

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0350
Valid 29/07/2025

LITTLE SUMMERHILL FARM
TICKHILL LANE
DILHORNE

CHANGE OF USE FROM 2NO.
HOLIDAY COTTAGES TO 1NO.
DWELLINGHOUSE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Sustainability
- Occupier amenity
- Green Belt

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application building is a 'one-and-a-half storey' converted and previously altered and extended brick and tile building closely adjacent to the farm house. Chestnut Cottage and Oak Cottage are the names of two holiday lets occupying the application building. It is one of a cluster of buildings associated with the premises at Little Summerhill Farm. The building is detached and stands immediately adjacent to the farm house but set back to align with the rear elevation line of the farm house. It is about 12m from the road and is set down from road level behind a modest lawned 'frontage' (in fact the rear) from which it is somewhat separated by a native-species hedgerow. Alongside and below this hedgerow is a narrow paved path running along the rear of the building. From the opposite elevation (away from the road) the building faces north west towards the gable end elevation of a further detached building that appears to serve as a store building associated with the farm. There is a stepped and ramped pedestrian access to the front (north west) elevation where there are the front doors to the two holiday lets.

To the immediate west is another detached single storey brick building of domestic appearance. This is set forward so that it is more in line with the farm house. This too has consent as holiday accommodation under the same consent given to the current application building granted in December 2004.

Vehicular access comes in on the south west end of the building group; there is firstly parking on the left, with then the access running across the front (north west) of the application building. Here the access lane is in between the application building and the store previously mentioned before leading into the farm yard proper. The wider surroundings are rural with a small area of woodland opposite (south east of the road) and fields to the northerly / north west side.

The approved layout of the holiday lets subject of this application showed each with a ground floor bedroom and a 'gallery bedroom' in the roof space, in other words 4 bedrooms in total and this is as shown in the submitted as-existing plans.

The separate Summerhill Farm about 70m along the road to the north east has a barn which is Grade II Listed.

PROPOSAL

As in the application description.

The application is accompanied by a planning statement and, in confidence, three sets of business accounts are provided covering the years 21/22 22/23 and 23/24.

The agent's statement comments that:

- The property has been operated as holiday lets since the 2004 consent
- The stated issue forcing the change is that the lettings no longer provide a viable income source
- At the same time the applicant / proprietor is looking to retire
- The proposal would create a single dwellinghouse with a gross floor area of 102.5 square metres, and whose accommodation will comprise of a lounge, study, kitchen / dining room, bedroom with wet room and w.c. at ground floor, with stairs leading up to a further bedroom and bathroom at first floor within the roof space.
- No external alterations are proposed to the building appearance
- Amenity space would be provided in the area between the building and the road (Tickhill Lane) which is currently an existing lawn
- parking sufficient for at least two vehicles would use the established parking space north west of the property

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application claims exemption under the de-minimis allowance. This can be accepted as there are no exterior developments involved.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 11 – Making effective use of land;

12 – Achieving well designed places; 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

04/01555/FUL [SMD/2004/1530] Conversion of outbuildings to self-contained holiday accommodation – approved

This permission was granted subject to a condition (2) that no development would take place in the curtilage unless it was the subject of a separate planning application.

It was also subject to a condition (3) which said that “the premises shall be used for short stay holiday accommodation not exceeding 4 weeks at any one time and for no other purpose including any purpose in class C3 (dwelling houses) of the Town and Country Planning use classes order 1987. Reason: the premises are not considered suitable for permanent residential occupation.

It was noted in the officer report at the time (2004) that the location of the property is remote from any settlement raising sustainability transport objections. The report went on to say this will though be a common issue for farmstead development.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 27.08.2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Dilthorne Parish Council – none received

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommend acceptance – change of use from 2no. holiday cottages to 1no. dwellinghouse.

Tickhill Lane is an unclassified road (Road No. D1176) with a speed limit of 60mph. Tickhill Lane has no footways either side of the carriageway. The road is unlit.

No changes to the existing access are proposed.

There is sufficient space for car parking on site. There will be no severe impact on the local highway network.

SCC Highways officer comment: *It is noted that the proposed location for this residential dwelling is potentially not in a sustainable location. By this I mean the village has no amenities such as a local shop or access to any medical or educational facilities. All trips to such facilities are more than likely to be made via a private car. The neighbouring roads also have no footway provision and would require any resident to walk within the road should they wish to walk within the immediate neighbourhood.*

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Although the current planning use is residential and therefore comes under Planning Use Class C3 (use as a dwelling house whether or not as main residence), the permission as originally granted is restricted by condition to holiday use only and it must be recognised that this is therefore a permission consistent with SS10(2) on the basis of supporting the diversification of an existing business or farm. In other words the existing residential use establishes only a limited position in terms of the principle of the now proposed development.

In its general approach, in accordance with policy SS1, the Council expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. This means that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan shall be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy SS2 sets out the settlement hierarchy for the District and requires that all development shall be of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and role of each area category within the hierarchy according to their individual policies. The categories in the hierarchy and their policies are: towns (policies SS5 /6 and 7); larger villages (SS8); smaller villages (SS9) and the Other Rural Areas – which applies in the case of this application – SS10.

Policy SS10 for the rural areas supports only development which meets an essential local need and supports rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas (or supports sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside).

In the rural areas outside of the development boundaries Policy SS10(6) also establishes that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate

development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government Policy.

As a material change of use (from two holiday lets to a single dwelling) bringing with it little or no change to affect openness, the Government's policy would regard the development as not-inappropriate in the Green Belt in accordance with NPPF paragraph 154(h)(v). The proposal may therefore be considered acceptable in principle in Green Belt terms on this basis.

Specifically in relation to housing, Policy SS10 provides in-principle support subject to SS10(1) which in turn is subject to the Council's Planning Policy for housing at H1. As this location is outside of any development boundary, and is some distance from any larger or smaller village, the principle of development in relation to housing therefore falls to be decided under H1(5). This establishes that only housing in the categories listed and described in sub-paragraphs (a) to (f) will be permitted. Relevant to this application is (d) which provides for the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. This section also provides for development in connection with heritage assets but that is not applicable for this application.

It follows from the above that the proposed conversion of the two holiday lets to a single dwelling is acceptable in principle by reference to SS10 and H1. The main further consideration is then one of whether or not this is a sustainable location in terms of travel and transport for the occupiers' access to supplies and services.

The existing consent for two holiday let dwellings – restricted to holiday let use only – is a significant material consideration. This brings into play such matters as (i) the economic contribution which two holiday let's can be expected to make versus that of a two (or three) bedroomed dwelling; (ii) the Council's wider aspirations to develop tourism in the district; (iii) the relative impacts on travel and sustainable transport brought about by two tourism holiday lets relative to the impacts of a single two (or three) bedroomed dwelling as now proposed.

The agent for the application has drawn attention (at 5.4 of the supporting statement) to an allowed appeal at Old Furnace Farm, Oakamoor in 2016 and approvals at a Kingsley Moor location in 2017. The agent is understood from 5.6 to have included these appeals as examples where a building was found suitable in physical architectural and character terms for conversion. As noted above the Council finds no conflict on these counts for this current application. The application acknowledges the loss of the two holiday units but points out that there are no policies current in the present local plan which specifically seek to prevent loss of holiday accommodation. This was a factor considered at a more recent appeal under ref SMD/2024/0272. The application there had sought to vary a condition that restricted an approved barn conversion to holiday let use only, due to being in open countryside outside of settlement boundaries – in other words an unsustainable location in travel and transport terms.

The original approval in that scheme (SM.99-00224) had granted three units with a combined 6 bedrooms at first floor and two at ground floor (8 bedrooms in total across the three units). A further fourth unit (number of bedrooms not given) was included in

the application 04/01361/FUL to vary conditions and which had again resulted in a holiday / short term let occupancy condition. That condition was the subject of the dismissed appeal on application SMD/2024/0970. The appellant sought to remove the condition to allow permanent residential occupation of the accommodation.

At decision paragraphs 15 to 18 the Inspector concludes: “...*the removal of the condition would allow the units to be occupied as permanent dwellings, whereby vehicle trips would be more frequent than the existing use. While the difference would be modest, the vehicle trips and a reliance on a vehicle to access services and amenities would be increased, nonetheless.*” At paragraphs 24 and 25 the Inspector finds the limited outdoor space would be harmful to the living conditions of future occupiers.

With regard to loss of tourism accommodation, the Inspector noted that “*Policies E4, SS10 and SS11 of the Local Plan seek to enhance tourism in the rural area, particularly within the Churnet Valley. In particular, Policies E4 and SS11 seek to support new tourist accommodation in the area, primarily within sustainable locations.*” The Inspector concluded however at paragraphs 27 to 29 that the Council’s policies do not ‘prevent’ loss of tourism accommodation and the appeal did not fail on that point: “...*the removal of the condition would not harm the supply of visitor accommodation in the area. As such, it would not be contrary to policies E4, SS10 and SS11 of the LP.*”

Turning back to Little Summerhill Farm and the principle of this proposal, in summary:

- (i) The proposal is acceptable in principle in the Green Belt.
- (ii) There is support in principle for conversion of the building to a dwelling by reference to SS10(1) [second point] and H1(5)(d) based on the building being suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion – the building has in any event already been converted to a C3 use, albeit one restricted by occupancy condition to holiday let use only.
- (iii) The reason given for the restrictive occupancy condition was that “*the premises are not considered suitable for permanent residential occupation*”. Given the phrasing this appears to be a reference to living conditions and the very small size of each unit would certainly have justified this condition on that basis. Whether it was also intended to reflect a consideration of their remoteness is not clear.
- (iv) This is not a sustainable location in terms of travel, transport and access to supplies and services. However the existing development brings with it similar impacts. The proposal amounts to a modest dwelling of two bedrooms taking the place of two holiday let units. Whilst a precise calculation is not possible, the replacement of two units of two bedrooms each, with a single unit with just two bedrooms in total, could reasonably be considered comparable, even allowing for the usually acknowledged greater impacts of a dwelling over a holiday let. (The latter are rarely if ever let 100% of the time whereas a main dwelling will normally be fully occupied year round.)
- (v) With no express local plan policy provision for the retention of tourism accommodation the loss of these two units does not constitute an in-principle objection on this count (see Hermitage Farm Appeal decision).

