

12. FULL APPLICATION - REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS WITH GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING AND AN 'AMERICAN' BARN FOR EQUESTRIAN USE (CHANGE OF USE), FAR BROOK FARM, BACK O'TH'CROSS, QUARNFORD (NP/SM/0517/0490 P.11264 401727/367018 18/05/2017 DH)

APPLICANT: Simon McMahon

Site and Surroundings

Far Brook Farm is a smallholding raising alpacas and sheep which lies on open countryside 720m to the south-west of the village of Flash. The landscape character is slopes and valleys with woodland. To the south at a distance of approximately 125m is the northern boundary of Leek Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest. This is also a Special Protection Area of the South Pennine Moors and is designated as open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The site is in a valley and is approached by a steep lane (which is also a bridle path and PROW) off the north side of Turn o'th Rake, which is the top road through the village. At the bottom of the slope, alongside which a stream flows, there is a relatively modern concrete block agricultural building to the south which the stream runs beneath, a yard area edged by a pond and a small traditional sandstone outbuilding, and the farmhouse to the north. The track continues west to a two storey traditional barn which has been converted to a holiday let and a range of modern agricultural buildings which are sited above the farmhouse on the hillside to the north-west. A further PROW runs in an east to west direction approximately 95m to the north of the farm group.

The nearest neighbouring properties are Axe Edge Green Farm at a distance of approximately 257m to the north-east, Cross Side Cottage 250m to the east, and Wicken Walls Farm 344m to the north-west.

Proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the existing decrepit agricultural buildings and replacement with new buildings, one for a general purpose agricultural building and one for equestrian use.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions / modifications:

- 1. The proposed development shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with the submitted plans and specifications received by the Authority 12 May 2017.**
- 2. The use of the equestrian building shall be restricted to private use by the applicant and guests staying in the holiday accommodation on site**

Key Issues

- Whether the proposed development would detract from the character, appearance or amenity of the site, its wider setting or neighbouring properties.
- Whether the access/parking arrangements are acceptable and adequate for the proposed use.

History

NP/SM/1196/102 - Conversion of outbuilding (attached to east gable of farmhouse) to ancillary accommodation – Granted subject to conditions in 1997

98008GPDO - Forming of new hardcore agricultural track – Accepted conditionally - 08/04/1998

NP/SM/0500/043 - Conversion of agricultural building (north-west of farmhouse) to holiday accommodation - Granted subject to conditions in 2000

NP/SM/1104/1244 - Renewal of consent for conversion of agricultural building to holiday accommodation - Granted subject to conditions in 2005

NP/SM/1115/1073 - Conversion of former agricultural building to Games Room - Granted subject to conditions in January 2016

Pre-application advice request – Enquiry number 29436

Consultations

Staffordshire County Surveyor (Highway Authority): No objections on Highway grounds. *“The proposal will likely attract additional vehicles including horseboxes. However, the small scale and existing on site holiday accommodation will not have a severe effect on the highway. There is adequate space away from the highway to park and turn horseboxes.”*

Staffordshire County Council (Public Rights of Way Team): No objection subject to no works taking place to the bridle path which runs adjacent to the site

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council: No response to date

Quarnford Parish Council: No response to date

Representations

The Authority has received seven representations regarding the proposal, all of which object to it; there are three reasons for objection (summarised):

1. Design of the replacement buildings and impact on landscape.
2. The existence of a riding stables in nearby Flash.
3. The suitability the network of surrounding bridleways to deal with additional use generated by the proposal.

Main Policies

Core Strategy Policy DS1 describes forms of development which are acceptable in principle across different parts of the National Park, and specifically the differences between named settlements and open countryside. DS1(C) specifically states that development for recreation and tourism is acceptable.

Core Strategy Policy E2 deals with proposals for business development in the countryside outside the Natural Zone and the named settlements in policy DS1. In these locations businesses should be located in existing traditional buildings either smaller settlements, on farms and in other groups of buildings in sustainable locations. Where no suitable traditional building is available the re-use of modern buildings may be acceptable provided there is no scope for further enhancement through an appropriate replacement building. It states that small scale business development on farmsteads and proposals to accommodate growth of existing businesses need to take into account their impact on the appearance and character of the landscape. E2 (D) states that proposals to accommodate growth or intensification of existing businesses need to be considered in terms of their impact on the appearance and character of the landscape.

Core Strategy Policy RT1 deals with proposals for recreation, environmental education and interpretation. It is supportive of development which encourages recreation and enjoyment of the National Park, and RT2 (B) states that appropriate developments which extend or make quality improvements to existing holiday accommodation are acceptable.

Saved Local Plan Policy LC13 deals specifically with agricultural development, which should respect the landscape and avoid harm to the areas characteristics.

Saved Local Plan Policy LC14 deals with farm diversification and states that if the diversified use can be appropriately located in existing vernacular or non-vernacular buildings which would remain appropriate to the area despite its removal from agriculture, and that if the size and location of an existing non-vernacular building and its relationship with other buildings is appropriate to a new use then it would be acceptable.

Saved Local Plan Policy LE4 states that the expansion of existing (business) development must be of a modest scale in relation to the existing activity/use and must not harm the amenity and valued characteristics of the area and the appearance of the site.

Saved Local Plan Policy LR7 deals specifically with facilities for keeping and riding horses and states that equestrian development will be permitted provided that the development does not detract from the landscape or valued characteristics of the area and does not have a detrimental effect on the amenities of the area.

