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Planning Development

Planning Statement: The Ford Inn, Greenfield Road, Holmfirth, HD9 2LS

Site Description

The application site is located adjacent to the junction where Thick Hollins Road to the west meets the A635 Greenfield Road to the south. Dean Road also runs along the rear / north of the site. The building itself is a large, detached, part single storey, part two-storey stone built property. The roof is pitched and tiled in natural stone slates.

The car park, part of which is within the red line boundary, is located to the east of the building. Access to the car park is via Greenfield Road and Dean Road. The site is situated in a rural location, largely surrounded by fields and open countryside, however, there is one dwelling located directly adjacent to the site. The site is situated approx. 2.7km north-west of Holmfirth.



The Ford Inn, Greenfield Road – Image courtesy of Google Street View

Relevant Planning History

2015/94013 – Erection of porch to front and rear – Conditional Full Permission (unimplemented)

93/03165 – Erection of extension to form restaurant / dance floor - Conditional Full Permission

93/00434 – Conversion of store rooms and residential accommodation to form bar extension and 6 guest bedrooms and erection of porch – Conditional Full Permission

Policy Designation

The application site is located within the Green Belt in accordance with the Kirklees Local Plan Policies Map. The site is also located within the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network, the Valley Slopes and Mid-Altitudinal Grasslands Biodiversity Opportunity Zone, the Sandstone Mineral Safeguarding Area, and the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan area.

The Proposals

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion, alteration and extension of the former Ford Inn public house to two residential dwellings, with associated parking and landscaping.

The proposals include the following works:

- Single storey porch extension on the front elevation.
- Single storey garage extension (two double garages) projecting out from the east side elevation.
- First floor extension across part of the rear elevation.
- The addition of eight new rooflights on the front facing roof slope and the addition of three new rooflights on the rear facing roof slope.
- The addition of new window and door openings on the east side elevation.
- The removal of two window openings on the west side elevation.

New external materials would comprise of regular coursed natural stone, stone roof tiles and aluminium / timber window frames. Internally, the accommodation for both plots would be spread over three floors with both plots containing four bedrooms.

Plot 1 has seven designated parking spaces and various areas of outdoor amenity space that comprise of hard and soft landscaped areas bordered by trees and hedges. Plot 2 has four designated parking spaces and two main areas of outdoor amenity space, one of which comprises of a raised outdoor seating area located above part of the garage extension, and the other of which is located in the front/eastern area of the site.

Assessment of the Proposals

Community Facilities / Services

Paragraph 97 in the NPPF states:

‘To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs.’

Local Plan Policy LP48 also states that:

‘Proposals which involve the loss of valued community facilities such as shops, public houses and other facilities of value to the local community will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- a. *there is no longer a need for the facility and all options including the scope for alternative community uses have been considered; or*
- b. *its current use is no longer viable; or*
- c. *there is adequate alternative provision in the locality to serve the local community which is in an equally accessible location; or*
- d. *an alternative facility of equivalent or better standard will be provided, either on-site or equally accessible; and*
- e. *any assets listed on a Community Asset Register have satisfied the requirements under the relevant legislation.'*

Policy 9 of the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan does not include public houses within its list of 'community facilities', although it is acknowledged this is stated to be not a closed list. Nevertheless, Policy 9 states that development or change of use of proposals involving the loss of community facilities will be managed in accordance with Kirklees Local Plan Policy LP48.

The starting point for judging the proposals against the above criteria is to assess whether or not the Ford Inn is a "valued" community facility. The following points are made in this regard:

- 1) The former pub is not on the Kirklees 'List of Assets of Community Value'.
- 2) There is no available evidence to suggest that in any objective sense, the Ford Inn was perceived to be a "valued" community facility, particularly given its location away from existing settlements and due to the presence of other similar facilities in the vicinity (see below).
- 3) There has been no particular 'outcry', or attempts by the community to purchase the property, following its closure just under two years ago.

It is therefore submitted that the former pub is not a "valued" community facility and therefore NPPF Paragraph 97 and Local Plan Policy LP48 do not apply to the assessment of this case in principle.

Without prejudice to this position, in the event the Council do not agree with this policy position, Policy LP48 is able to be satisfied providing that either criteria a, b, c, or d are complied with, in addition to criteria e (the latter not applicable in this case because the premises is not on the Community Asset Register).

The applicant wishes to focus primarily on Criteria c (alternative provision), but is also able to provide information in support of compliance with criteria b as a fallback position.