Design

There are no external design appearance considerations as the building is not being altered externally.

The proposal quotes the internal floor area as being 102.5m². Scaling from drawing JPK/25/5335/1 suggests the gross internal area may in fact be slightly greater at 110m².

At first floor (in the roof space) there is a bedroom 3.0m wide by at least 4.7m = 14m². This would therefore qualify as a double or twin bedroom given it would have an area of at least 11.5m² and a width of at least 2.75m.

A proposed ground floor bedroom with attached wet room would be 9.5m² in area (not counting the wet room) which exceeds the minimum qualifying area of 7.5m² as a single room. Being 2.9m x 3.3m the room also exceeds the minimum width of 2.15m to qualify as a single room.

In terms of the above the proposed dwelling more than meets the NDSS requirements for a 2 bedroom three-person two storey dwelling which would stipulate 70m² as a minimum.

The plan cross sections show the ground floor to have a ceiling height of c. 2.1 metres throughout. At first floor the ceiling height is 2.1 metres in a central 1.25m wide strip end-to-end of the building flanked by a c.0.8m wide strip on both sides where the ceiling height is between 1.5m and 2.1m reflecting the roof slope. NDSS expects a minimum ceiling height of 2.3m across 75% of the dwelling. Clearly this dimension cannot be met. However, given that the building is and has been occupied residentially, albeit as holiday accommodation, and given that the proposal layout would otherwise be acceptable as a two-bedroom three-person dwelling over two storeys, it might reasonably be held that this relatively small deficiency of 20cm could be accepted. A ceiling height of 2.1m is not exceptionally low. Indeed, in older properties a 2.0m height is not infrequently encountered. It does not seem reasonable to fail the proposal in terms of NDSS on this one point.

It is therefore concluded in terms of design that the scheme is acceptable.

Amenity

The scheme provides more than sufficient outside amenity space (65m² minimum) as the lawned area is some 8.5m x 14m = c.120m².

There are no directly facing windows between this property and adjacent properties such as Beech cottage or the farm house. Although the several buildings are close together they are laid out at 90° to one another. Despite a multiplicity of windows in the farm house, a number of factors, in particular the set down level of the proposal property, lead to a conclusion that there should not be an undue sense of breached privacy for occupiers. It can also be noted that the proposal is being instigated by the

current occupier of the farmhouse and no unrelated third party is affected. Any new occupiers of either building would be able to make their own assessment. On balance the juxtaposition of windows in the different buildings is found acceptable.

The front (northwest) elevation of the dwelling faces a blank gable of the store building opposite. The separation distance is between c.6m and 8m. This can be considered acceptable here as the Council's space about dwellings SPG looks for at least six metres between any site boundary or any solid obstruction higher than the top of the principal window. It can also be noted that there is an open aspect to the side to the west and northwest from where good afternoon and evening light will be enjoyed. Overall the amenity in terms of outlook is therefore found acceptable.

Highway Safety

Based on the Highways Authority's advice there are no conflicts identified. Although the HA has not recommended a highways condition it is nevertheless recommended to include a condition that the parking area as proposed in the application shall be kept in situ and available for parking for the lifetime of the development.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Given that the scheme is acceptable in terms of all of the above, the one outstanding matter is that of travel sustainability for this location. In plain terms it is not sustainable and not a suitable location for a new dwelling in travel terms. That said, the existing approved use for two holiday lets will create / is capable of creating travel impacts. Noting that the applicant is not finding holiday letting a viable proposition any longer it is not clear what they would do if conversion to a dwelling were refused. It is possible for example that the applicant's motivations are at least in part due to desired retirement. However it is perhaps improbable that the building would totally cease to be occupied and therefore it might be expected to continue to bring travel journey impacts. Weighing into the balance it is also found of some significance that the current use is for two lettings (each comprising two bedrooms) whereas the proposal is for a single dwelling comprising two bedrooms. For these reasons and on balance it is recommended in this case that approval be granted on the basis that the sustainability issues of one new dwelling are counter balanced by the existing impacts of the two let properties.

It is recommended in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and for the amenity of occupiers that certain householder permitted development rights be removed by condition as the property has its rear elevation facing the public highway where there is a pleasant square of green space which is proposed to serve the development as garden / outdoor amenity space. There is also a vehicular gateway into this lawned area and it would be important in terms of the amenity of occupiers and in the interests of the character and appearance of the area that this space be kept free of parked vehicles or other storage.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 23.03.2026 revised 27.04.2026

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council