

PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

**PROPOSAL : PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FROM HOLIDAY
ACCOMMODATION TO FARM OFFICE AND STORE**

**ADDRESS : BOTTOMHOUSE FARM, BOTTOMHOUSE, LEEK, ST13
7QJ**

APPLICANT : MR COOPER

DATE : MARCH 2026 JOB No. : 2026-3073

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by Mr Cooper to prepare and submit a full planning application for the proposed change of use from holiday accommodation to farm office and store at Bottomhouse Farm, Bottomhouse. The application is accompanied by existing and proposed drawings numbered 2026-3073-01, 2026-3073-02 and 2026-3073-03 all of which should be read in conjunction with this planning, design and access statement.

This statement analyses the site, the proposals and the policy context within which the proposals are made. Thereafter, it provides justification for approval of these proposals, primarily on the basis that the development would result in a sustainable form of development which would not impact adversely on the character and appearance of the application building or its wider setting, prejudice residential amenity, harm highway safety or affect any established ecological interests.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

Bottomhouse Farm lies on the south eastern side of the crossroads of the A523 with the B5053. It comprises of a two storey farmhouse constructed from a mix of stone and render under a tiled roof with a range of detached traditional barns.

The application building comprises of a detached two storey barn which has been converted to holiday accommodation in accordance with planning approval SMD/2002/1366. Constructed from stone under a plain clay tile roof it lies close to the farmhouse with its axis running in a north to south location.

Residential dwellings lie on the northern side of the crossroads lying either side of the B5053 whilst to the west lies the former Green Man public house which has now been converted into holiday accommodation. For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within the open countryside.

3.0 PROPOSAL

This is a full application which seeks consent to change the use of the existing holiday accommodation to a farm office and store. No external or internal alterations and proposed and the development relates solely to a change of use of the building and reorganisation of the internal accommodation to facilitate the proposed use.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published on 27th March 2012 and revised in December 2024 replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy

advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF also sets out requirements in respect of housing delivery and securing high quality design. The following are considered to be the most relevant chapters:-

- Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 12 - Achieving Well Designed Places
- Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Local plan (September, 2020). The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS10 (Other Rural Areas Strategy); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources) and T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

5.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are therefore considered to be:-

- The principle of development
- Design and appearance
- Highway safety

The Principle of Development

For the purposes of planning policy consideration the application site lies outside any defined settlement boundary within the open countryside. Local Plan policy SS10 which deals with the other rural areas comprising of the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages states that "these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside." The policy then goes on to list a number of ways in which this will be achieved. The conversion of existing buildings in the countryside into other uses is not unacceptable particularly if the building is solid, permanent and in keeping with the rural and traditional character of the area.

The application building is currently used as a three bedroom holiday accommodation. Unfortunately the unit has not been as successful as anticipated and the size of the unit and proximity to the existing farmhouse make it less attractive than the other unit on the site. Furthermore, increases in overhead costs, especially electricity and the fact that the market has been flooded since Covid with occupancy which have not recovered since that time make it unviable to retain it in its current use.

The proposed development there seeks to convert the building into a dedicated farm office and additional store which would be used in conjunction with the main farmhouse. Accordingly the principle of development is considered acceptable in principle in accordance with the provisions of policy SS10 of the recently adopted Local Plan.

Design & Appearance

The specific design policy of the LP also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

The application proposes no alterations to the external or internal appearance of the application building. Given that the application building is existing, structurally sound, already in domestic use and that there would be no visible change to its external appearance it is not considered that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application building, its setting or the valued characteristics of the wider area. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies DC1 and DC3 of the adopted Core Strategy as well as guidance contained within the NPPF and supplementary planning guidance.

Amenity

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The NPPF also states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area. Local Plan policy DC1 requires that all development proposals should 'protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.'

Given the relatively isolated location of the application site and the fairly sporadic spattering of farmsteads and dwellings it is considered that the proposal would not raise any adverse amenity issues.

Highways

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that "In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- (a) Sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision of the site, the type of development and its location;
- (b) Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
- (c) The design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code, and

- (d) Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion) on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.”

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that “development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.” Local Plan Policy T1 echoes the guidance contained in paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF.

Having regard to the existing use of the application building it is considered that the proposed use as a farm office and store would actually result in a reduction in the number of vehicle trips to and from the site. The application site is already served by an existing access which was considered and accepted by the council as being safe when the consent for use of the application barn as holiday accommodation was considered. The proposed development would continue to use this access and adequate parking and turning facilities are currently provided within the site and will be retained for this development. In this respect it is considered that the proposal complies with CS policy T1 and guidance contained within the NPPF.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. It also states in the NPPF that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay, and where policies are out-of-date permission should only be refused where there is significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the benefits of the development.

This proposal represents appropriate development in the open countryside in accordance with LP policy SS10. In addition the submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development in that it involves the re-use of an existing rural building which is considered suitable in physical, architectural and character terms. No external changes to the application building are proposed and the scheme would not therefore have any impact on the character and appearance of the application site itself or the wider surrounding area. Furthermore the proposal will not derive any significant issues in respect of highway safety nor will it be prejudicial to residential amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS10, DC1, DC3 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the alteration and re-use of the existing rural building for use as a farm office and storage which is considered sustainable and appropriate in this location.

AMOUNT

The application proposes the change of use of one of the existing buildings within the unit for the use of one of the units for storage and the use of the other for a farm office with ancillary storage and accommodation. The existing building has a footprint of 64 sq metres and an overall floor area of 90 sq metres.

LAYOUT

The layout of the proposal is as shown on the submitted plans numbered 2026-3073-03.

SCALE

The application building will be converted within the shell of the existing building. No extensions are proposed as part of the application and no external alterations are proposed.

LANDSCAPING

Given the existing domestic use of the site no additional landscaping is proposed as part of this application.

APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the external character and appearance of the application building as no external changes are proposed as part of this scheme.

ACCESS

Pedestrian access will be as shown on the submitted plans. The existing parking and turning facilities for the main dwelling will be retained and no alterations to the vehicular access are proposed as part of this application.