LP48(b) - The current owners of the Ford Inn purchased the premises in 2015 from the previous owners, who had operated the business for the previous 13 years. In late 2017, it was decided to lease the premises and take a retirement role. In 2020 the tenants decided to sell on the lease to, what would be, the final tenants (Ford Inn 20 Ltd.).

The applicant found that operating the pub & restaurant became more and more challenging and unviable due to the following reasons:

- 1) New premises offering different specialities in the local main town of Holmfirth started to capture more of the market, meaning there were more nearby (linked) facilities for going to after a meal, rather than having to drive on afterwards, as was the case from the Ford Inn.
- 2) In November 2022, the premises into financial difficulties and being unable to find anyone interested in continuing the lease, the business went into liquidation. The lease was cancelled, and then the applicant started the process of looking for an outright buyer or a new tenant.

Having employed two agencies for the purpose of marketing the premises, nothing was forthcoming unfortunately.

- 3) In terms of contributing to a lack of interest - the financial pressures from Covid; the later surging fuel prices; the 'cost of living' crisis and inflationary costs have all contributed to a noticeable fall in turnover of the licensed trade. Larger listed companies had the means to withstand some of these pressures, and it was apparent nobody wanted to purchase a single standalone business, positioned over 2 miles from the nearest village. Since November 2022, the building has stood empty.

LB48(c) - there is more than adequate alternative provision in the locality to serve the local community, which are not just in equally accessible locations (such as the Huntsman Inn 700 metres to the west - and a more sustainable/viable business due to its wedding / celebration function space), but other pubs in the vicinity are actually in more accessible locations:

- 1) The Pickled Pheasant – Holmbridge village centre (1.75 km to south).
- 2) The Stumble Inn - Hinchliffe Mill village centre (1.75 km to south-east).
- 3) Farmers Arms – Burnlee settlement centre (1.85 km to south).
- 4) Multiple pubs / drinking establishments - Holmfirth town centre (2 km to the east).

It is also worth pointing out that policy LP 48 seeks to provide community facilities in accessible locations where they can minimise the need to travel, or they can be made accessible by walking, cycling and public transport (the policy notes that this will normally be in town, district or local centres).

It is noted in this regard that the forward in is not in an accessible location, or in an easy location to access by sustainable transport means, or within an established village or town centre.

It is therefore concluded that the principal of the change of use of the former pub to residential use should be judged to be acceptable on the basis of the relevant planning policy framework.

Housing Supply & delivery

Paragraph 60 in the NPPF states, *'To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.'*

Paragraph 70 goes on to state that, *'Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly.'*

The appeal site represents a windfall opportunity capable of contributing to the Council's Local Plan housing supply targets. Paragraph 8.12 of the Local Plan (Appendix P) states: "A windfall allowance of 450 per annum for the final ten years of the plan period (2021/22- 2030/31) has been included in the land requirement calculations. The total amount of housing anticipated on windfall sites during the plan period is therefore 4,500."

However, the Local Plan now exceeds five years old and the confirmed position for Kirklees Council ¹ is that there is no longer a five year supply of specific deliverables site.

In addition to the confirmed inadequate housing supply position, housing *delivery* in Kirklees has also fallen below 95% of the Local Authority's housing requirement over the previous three years and is at 67% - again triggering the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

In these circumstances, the Council is obliged to afford substantial weight to the presumption in favour of sustainable development (i.e. applying the 'tilted balance') unless there are any adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. ²

The new Government ³ has acknowledged the housing crisis with the immediate decision to re-introduce compulsory house targets and the "urgent steps" pledge to build 1.5 million homes within this parliamentary term. It is likely that changes to the NPPF are likely to be forthcoming during the determination period for this application, and the applicant reserves the right to provide further submissions in this regard.

Given the above, there is significant policy support for housing development at both Local Plan and Government levels in this case.

Green Belt Impact

Paragraph 154 in the NPPF states:

'A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.'

Local Plan Policy LP57 also states that,

'Proposals for the extension, alteration or replacement of buildings in the Green Belt will normally be acceptable provided that:

a. in the case of extensions the original building remains the dominant element both in terms of size and overall appearance. The cumulative impact of previous extensions and of other associated buildings will be taken into account. Proposals to extend buildings which have already been extended should have regard to the scale and character of the original part of the building.

c. the proposal does not result in a greater impact on openness in terms of the treatment of outdoor areas, including hard standings, curtilages and enclosures and means of access;

d. the design and materials should have regard to relevant design policies to ensure that the resultant development does not materially detract from its Green Belt setting.'

¹ Kirklees Housing Position Statement to Boost Supply February 2024

² Underlining our emphasis.

³ Government News Story "Chancellor unveils a new era for economic growth 8th July 2024"

The single storey front porch extension is small in scale measuring 1.7m wide by 3m long. The porch would be set back from the existing front elevation of the adjacent kitchen and would have a mono-pitch roof. The single storey garage extension would measure 7.3m wide by 12.6m long. The garage would be set in from the existing front and rear elevations and the roof of the garage would be flat. Finally, the first floor extension measures 3m wide by 9m long with the extension having a mono-pitch roof.

The former Ford Inn is a relatively large, two-storey detached building. The Council's planning records indicate that the only previous extensions to the building were a front porch and a single storey extension to the rear. It is therefore considered that the addition of the proposed extensions would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, which would remain the dominant element in terms of size and overall appearance.

The proposed extensions would be in keeping with the host building with regard to materials (regular coursed natural stone and stone roof tiles), window and door openings and architectural detailing. Matters concerning outdoor areas, curtilages, enclosures and accesses are addressed below.

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.'

This is echoed in Local Plan Policy LP60 which also states that,

'Proposals for the conversion or re-use of buildings in the Green Belt 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 and curtilage buildings;

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

In relation to paragraph 155 in the NPPF, the building is a large, detached stone built property with a slate tiled roof. The building, formally the Ford Inn public house, is therefore considered to be of permanent and substantial construction and is more than capable of being converted.

With regard to Local Plan Policy LP60 b., the existing accesses at the front and rear of the application site are proposed to be used to serve the new dwellings. No additional hardstanding areas are proposed. The areas to be used for outdoor amenity space for both plots are located within the confines of the Ford Inn site. No further encroachment into the Green Belt is therefore proposed. The proposals also include additional soft landscaped areas which will improve visual amenity and landscape quality.

With regard to Local Plan Policy LP60 c., the walling and roofing materials and the new window and door openings would match the host building. The external patio areas and boundary treatments (trees and hedging) would also be sympathetic to the site's local rural Green Belt setting. Matters concerning residential amenity are addressed in a subsequent section of this report.

Given the above, the proposals are considered to be acceptable with regard to relevant national and local Green Belt policy.

Design and Visual Amenity

Local Plan Policy LP24 states that, *'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.

c. extensions are subservient to the original building, are in keeping with the existing buildings in terms of scale, materials and details.'

Paragraph 135 in the NPPF sets out various design objectives, including the need to ensure that developments: function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive; are 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.

The overall external appearance and character of the building would remain broadly similar following the conversion. The small front porch extension and the relatively small rear first floor extension would only result in minor alterations to the external fabric of the building. The garage extension, which would be located at the side of the building and set back from the front/principal elevation, would provide a subservient addition to the original building, which would remain the dominant element. The proposed materials of the extensions and the new fenestration proposed would also harmonise with the appearance of the host building.

In terms of the outside areas, the parking areas would be located on what is currently existing hardstanding at the front and rear of the site. The garden areas would comprise of both hard and soft landscaping with planting along the boundary to form soft borders and screening. The raised outdoor seating area would be relatively inconspicuous from the roadside with a low screen around it for safety and privacy reasons.

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 that, *'Proposals should promote good design by ensuring:*

b. they provide a high standard of amenity for future and neighbouring occupiers.'

This is echoed in paragraph 135 f) in the NPPF.

There is only one residential property within close proximity of the application site; the dwelling located directly north-east. This property is also situated at a slightly elevated position to the building subject to this application.

Following the proposed development, the southern elevation of the neighbouring property would look over the proposed garage extension and outdoor amenity areas of both plots. Given the topography of the site and the natural screening proposed, it is considered that the outlook for the neighbouring dwelling, and the privacy for future occupants of both plots when they are outside would not be unduly harmed by the proposals.

Given the siting and orientation of the buildings to one another, and the fact that the side elevation of the neighbouring property only contains one small non-habitable window, the proposed development would not cause any harm in respect of overlooking for the occupants of the neighbouring dwelling or plot 2. In addition, none of the properties would experience any overshadowing as a result of the development.

The proposed dwellings would have access to private outdoor amenity spaces for the future occupants to enjoy. These areas are considered to be proportionate in scale in relation to the size of the plots and amount of internal accommodation. The majority of rooms within the building have either a window or a rooflight, which would enable plenty of natural daylight to enter the property.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in respect of residential amenity and complies with Local Plan Policy LP24 and paragraph 135 in the NPPF.

Summary

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion, alteration and extension of the former Ford Inn to two residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.

The sections above demonstrate compliance with relevant local, national and neighbourhood planning policies, and with particular regard to the Government's strong emphasis on delivering housing, together with the 'tilted balance' being engaged, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

October 2024