Wider Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is supportive of development which meets the needs of the area, contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. A strong rural economy is important and the NPPF supports development which creates employment opportunities. It supports sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments in appropriate locations within rural areas which respect the character of the countryside.

The National Park has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks, and to promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Core Strategy Policies GSP1 and GSP2 require that all development is consistent with the National Parks legal purpose and duty. GSP3 and Saved Local Plan Policy LC4 require a high standard of design and state that where development is acceptable in principle, as set out in DS1, it will be permitted provided that it does not have an adverse effect on the amenity, privacy and security of the development and of nearby properties.

Core Strategy Policy L1 states that development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and other valued characteristics.

Saved Local Plan Policy LT18 requires vehicular access to be safe and suitable for their designated purpose.

Assessment

The proposal is to replace the existing agricultural buildings on site with new buildings which are a standard design for agricultural development and constructed of standard materials typically used in agricultural development.

One of the buildings would remain in agricultural use; the other would be laid out internally as an 'American' barn with loose boxes on each side and would be for equestrian use for the applicant's horses and for use by guests staying in the holiday accommodation already on site.

Principle - DS1(C) specifically states that development for agriculture and other rural enterprises including farm diversification, recreation and tourism is acceptable.

Siting – The replacement buildings would be in much the same position on the site as the existing buildings which are to the north-west of the farmhouse and the traditional stone buildings. The existing access track to the buildings is to continue to be used and no alteration is necessary. As the proposal is for replacements of the existing buildings the visual impact will be minimal and the proposals will not have any significant adverse effect on the site, or on the wider landscape, in line with Core Strategy Policy L1.

Design - Any approval for the current application would be subject to normal planning considerations such as design and potential impact on the character, appearance and amenities of the property and the local area.

The existing buildings which are to be demolished are constructed of concrete block under profile sheet roofs. One has a standard rectangular footprint, the other has an L-shaped footprint. Both buildings are in a poor state of repair and their removal will be an enhancement to the site.

Letters of objection have raised concerns about the design and visual impact of the proposed development and such concerns are noted. However, the proposed replacement buildings are a similar size and scale to the buildings they will replace, one is a four bay portal frame building, the other a five bay building. The massing is cleaner, each building having a simple rectangular footprint and pitched roof, which is a standard design for agricultural buildings, although one is for equestrian use. Both buildings are in line with Saved Local Plan Policy LC13 and guidance in the Authority's Supplementary Planning Document on agricultural development. As such they are typical of the type of development which would be expected to be seen within a rural landscape and will therefore have minimal impact on the special qualities of the wider area and landscape.

Materials - The materials proposed for their construction are also typical of agricultural buildings, being concrete panels with Yorkshire boarding above, whilst the visible concrete panels are to be faced with gritstone up to where the boarding starts. They are to be roofed with fibre cement profile sheets finished in slate blue, with GRP roof lights. These materials are in line with policies and guidance for agricultural development.

The scale is appropriate for the intended use and proportionate to the needs of the holding at the present level, the design and materials are those of standard modern agricultural buildings, therefore it is considered that the proposed new buildings will not be harmful to the setting of the farm, or its surroundings within the wider landscape in line with policies GSP1, 2 & 3, DS1, L1, LC4 & LC13.

Amenity - The proposed replacement buildings are not considered to have a detrimental effect on the amenities of any neighbouring properties due to the intervening distances. Nor would they

have any adverse impact on the character and appearance of the site or its setting within the wider landscape as they are typical of modern agricultural buildings.

The use of one of the buildings for equestrian purposes does not give rise to significant concerns regarding any adverse impact on the amenities and privacy of any neighbouring residential properties. By virtue of the size and scale of the addition to the existing business proposed, it is considered that the proposals would have a limited impact on the quiet enjoyment of the area.

As concerns have been raised regarding the suitability the network of surrounding bridleways to deal with additional use generated by the proposal, this has been carefully considered. The current state of repair of the bridleways in the vicinity has been brought to the attention of the County Council who are responsible for their upkeep. The additional use is small scale as the holiday accommodation is available for anyone to rent and not every guest will bring their own horse, as such, it is considered that the additional wear and tear on the network will be minimal. The use of the network of bridle paths by additional horses will not have any effect on the enjoyment and use by other users.

The Highway Authority state that there are no material highway implications associated with this development proposal, therefore they have no objection to the proposed change of use of one of the buildings. It is considered that there is adequate parking and turning provision for the small scale of the proposed diversification of the established holiday business on the site. Therefore, the proposal would not conflict with the specific provisions of Local Plan policy LT18, which requires safe access and adequate parking provision for all new development in the National Park.

Other Issues

Letters of objection have raised concerns relating to the presence of existing riding stables in Flash. Commercial competition is not a material planning consideration so it should not be considered when making a planning decision. Additionally, in this instance the equestrian building is not for a riding school. Some of the loose boxes are for personal use and the others are for guests staying in the holiday accommodation on site.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that the application meets the requirements of policies in the Development Plan and national planning policies in the Framework because the replacement buildings would be of an appropriate design and would not harm the valued characteristics of the National Park. The development would not detract from the character, appearance or amenity of the site, its setting or neighbouring properties. Accordingly, the application is recommended for conditional approval.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil