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Planning Development

Planning Statement: Moss Edge Farm, Moss Edge Road, Holmbridge, HD9 2SD

Site Description

The application site comprises of one agricultural stone built barn, one portal framed barn and land directly adjacent to the building. The wider site of Moss Edge Farm also includes the farmhouse, one other stone built barn, and extensive surrounding grazing land. Access to the site is via a private road known as Moss Edge Road, which joins the adopted highway known as Hollin Brigg Lane at the northern end. The site is situated approximately 1km south of Holmbridge in an upland rural location.



Application Site

Policy Designation

The application site is located within the Green Belt in accordance with the Kirklees Local Plan Policies Map. The site is also within the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network and the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan area.

Relevant Planning History

2023/91342 – Prior Notification for change of use from agricultural buildings to three dwellings with associated works – Details Approved

Background to the Proposals

The applicant submitted a prior notification application to the LPA for the change of use of two agricultural buildings to form three dwellings with associated works in May 2023. The details of the application were approved by the LPA in December 2023 (LPA ref: 2023/91342).

In the previous Class Q¹ application, the applicant applied for two larger homes (The West Barn and The North Barn) with an overall floor area measuring below 465 square metres and one smaller home (The Stables) with an overall floor area measuring less than 100 square metres. On reflection, however, the applicant would like to sub-divide the building known as The North Barn and The Stables more equally in terms of floor space and create additional accommodation at first floor level.

As such, the proposals relating to The North Barn and The Stables building no longer comply with the floorspace limitations set out in Class Q, hence this new application for planning permission.

The Proposals

This application seeks planning permission for the part demolition of one portal framed barn and the conversion of one agricultural building to form two no. dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.

The proposals include the partial demolition of the portal framed barn directly adjacent to the north-east elevation of The North Barn building (the same part was approved to be demolished under the previous Class Q application).

The building known as The Stables and The North Barn is proposed to be converted into two dwellings. Internally, both dwellings/plots would incorporate four bedrooms and two bathrooms on the first floor. Plot 1 would incorporate a lounge, laundry room, W.C and open plan kitchen/dining/living room on the ground floor, and plot 2 would incorporate a lounge, office, playroom, W.C and open plan kitchen/dining/living room on the ground floor.

Externally, the following alterations are proposed to The Stables and The North Barn:

- South-east elevation – one large door opening, one small door opening, two ground floor window openings and one rooflight opening are to be re-used; six new window openings are proposed and four new rooflights are proposed.
- North-west elevation – three existing openings are to be altered and re-used; four new window openings are proposed and eight new rooflights are proposed.
- South-west elevation – one door opening, and one window opening are to be re-used, one door opening is to be blocked up and two new window openings are proposed.
- North-east elevation – Three window openings are to be re-used, one door and one window opening are to be blocked up, and three new window openings are proposed.

¹ Schedule 2, Part 1, Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended)

Three parking spaces are proposed to serve each dwelling. The spaces for The Stables are proposed to be located opposite the front elevation and adjacent to the parking spaces for The West Barn. The spaces for The North Barn are proposed to be located adjacent to the front of the building. The private outdoor amenity spaces for both dwellings are proposed to be located in the north-west section of the application site, adjacent to the buildings.

Assessment of the Proposals

Green Belt

Paragraph 155 in the NPPF states:

‘Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.’

Local Plan Policy LP60 also states that proposals will normally be acceptable where:

‘b. the resultant scheme does not introduce incongruous domestic or urban characteristics into the landscape, including through the treatment of outside areas such as means of access and car parking, curtilages and other enclosures and ancillary or curtilage buildings;

c. the design and materials to be used, including boundary and surface treatments are of a high quality and appropriate to their setting and the activity can be accommodated without detriment to landscape quality, residential amenity or highway safety.’

The proposed plans remain broadly similar to what was submitted and approved under the Class Q application. Whilst it is acknowledged that the impact on the Green Belt is not a material planning consideration when assessing Class Q applications, it is nevertheless important to recognise that the Class Q application represents a legitimate fallback position in this case, and should therefore be considered as a baseline position when assessing the overall impact of the new proposed development on the Green Belt.

Referring to paragraph 155 in the NPPF above, a Structural Appraisal of the agricultural buildings on site was submitted as part of the previous Class Q application. Officers concluded that, *‘on balance the structural evidence submitted confirms that the buildings could be successfully converted to dwellings without works having to be undertaken going beyond those allowed by Class Q.’*²

The same appraisal is submitted as part of this application and confirms that The North Barn and The Stables are free from any major structural defect or distress, and although the building is of a significant age, its original construction is such that it can be used for many years to come. The building is in a sound and stable structural condition and can be deemed to be of a permanent and substantial construction suitable for its conversion into dwellings.³

² Officer Report page 7 (ref: 2023/91342)

³ Marsh Design Limited

With regard to Local Plan Policy LP60 b. the existing access known as Moss Edge Road is proposed to be used to serve the new dwellings. The car parking spaces are proposed to be located close to the existing buildings on land which is currently unsurfaced. Likewise, the private outdoor amenity areas for both dwellings have been kept close to the building on land which largely comprises of hardstanding.

The size of the rear gardens is considered to be no larger than what is reasonably necessary to provide future occupants with a good degree of private outdoor space, and the areas provided (other than the addition of one extra parking space within the central courtyard) are the same size as those approved under the Class Q process, so there is no greater impact on Green Belt openness than the Class Q fallback position.

No ancillary or curtilage buildings are proposed.

In relation to Local Plan Policy LP60 c., as the proposals involve the conversion of an existing building, materials are largely limited to new window and door surrounds, including new rooflights. Any infill masonry or replacement roof tiles would match the existing (natural stone). Boundary treatments would comprise of post and rail fences, with shrubs to be planted to provide additional screening. The car parking spaces would be located on land which is currently unsurfaced.

The proposed design and materials are therefore considered to be appropriate for the Green Belt setting. Matters concerning residential amenity and highway safety are addressed in subsequent sections of this report.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be acceptable with regards to relevant national and local Green Belt policy. It is considered that the current proposals would have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the proposals approved under the Class Q application.

Design and Visual Amenity

Local Plan Policy LP24 states:

'Proposals should promote good design by ensuring: a. the form, scale, layout and details of all development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape.'

Paragraph 135 in the NPPF also sets out various design objectives, including the need to ensure that developments are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character, and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

Policies 1 and 2 in the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan (HVNDP) also emphasise the importance of protecting and enhancing the landscape character and built character of the Holme Valley and promoting high quality design.

Officers made the following comments on the previous Class Q application in relation to the design and external appearance of the buildings:

'The proposed conversion would leave the external appearance of the buildings almost unchanged, with no significant rebuild or extension having to be undertaken and existing openings being reused. It

is therefore considered that the rural agricultural character of the buildings would be unaffected and that the conversion would have no adverse impact on the wider landscape or distinct views.’⁴

The current proposals include nine additional windows and seven additional small conservation style rooflights over and above what was approved under the Class Q application. It is important to note, however, that some of the additional openings are original openings that are being re-used. The additional windows and rooflights are now required due to the proposed layout and the addition of first floor accommodation in The North Barn and The Stables. The additional windows and rooflights would match those previously approved and would not detract from the original agricultural character and appearance of the building. All new materials proposed would be of high-quality and would respect and enhance the existing building. For instance:

- Any infill masonry or replacement roof tiles would match the existing (natural stone).
- Natural stone roof slates will be retained.
- Grey coloured aluminium windows and doors are proposed.
- Rainwater goods would be coloured black to match existing.

In terms of the outside areas, the rear gardens for both dwellings would comprise of a mix of hard and soft landscaped areas with post and rail boundary fencing and new planting along the boundaries. The car parking spaces at the front of the building would be located on land, which is currently unsurfaced, although it is anticipated that these areas would be surfaced in a suitable material and drained prior to the occupation of the dwellings.

Finally, the proposed demolition of the attached portal framed barn, given its design, age and condition, would also help improve the overall visual amenity of the site.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in relation to design and visual amenity and complies with Local Plan Policy LP24, paragraph 135 in the NPPF and policies 1 and 2 in the HVNDP.

Residential Amenity

Local Plan Policy LP24 states:

‘Proposals should promote good design by ensuring: b. they provide a high standard of amenity for future and neighbouring occupiers.’

Paragraph 135 in the NPPF also sets out various design objectives, including the need to create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.’

The proposed conversion would result in the addition of two new dwellings on the site alongside the existing farmhouse and the conversion of The West Barn into one dwelling under the Class Q application. In terms of residential amenity, the following is relevant:

The orientation of the buildings on site, the separation distances between the buildings, and the siting of windows, would ensure that high levels of privacy for existing and future occupants would be maintained. Each of the dwellings would also have access to a private outdoor amenity space for future occupants to enjoy. These areas are proportionate in scale in relation to the size of the properties.

⁴ Officer Report pages 20-21 (ref: 2023/91342)

All of the habitable rooms and most of the non-habitable rooms within the building have either a window or a rooflight, which would enable plenty of natural daylight to enter the dwellings. The internal floor areas of each of the dwellings also comply with and exceed the Government's Nationally Described Space Standards.

As the application site is situated in an upland and rural location, the outlook for future residents would be open and spacious, particularly from the rear of each of the properties.

The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable in respect of residential amenity and comply with Local Plan Policy LP24 and paragraph 135 in the NPPF.

Highways Matters

Local Plan Policy LP21 states:

'New development will normally be permitted where safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are not severe ... All proposals shall:

a. ensure the safe and efficient flow of traffic within the development and on the surrounding highway network;

d. take into account changes in site levels and topography to ensure the development can be accessed easily and safely by all sections of the community and by different modes of transport;

e. take into account the features of surrounding roads and footpaths and provide adequate layout and visibility to allow the development to be accessed safely;

f. take into account access for emergency, service and refuse collection vehicles.'

Referring to the above, it is considered that the following points are relevant:

- Highways Development Management did not raise any concerns about the visibility or junction layout where Moss Edge Road meets the adopted highway when consulted on the previous Class Q application. Officers noted that, *'the main constraint on visibility, from the point of view of emerging drivers, is the bend at the point where Woodhouse Lane joins Hollin Brigg Lane. It is noted however that the carriageway is unusually wide at this point and provides an area in which emerging motorists can edge forward before completing their turn into Hollin Brigg Lane or Acre Lane and thereby get an improved view of any vehicle oncoming from the Woodhouse Lane direction.'*⁵
- The previous Class Q application included seven passing places along Moss Edge Lane. The current proposals also include seven passing places, and these are shown on the submitted Location Plan. Again, Highways officers did not object on the grounds of inadequate passing places.
- Like the previous Class Q application, the bin collection point is located west of the existing farmhouse. It was previously acknowledged by officers that this collection point is already used by the existing residents, and whilst somewhat inconvenient, this arrangement would work.

⁵ Officer Report page 12 (ref: 2023/91342)

- Six parking spaces are proposed to serve the new dwellings (three spaces per dwelling). This level of parking provision accords with the guidance set out in the Kirklees Highways Design Guide SPD for 4-bed properties. Although no formal visitor spaces have been included as part of the proposals, there is space within the application site for visitors to park informally.
- Swept paths to demonstrate how a fire engine would turn within the application site are shown on the submitted Proposed Site Layout Plan. Officers previously considered that, *'the layout of the road does not prohibit access for large emergency service vehicles, although it may make it difficult for them.'*⁶
- Moss Edge Road has steep gradients in places. It was previously noted by officers that, *'steep gradients may give rise to increased safety risks because of the increased possibility of cars losing their grip on the road when turning or having to break in icy conditions.'*⁷ As a result, a Unilateral Undertaking, which provided a legally enforceable means of ensuring that the new dwellings do not become isolated in severe winter weather and that the track will remain safe to use, was submitted and approved by the Council as part of the previous Class Q application. **It is anticipated that a variation to this legal agreement will form part of this application decision and the solicitors who drafted the previous agreement have already been instructed in this regard.**
- It was previously noted by officers that the increased use of Moss Edge Road by vehicles in association with the development may cause deterioration of the surface given that its largely unsurfaced. However, officers considered that as the road is private, it would be up to the future occupants and owners of the dwellings to agree future maintenance of the road among themselves.
- For most of the road's length, there is a steep drop to the east with only low earth bund standing between the road and the drop. Highways officers did not object to this aspect of the proposals on the previous Class Q application and stated that, *'in view of the likely number of vehicles using this route, it would be disproportionate to require the applicant to erect security fencing, walls or bollards at the edge of the track.'*⁸

Given the above, in particular the comments made by planning and highway officers in respect of the approved Class Q application, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and accords with Local Plan Policy LP21, the aims of Chapter 9 in the NPPF, and the guidance within the Kirklees Highways Design Guide SPD.

Climate Change

A Climate Change Statement is submitted as part of the application. Climate change mitigation measures have been incorporated into the proposals. These include:

- The installation of air source heat pumps
- The formation of bore holes for water

⁶ Officer Report page 13 (ref: 2023/91342)

⁷ Officer Report page 13 (ref: 2023/91342)

⁸ Officer Report page 14 (ref: 2023/91342)

- Materials to be re-used, or sourced locally where new
- High-quality windows and doors
- The installation of energy efficient lighting on timers
- The installation of two bat boxes

The proposals would therefore have a positive impact on climate change and accords with Local Plan Policies LP24 and LP26.

Biodiversity

Certain types of development are exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements. This includes a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m x 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

The Government guidance states that a development ‘impacts’ a habitat if it decreases the biodiversity value.⁹

The proposals relate to the conversion of one agricultural building to two no. dwellings with associated parking and landscaping. The proposed parking and garden areas would be located on existing hardstanding areas and unmade ground. As a result, the proposed development would not impact or decrease the biodiversity value of the site. If anything, the biodiversity value of the site would be marginally increased through the addition of soft landscaped garden areas.

There is no requirement for a bat survey in this case because the buildings are situated in an exposed upland location above the 300 metre contour, and outside the Bat Alert layer (with reference to the West Yorkshire Ecology Service Guidelines).

The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable with regard to biodiversity and accord with Local Plan Policy LP30 and the aims of Chapter 15 in the NPPF.

Drainage

The existing septic tank which is currently located north-east of The North Barn is to be removed and replaced with a new Klargestor Alpha septic tank (STS04610) with access to a soakaway/drainage field to comply with BS6297 located north-east of the septic tank on land within the applicant’s ownership. Officer’s recommended that details of the septic tank should be conditioned in the Class Q application. It is considered that a suitably worded condition could be attached to this application too.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable and complies with Local Plan Policy LP28.

Conclusion

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of one agricultural portal framed barn and the conversion of one agricultural building to form two no. dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.

⁹ Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this report, the proposals are considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt which would preserve openness and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposed development is also considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety, climate change and biodiversity. Finally, approval to convert the building to two dwellings has already been granted under the recent extant Class Q application.

It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is approved accordingly.

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

July 2024