previous proposed metal framework to support the walls.

On 11th June 2025, an amended Location Plan and Site Plan were received to show the modern farm storage building to the north of the old barn excluded from the application site. The modern building is going to be retained but remains in the same ownership as the application site.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (Adopted Sep 2020)

SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
NE1 Biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Feb 2025)

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design), 15 (Natural Environment) and 16 (The Historic Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant to this particular proposal.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 30.4.24

Neighbour consultation period ends: 30.4.24.

Press Advert: 19.4.24

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

Ipstones: Support approval of the development subject to suitable access to the development being available.

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

Environmental Health

No objection subject to standard conditions normally recommended for barn conversions.

Conservation Officer

The first response was in May 2024. The officer had no objection to the principle of the proposal but requested a significant amount of further information. By the time the further information had been received the officer no longer worked for the Council.

The final Conservation Officer comments in response to the April 2024 Amended Plans and Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment Report, are as follows (dated 20th May 2025):

The amended information has provided a more robust statement of significance, which would be in accordance with par.207 of NPPF. As set out in the supporting information, there is no longer structural alterations required such as the previously proposed removal of flooring and installation of metal framework to support the walls. This amendment has reduced some of the level of harm to the internal significance as it would help conserve the authenticity and integrity of the building's internal architectural interest.

The proposed scheme would reuse existing openings so as to minimise the impact on the historic fabric and agricultural appearance of the building. Nevertheless, the

insertion of windows and doors to these openings as well as the proposed rooflights would introduce overtly domestic features which would still diminish this historic agrarian character.

The extent of the proposed boundary treatment and enclosure has also been slightly reduced to maintain the openness of the yard and somewhat minimise the visual impact of the residential conversion on the setting of the listed farmstead.

Overall, the principle of a conversion to residential use would still result in a degree of heritage harm as it would involve the loss of historic associative value of the building's original use. The proposed internal subdivision and external alterations would also diminish the agrarian character of the building. Whilst the ownership between the principal house and the surrounding agricultural buildings has been severed, this proposal would still have a harmful impact on the historic setting of the listed farmstead.

The amended Heritage Statement provides robust justification for the proposed level of heritage harm and outlines how, on balance, this proposed new use would help secure the long-term conservation of the designated heritage asset.

In summary, the proposal would result in a moderate-high degree of harm to the Grade II listed barn and its setting through the loss and erosion of its agricultural character. It would also have a moderate harmful impact on the setting of the surrounding Grade II & Grade II listed buildings at Whitehough Farm. This harm identified would be contrary to the provisions of s.16 and 66 of the Act.*

With reference to the planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage assets (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). There has, however, been clear and convincing justification provided for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) due to the building's redundancy. The proposal seeks to secure the optimum viable use for the asset which would help conserve it for future generations (par.215 and 210 of NPPF).

There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective, subject to several conditions requiring specifications of the agreed works and further details of exact new building materials.

Historic Buildings & Places (HBAP)

April 2024: No objection to the principle of the proposal but requested a significant amount of further information.

October 2024: Concerns raised over unnecessary replacement of historic parts such as the first floor.

January 2025: Request clarification of whether the hayloft beams will also be retained now that the first floor is confirmed to be retained.

May 2025 - Final Comments in response to the April 2025 Amendments and Heritage Assessment & Impact Report:

We reviewed the additional documents and note the changes that have been made and have no further comments to make at this stage. We are content to defer to the advice provided by your conservation officer, dated 20 May.

Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

May 2024: Objection on the following grounds:

-insufficient description/assessment of the building's significance and to enable a full understanding of the potential impact of the proposals thereon.

-insufficient details (drawings, specifications, method statements) to: understand the existing arrangements; detail the proposed works; and to understand the potential impact of the proposed works.

-the proposals would not preserve the building's features of special architectural or historic interest, and would result in harm to/loss of the building's significance.

-no clear and convincing justification has been provided for the harm to/loss of significance, and there are no public benefits.

October 2024: *It is with regret that we advise that the amended plans and details do not overcome the concerns we expressed in our initial consultation response. Additionally, the application remains absent of sufficient detail and the requisite clear and convincing justification.*

January 2025: *It is with regret that we are again unable to offer a positive response on the application due to i. a continued lack of sufficient information to understand the extant building and the likely impact of the proposals on its significance, and ii. it appears that the scheme would still result in some potential harm/losses and which require clear and convincing justification.*

June 2025 - Final Comments in response to the April 2025 Amendments and Heritage Assessment & Impact Report:

In our view, while the revised scheme would still result in some harm and losses, there are significant improvements in the proposals themselves and in the application documentation. We advise that we are now content to defer to you and the Council's Conservation Officer and offer the final comments to assist your authority.

The final comments comprised recommendations of further improvements that could be made.

Historic England

We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT).

A Holding Objection was issued on the grounds of insufficient information. In order to remove this objection, SWT requested further information of bat roosts which were

discovered in the building and also the compensation and mitigation measures for their removal. SWT also commented as follows (key comments):

Whitehough Wood Site of Biological Importance (SBI) comprising ecologically valuable grassland and woodland habitats is within 200m of the site and Blackbank Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is within 500m of the site. They are considered sufficiently distant to remain unaffected by the proposals.

There appear to be some trees within the wider area but they appear to be unaffected by the proposals. The Bat and Bird Activity Survey Report states that any new tree/shrub planting should comprise native species and this is to be welcomed.

The MAGIC1 interactive map indicates a number of potential Priority woodland habitats and an area of Priority lowland meadow within 500m of the site. There is a small stream approximately 100m to the south-east the site. The proposals are not anticipated to affect these habitats, based on the information reviewed.

