

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 1st September 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0355
Site Address: School House, School Lane, Bradnop
Proposal: Erection of self build dwellinghouse and associated works

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- School Cottages – Grade II (listing ref: 1374534) - Sytch Farmhouse – Grade II (listing ref: 1038225) - Buckley Farmhouse and attached farm buildings – Grade II (listing ref: 1038224)
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in the setting of several Grade II Listed Buildings, including School Cottages, Sytch Farmhouse and Buckley Farmhouse.

School Cottages (Grade II) are a pair of cottages constructed in gritstone and tiled roof. The building has a datestone of 1750 on the principal elevation. The building is illustrative of vernacular construction and detailing and, as the name suggests, has a historic association as a former schoolhouse. The significance derives from its association with rural school buildings in the post-medieval period, prominent orientation facing the village hall and traditional construction. Its setting is provided by the irregular layout of traditional buildings within the village and surrounding open agricultural fields, which accentuate the rural character of the building.

Sytch Farmhouse (Grade II) is a late-16th century farmhouse with later alterations. The building is constructed in gritstone and tiled roof with coped verges. The significance derives from its retention of a possible earlier cruck framed structure, association with the development of farmhouses in North Staffordshire and illustrative vernacular construction.

Buckley Farmhouse (Grade II) is a 17th century farmhouse, constructed in stone with limewash façade and tiled roof. The significance derives from retention of historic fabric and possible earlier structure internally, vernacular construction and association with the development of post-medieval agricultural farmhouse.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal would involve the construction of a dwelling within the immediate setting of three listed buildings. The site is an open paddock within the village centre, which is enclosed by a mixture of timber post and rail fence and drystone boundary wall. The openness of the site and the mature trees within and on the border of the site provide a verdant setting to the surrounding Listed Buildings, which enhances their rural character and significance.

The dwelling would be 2-storeys with an L-plan formation, constructed in stone with a Staffordshire blue tile roof and timber windows. The dwelling would be approx. 15m (L) x 7.4m (H) and the width of the gable end would be approx. 6.2m. The principle of a dwelling on the site would likely encroach upon and diminish the openness which contributes to the rural setting of the surrounding Listed Buildings. However, it is noted that the trees along the School Lane verge sit outside the red edge of the site, and it appears these would not be affected by the proposed development. Their retention would, to some degree, help retain the verdant appearance of the lane. It is unclear if trees to the southern boundary would be retained.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed scale, height, proportions and palette of materials would be quite sympathetic to the surrounding built form and heritage assets, which are typically characterised by their traditional and vernacular construction. It is, however, noted that the site appears to be at a higher topography than School Cottages (Grade II) and it is not clear if there would be any levelling of the site. In any respect, it would be useful if a streetscene elevation could be provided to illustrate the building in relation to School Cottages due to its proximity to this Listed Building and the possible visual impact this would have on its immediate setting.

The proposed fenestration of the principal part of the dwelling that faces the main road would respect the simple fenestration of the surrounding cottages and farmhouses. However, the proposed detailing for the attached garage would be slightly at odds with the overall pastiche design. The double width garage would create quite a strong horizontal emphasis to this part of the building, which would be disproportionate to the features and detailing of the rest of the façade and would likely create a distracting visual feature. In addition, the use of faux barn shutters to the first floor would diminish the authenticity of the adjacent historic farmhouses and barns.

The site plan outlines that the proposed boundary treatments would involve a stone boundary wall to the front and fencing and hedging to the side and rear of the site. It would be useful if this could be shown on the proposed elevations for context.

Overall, the proposal would have a harmful impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings. Due to proximity and inter-visibility with the site, the impact would be greater on the setting of School Cottages but there may still be some minor impact on the wider setting of Sytch and Buckley Farmhouse. At this stage, it is not overtly clear whether the proposed dwelling would dominate or overbear the setting of the School Cottages as the site appears to be at a slightly higher topography than the Listed Building. In addition, the detailing of the attached garage would create a distracting visual feature.

From a conservation perspective, it would be recommended that the detailing for the attached garage is redesigned, for example the double garage door is altered to two clearly distinguishable bays to reduce its horizontal emphasis. It would be suggested that the garage doors are side-hung openers to respect the surrounding traditional detailing. It would also be recommended that the faux shutters to the upper floors are removed and, subject to the detailing of the garage doors, the window shape altered. In addition, it would be useful if detailing for the boundary treatments and the streetscene elevations were provided to help assess the visual impact of the proposal on the setting of the designated heritage assets.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Building (s.66).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in a harmful impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings. This would fail to satisfy s.66 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). Any harm to the setting and significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification (par.213 of NPPF). As set out above, it is considered that some sympathetic alterations to the design could help reduce or remove this level of heritage harm. We cannot support the proposal from a conservation perspective at this stage, but recommend the following:

- Streetscene elevation of the proposal in relation to School Cottages
- Elevation of boundary treatments in relation to the proposed dwelling
- Alterations to the garage door to create 2 separate bays, with side-hung garage doors
- Removal of faux shutters to the first floor windows

Conservation Officer: