

7. FULL APPLICATION - FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF AN EXISTING AGRICULTURAL BUILDING WITH A NEW DWELLING AT HOPE FARM, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/1123/1405, GG)

APPLICANT: MR & MRS HAMBLING

Introduction - Background

This application is being re-presented to the Planning Committee further to the decision to defer the application at the 8th March 2024 Committee Meeting.

At the meeting, a motion to approve the application was moved and seconded but not voted on. There was a discussion regarding the submitted design, which was felt did not provide particular enhancement to the area. Therefore, Members requested that the item be deferred to allow for further discussions between the Officers and the Applicants regarding the design, to see if a more suitable design could be presented and the policy implications of this.

The motion to approve the application was withdrawn and a motion to defer the application, to allow for further discussions between the Applicant and Officers, regarding the design, was moved, seconded, voted on and carried. It was resolved:

That the application be DEFERRED to allow for a discussion between the Applicant and Officers regarding design which could result in enhancement.

The Officers report has been revised to address the amended submission.

Summary

1. The application is for the replacement of an existing agricultural building with a new build open market dwelling.
2. The application follows a refusal in November 2023 of a conversion of a non-traditional redundant agricultural building to a dwelling.
3. The applicants have not demonstrated an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park. Nor do they demonstrate a functional need for a dwelling in this location.
4. The application is recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

5. Hope Farm stands in open countryside off the south side of Hopedale Road, opposite the junction of Furlong Lane, approximately 680m to the south-west of Alstonefield, which is the nearest named settlement in policy DS1.
6. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity. Neither does the site lie within a designated conservation area, the nearest point of the Alstonefield Conservation Area is 266m to the north-east.
7. The site comprises two distinct yard areas, largely separated by a drystone wall. In the yard to the north, by the road, there is a holiday cottage, which is a conversion of a small traditional stone building, the farmhouse itself, and small stone outbuilding. In the yard area to the south there is a small range of more modern agricultural buildings, two profile sheeted buildings, small timber buildings, plus the building which it is proposed to replace. A pole barn and a lean-to off the larger of the portal

frame buildings stand in the field to the west, to the rear of the yards. A further two fields extend the entire holding, including the yard areas, to a total of approximately 1.58 hectares (3.91 acres).

8. The building the application proposes to replace is a long, narrow single storey former cattle building and dairy which spans both yards, though mainly being in the southern yard. The building is of no historic or vernacular merit.
9. The nearest neighbouring property is Hope Farm House, approximately 40m to the west of the building which is the subject of the application.

Proposal

10. The proposal is to replace the single storey linear building, formerly an agricultural building, with a new build open market dwelling. Furthermore, the Agent has stated by email dated 5 December 2023, that the applicants would like the new dwelling to be legally separate from the farm, i.e. they seek to create a new planning unit.

RECOMMENDATION:

11. That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

- 1. The applicant does not have an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park and the current application is therefore contrary to policy HC1(A) of the Core Strategy.**
- 2. In this instance, there are no exceptional circumstances or any other material planning consideration that would justify a departure from the Authority's adopted housing policies.**

Key Issues

12. The key issues are:

- Whether an exception to policy HC1 is justified; and
- Whether the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site and its setting, or the wider landscape setting within which it sits; and
- Whether the proposal would harm the amenities of nearby neighbouring properties.

History

13. 1990 - The restoration of a disused farmhouse to a dwelling was granted subject to conditions by NP/SM/0590/075 – Condition 14 imposed an agricultural occupancy condition.
14. 2002 - The conversion of a small stone traditional building in the yard to a holiday cottage was granted subject to conditions under NP/SM/0702/041.
15. 2018 - Extensions to the farmhouse were refused under NP/SM/0818/0742, an appeal was dismissed, and a resubmission was made, NP/SM/1018/0968, for a reduced scheme, which was granted.
16. 2023 – The conversion of a redundant agricultural buildings to a new dwelling was refused under NP/SM/0823/0928

17. 2023 – A Section 73 application, NP/SM/1023/1281, for the removal of condition 14 (the agricultural occupancy restriction) on NP/SM/0590/075 was granted.

Consultations

18. Staffordshire County Council (Highway Authority) – No highway objections subject to a condition requiring the site access to have a bound surface for a minimum of 5m.
19. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – No response to date.
20. Alstonefield Parish Council – No objections.
21. Natural England - No response to date.
22. PDNPA Ecology - No response to date.

Representations

23. During the publicity period, the Authority received 8 representations, all of which are supportive of the proposed development, though some are duplicates, and some refer to the previous conversion scheme as opposed to the current proposal for a new build. The following reasons are given in the relevant representations:

- *It is an unobtrusive development in keeping with other buildings in the locality.*
- *The existing building is a redundant eyesore which detracts from its surroundings.*
- *Much more in keeping with the local area than the brick barn it would replace.*
- *It is important to have residents in the village to support the community and economy further.*
- *The applicants would be an asset to the village, and with their financial expertise, are willing to take on important roles in the community.*
- *Support adding to our permanent local community rather than short term rental, transient visitors.*

24. Further to deferral of the planning decision, and the submission of the amended proposals, a representation has been received which advises the following:

- *latest modification, which is a more traditional build in keeping with the existing farmstead, looks excellent*
- *hope that owners can now get permission.*

Main Policies

25. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, GSP4, CC1, CC2, DS1, HC1 & L1
26. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3 & DMC4
27. National Planning Policy Framework

Wider Policy Context

28. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:
- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
 - Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public
 - When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to:
 - Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

National Planning Policy Framework

29. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. A revised NPPF was published in December 2023. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and policies in the Peak District National Park Development Management Policies document 2019. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
30. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*
31. Paragraph 82 of the NPPF states that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should support housing developments that reflect local needs. It goes on to say that consideration can be given to market housing on sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, if allowing some open market housing would help to facilitate this.
32. Paragraph 84 clearly states that planning policies and decisions should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:
- (a) meeting an essential need;
 - (b) ensuring the longevity of a heritage asset by allowing a viable use;
 - (c) the development would re-use redundant buildings and enhance its setting;
 - (d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
 - (e) the design is of exceptional quality.

Peak District National Park Core Strategy

33. GSP1 & GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park.* These policies set out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives, and jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage

34. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. GSP3 states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
35. GSP4 – *Planning Conditions and Legal Agreements*. To aid the achievement of its spatial outcomes, the National Park Authority will consider the contribution that a development can make directly and/or to its setting, including, where consistent with government guidance, using planning conditions and planning obligations.
36. CC1 – *Climate change mitigation and adaptation*. CC1 requires all development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources to achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.
37. CC2 – *Low carbon and renewable energy development*. CC2 states that proposals for low carbon and renewable energy development will be encouraged provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting the landscape character, cultural heritage assets, other valued characteristics, or other established uses of the area.
38. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. This sets out what forms of development are acceptable in principle within the National Park.
39. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. L1 states that all development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
40. HC1 – *New housing*. Policy HC1 states that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet an open market demand, and sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside. These are:
- A. *It addresses eligible local needs:*
- i) *for homes that remain affordable with occupation restricted to local people in perpetuity; or*
 - ii) *for aged persons' assisted accommodation including residential institutions offering care, where adequate care or assistance cannot be provided within the existing housing stock. In such cases, sufficient flexibility will be allowed in determining the local residential qualification to take into account their short term business needs whilst maintaining local residency restrictions for the long term.*
- B. *It provides for key workers in agriculture, forestry or other rural enterprises in accordance with core policy HC2.*
- C. *In accordance with core policies GSP1 and GSP2:*
- i) *it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings; or*
 - ii) *it is required in order to achieve conservation or enhancement in settlements listed in core policy DS1.*

Any scheme proposed under Ci or Cii that is able to accommodate more than one dwelling unit, must also address identified eligible local need and be affordable with

occupation restricted to local people in perpetuity, unless:

- iii) it is not financially viable, although the intention will still be to maximise the proportion of affordable homes within viability constraints; or*
- iv) it would provide more affordable homes than are needed in the parish and the adjacent parishes, now and in the near future: in which case (also subject to viability considerations), a financial contribution will be required towards affordable housing needed elsewhere in the National Park.*

Local Plan Development Management Policies

- 41. DMC3 - *Siting, design, layout and landscaping*. DMC3 states that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place.
- 42. DMC4 – *Settlement limits*. DMC4 (B) states that development that is separated from existing settlements will not be permitted as it is likely to result in pressure to infill intervening gaps.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 43. The PDNPA Design Guide refers to the principles of good design and designing in harmony with the local building tradition. However, this must only be applied where a development is otherwise justified by other policy criteria.

Assessment

Principle of the development

- 44. Policy HC1 states that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet an open market demand, and sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside. The proposal does not meet any of the exceptional circumstances set out in HC1 and is therefore not acceptable in principle.
- 45. However, Policy GSP2 advises that, when development is permitted, a design will be sought that respects the character of the area. Policy GSP3 sets out development management principles and states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.

Discussion

- 46. The application follows the refusal of a previous application (ref: NP/SM/0823/0928) for the conversion of a redundant agricultural building to a dwelling. There was reference in that application to the dwelling being intended for the parents of the owner of the farm. The application was therefore considered on two grounds; whether the existing building was considered to be of sufficient architectural merit to justify its conversion to provide a viable use and, also, whether the scheme could be considered acceptable under DMH5 as an ancillary dwelling. The conclusion was that it was not acceptable in either regard.

47. At the Planning Committee meeting in November 2023 to determine the previous application, the possibility of a new build ancillary dwelling in place of the redundant building was raised. Clear advice regarding the acceptable scale of ancillary dwellings had been provided during the course of the previous application, and was reiterated after the Committee meeting.
48. The development description is now for “*Replacement of an existing agricultural building with a new dwelling.*” It has been made clear, in an email dated 5 December 2023, that the Applicants would like the new dwelling to be legally separate from the farm, i.e. they seek to create a new planning unit in the form of the market dwelling and not, therefore, an ancillary dwelling. On this basis the application is contrary to policy HC1.
49. For clarity, the proposed dwelling would not be an affordable dwelling, as may be acceptable under DMH1. Nor is it an essential workers dwelling, as may be acceptable under DMH4. Neither does it constitute re-development of previously developed land to dwelling use under DMH6, because previously developed land is not land that has been occupied by agricultural buildings.
50. The dwelling would be for the parents of the owner of the farm, who currently live in the south of England. The information provided indicates that the applicants want to retire and move closer to their daughter and her family. It can, therefore, be concluded that the proposed dwelling would not address eligible local needs, nor is it for aged persons’ assisted accommodation, as required by HC1 (A). Neither would the dwelling be a provision for key workers in agriculture, forestry or other rural enterprises, as set out in HC1 (B). Finally and as stated, the Applicants have confirmed that they would not be agreeable to a planning condition or S106 Legal Agreement that would ensure the dwelling remains ancillary to the main dwelling, instead their intention is for the new dwelling to be legally separate from the farm.
51. The farmstead is in open countryside, over half a kilometre to the south-west of Alstonefield. Therefore, it does not lie within the settlement and, as a new build, would not conserve or enhance a valued vernacular building. It therefore fails to meet the exceptional circumstances of HC1 (C). Therefore, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to Core Strategy Policy HC1.
52. Notwithstanding the above, at the Planning Committee meeting in March 2024, this current application was deferred to allow for a discussion between the Applicants and Officers regarding design, which Members considered could result in enhancement. Given that Members of the Committee advised that they wished to see an improved design, the Applicants were referred to Core Strategy Policy GSP2 and Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.
53. Policy GSP2 advises that, where development is permissible, a design will be sought that enhances the National Park. The key criteria are:
 - A. Opportunities for enhancing the valued characteristics of the National Park will be identified and acted upon.
 - B. Proposals intended to enhance the National Park will need to demonstrate that they offer significant overall benefit to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. They should not undermine the achievement of other Core Policies.
 - C. When development is permitted, a design will be sought that respects the character of the area, and where appropriate, landscaping and planting schemes will be sought that are consistent with local landscape characteristics and their setting, complementing the locality and helping to achieve biodiversity objectives.

D. Opportunities will be taken to enhance the National Park by the treatment or removal of undesirable features or buildings. Work must be undertaken in a manner which conserves the valued characteristics of the site and its surrounding.....

54. Beyond the terms of adopted Local Plan policies the only other exceptions for residential development in the open countryside are set out in Paragraph 84 of the NPPF. This states:

Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;*
- b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;*
- c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting;*
- d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or*
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:*
 - is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
 - would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

55. To this end, as detailed above in the 'Discussion' section of this report, the only criteria that a proposal could meet with, to accord with the NPPF, is that of criteria e); the Applicants were advised that this could be explored.

Character and Appearance

56. The Applicants' Agent considers that the guidance in criteria e) is drawn upon to create a stand-alone dwelling in an isolated location where there are few or no buildings within the locality; that is not necessarily the case. The concern of the Applicants' Agent is that to construct something of this nature, within the surroundings of an existing farmstead, with a traditional stone farmhouse and timber agricultural buildings in close proximity, would be unusual, making the newer design more noticeable next to the existing buildings. The Applicants' Agent considers that this contradicts the policy, in that the new design is supposed to sit harmoniously within the landscape, something that they believe would not be possible with the surrounding traditional/agricultural buildings.

57. The Applicants' Agent explored designs of this nature, for critical evaluation, and it was deemed that they would not be a suitable addition to the village of Alstonefield and that communities would like to see permanent residents living in an expanded housing stock that is harmonious and complementary to the surroundings. It is the view of the Applicant's Agent that creating a '*grand design*' on the outskirts of the village opposes this incentive. The designs detailed to Officers certainly would not be considered truly outstanding or of exceptional design quality.

58. Given the above, the Applicants have now amended the proposals to reflect on the initial submission, but to provide a gabled projection off the front and a gabled projection off the rear of the building. Where there is a step back between the two elements of the existing building (rear elevation) which was reflected in the initial proposals, this elevation is now proposed to be flush along its length with a gabled projection, of shallow depth, now proposed as an intervention in the elevation where patio doors were

previously proposed; this now merely sets the patio door detail off the main elevation.

59. Similarly, a larger gabled projection is now proposed on the front elevation of the proposed building. This is proposed to have an eaves and ridge height to match that of the main element of the proposed building. The majority of the space within this projection is for a covered terrace, with full height glazing set deep in the recess and just forward of the line of the front elevation of the main element of the building. The simple, hopper style windows that were previously proposed are now proposed to be stone surround, mullioned windows. The flue previously proposed on the roof is now proposed to be a chimney.
60. As a result of the amendments, it is the view of Officers that the design of the amended proposed dwelling fails to conserve and enhance the valued character of the area and is not of truly outstanding quality. The amended proposal has not improved on the initial submission, producing what now would appear more so a bungalow development than a building seeking to be reflective of traditional farmstead character.
61. Given the above, the Officer view is that the replacement building would be anomalous in its context and would not meet with criteria e) of the NPPF, by which such a new build dwellinghouse could only otherwise be justified in such a location. Even setting the above aside, and only having regard to Core Strategy Policy GSP2, it is considered that the building proposed would not constitute an enhancement to the site, given that its design is clearly reflective of a residential building, and it would not be contiguous with the character and appearance of buildings that would be associated with a farmstead, as is also a required by the policy.

Sustainability

62. A statement was provided with the application, and the proposals include the provision of solar panels. Had the application been acceptable in principle, it is considered that it would comply with the requirements of CC1.

Conclusion

63. The Applicants have not demonstrated any eligible local need or functional need for housing in this location and the proposed dwelling fails to conserve and enhance local valued character and also fails to satisfy the exceptional criteria e) of the NPPF with respect to being a development of outstanding quality. As such, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to the Core Strategy Policy HC1 and national planning policy.

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

Report Author and Job Title

Gareth Griffiths – Planner – South Area