The modern agricultural building is reported as having no/low potential for roosting bats.

A total of nine common pipistrelle bats were recorded as roosting in exterior features of the Grade II listed barn during the surveys in May/June 2023.

Six/seven brown long-eared bats were recorded as roosting within the Grade II listed barn during the surveys in May/June 2023.

The Bat and Bird Activity Survey Report identified evidence of nesting birds on site, including nesting birds within both buildings on site, including nesting Swallow.

The report recommends ten swallow nest cups to be installed within the modern agricultural barn to compensate for loss of swallow nest sites across the scheme and for the installation of one barn owl nest box, four general bird nest boxes suitable for passerine finches and two sparrow terrace nest boxes.

On the basis of the further information requested by SWT and received by the applicant in July 2024, SWT removed its holding objection and made no further comments.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No issues regarding waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is in the countryside and policies SS10 and H1 restricts new dwellings in the countryside in order to protect the character and appearance of the countryside and also because the countryside is generally an unsustainable location for new housing. However, the change of use of existing rural buildings is allowed where the buildings

are deemed to be physically, architecturally and in character terms suitable and worthy for a residential conversion.

I consider the building to be converted would accord with this. It is built of solid stone and is also regarded as being stable and in good condition for its age (built in the 17th Century). A Structural Survey report confirms it is structurally stable enough to be converted without any significant further structural work or rebuilding. The building is a traditional stone barn of significant historic value and an integral part of a historic farmstead and country estate including a Grade II* listed farmhouse. The building is clearly architecturally and in character terms suitable and worthy. I also consider that significant further weight should be attached to the proposal helping to safeguard a building of particular merit (it is a traditional stone barn of sufficient quality for it to be listed) and prevent long-term decay or dereliction to the detriment of the building and also the setting of listed traditional farm buildings which revolve around the key dominant building i.e. the Grade II* listed Whitehough Hall. Overall, the principle of the proposal is deemed to be acceptable.

With regard to the actual impact of the works on the character and appearance of the listed barn and the historic setting, the original scheme submitted in March 2024 raised concerns around aspects of the works including the replacement of a historic floor, removal of beams and works to support walls, deemed unnecessary interventions and also insufficient information to fully assess the heritage value of the buildings and the impact of the works. However, sufficient amendments and a robust Heritage and Impact Assessment were undertaken and submitted in April 2025. On this basis, the Conservation Officer has assessed that due to some new features such as rooflights, there would be a moderate to high degree of harm but this harm is deemed to be "less than substantial". The NPPF makes clear that where there is less than substantial harm, approval should be given where there are significant public benefits considered to outweigh the level of harm identified and where the optimal re-use of the building would be achieved in terms of its impact on the heritage asset. It is considered that a residential use would be the optimal use and that although the benefit of providing a new dwelling in an area of undersupply (there is currently a less than five year housing land supply in the District) would only amount to a limited benefit (i.e. only one new dwelling would be provided and that the location is not a "sustainable location"), overall, it is considered the benefits of the proposal would be sufficient to outweigh the harms identified caused by the proposed works.

Several conditions would be added to finalise the specific details of the scheme including window specifications for example. SPAB has ultimately deferred to the comments of the Conservation Officer but also provided a list of other improvements that could be made. I consider that these should be added as informatives.

The works outside of the building include new stone boundary walls to define the residential curtilage and some resurfacing of existing yard areas. These would not lead to harm to the overall character and appearance of the area. The surfacing materials can be controlled by way of a planning condition.

With regard to residential amenity, the nearby dwellings are over 25m and the windows and garden areas of those dwellings would only be visible from the new

windows at an obscure angle. There are no overlooking concerns and the residential amenities of nearby properties would not be affected. For the future occupants, there would be in excess of 150 sq,m of floorspace with a minimum floor to head height of 1.5m, which is in excess of the floorspace standards for a 3-bed 6-person two-storey dwelling, as set out in the governments Nationally Described Space Standards. The garden area is small and not very private but I consider this is compensated for by having adjacent open land accessed via nearby public footpaths crossing fields to the west and along the narrow country lane to the south (but which do not run through the site). Regarding noise, agricultural uses on the property have ceased but it is not clear if there is still farming occurring on the neighbouring properties. However, Environmental Health only recommend a condition requiring sound insulation only if there is current agricultural workings at the property and not neighbouring properties. Overall, residential amenity including the living conditions of the future occupants would not be harmed.

The provision of a new 3-bed dwelling would not compromise highway safety on the nearby lanes as the increase in vehicle movements would be minimal. A sufficient parking area for the new residents would be retained.

Finally, with regard to biodiversity, although bats, a protected species have been discovered using the old barn, on the basis of the further information provided by the applicant's Ecologist about the roosts and mitigation measures, the bats would not be harmed and SWT accepts the mitigation measures put forward which include a number of new bird and bat boxes to be installed. SWT removed its earlier Holding Objection and a condition will be added requiring all the measures set out in the submitted Bat Report to be undertaken. The application of the Natural England "Three Tests" is not necessary for the proposal due to its scale. However, a Bat Licence would need to be applied for and this is a separate matter.

There is no requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for the proposal as the application was submitted before 2nd April 2024 when the regulations made this a compulsory requirement for all "minor" class developments.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The amended proposal is acceptable in principle and would help restore and safeguard a Grade II listed barn. It would not lead to any significant harms to the visual or residential amenities of the area or the overall heritage value of the area. It would not lead to any harms to the ecological value of the area. The proposal would therefore comply with Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE FULL PLANNING APPLICATION AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 12.6.25

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council