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Planning Development

Planning and Heritage Impact Statement

New Close Farm, Wickens Lane, Upperthong, Holmfirth, HD9 3RB

Site Description

The application site comprises one detached stone built building currently used for storage and workshop purposes, adjacent land and access road. The building is located at New Close Farm which also comprises New Close Farmhouse (Grade II listed), New Close Farm Cottage and New Close Barn. Access to the site is via a shared access road from Wickens Lane and Back Lane located south of the application site. The site is situated in a rural location, surrounded by open fields and countryside. The centre of Holmfirth is located approximately 1.5km to the south-east of the site.



Building subject to this application

Relevant Planning History

2016/94069 – Alterations to convert detached store to dwelling – Withdrawn

2017/93297 – Listed Building Consent for demolition of dog pens, erection of single storey rear extension, demolition of barn and erection of barn using existing materials – Non determination subject to appeal – Appeal dismissed

2017/93721 – Demolition of existing agricultural building and erection of two storey agricultural building (within the curtilage of a listed building) – Non determination subject to appeal – Appeal dismissed

Please note: The building subject to this application did not originally have planning permission to be constructed (as a replacement to an existing piggeries barn). However, the building was substantially completed more than four years ago (in 2009) (see Google Earth image below confirming minimum four years) and is therefore immune from any enforcement action in accordance with Section 171B Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and the transitional arrangements under the Levelling-Up Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 4 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 (Regulation 5).



May 2019

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, the Valley Slopes and Mid-Altitudinal Grasslands Biodiversity Opportunity Zones, the Sandstone Mineral Safeguarding Area and in the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan area.

The Proposals

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of the existing store / workshop to one residential dwelling with associated parking, outdoor amenity space and landscaping.

The conversion is proposed to include the following external works:

- An existing opening on the north elevation would be reinstated with an obscure glazed window.
- An existing door on the east elevation would be replaced with a fully glazed door.
- Two other existing openings on the east elevation would be enlarged by removing the central pillar and a new sliding door would be installed.
- One conservation style rooflight would be formed in the east facing roof slope.
- An existing opening on the west elevation would be reinstated with an obscure glazed window.

The existing external steps on the north elevation would be retained and the doors on the south and north elevations would be retained.

Internally, the proposed accommodation would comprise a living room, an open plan kitchen and dining room, a W.C and a hallway on the ground floor with two bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor.

Two designated parking spaces are proposed to be located at the front/south of the building (on existing hardstanding areas) and an area of domestic curtilage is proposed to the east of the building, which would be bordered by post and rail fencing. Waste & recycling bins would be located in the existing timber compound to the south of the building, while an EV charging point is proposed on a freestanding post within the hardstanding area immediately south of the building.

The building is already drained to the existing package treatment plant to the north of the building; this is indicated on the enclosed plans.

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 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 existing building is relatively new and has been constructed using a concrete blockwork inner skin with a natural stone outer wall. The building also has a concrete floor, and the roof has been constructed using steel and timber joists and is tiled in natural slate. The building was constructed relatively recently and is therefore considered to be of permanent and substantial construction and as a result, is suitable for conversion.

With regard to Local Plan Policy LP60 b., the existing shared access is proposed to be used to serve the new dwelling. The car parking spaces are proposed to be located to the south of the building on an area of existing hardstanding. The private amenity space to serve the new dwelling would be situated directly east of the building and is considered to be no larger than what is reasonably necessary to provide future occupants with a good degree of outdoor space, proportionate to the size of the building.

In relation to Local Plan Policy LP60 c., as the proposals involve the conversion of an existing building, materials are largely limited to altered window and door openings and the addition of one new conservation style rooflight, as described above. The new domestic curtilage to the east of the building would be bordered by post and rail fencing, which would be in keeping with the character of the local landscape. 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 regard to relevant national and local Green Belt policies.

Heritage Matters

Local Plan Policy LP35 states that,

'Development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset (or an archaeological site of national importance) should preserve or enhance the significance of the asset.'

There is one designated heritage asset located within close proximity to the application site: New Close Farmhouse, which is a grade II listed building, is located directly north-west of the application site.

In 2020, the applicant sought advice from the heritage consultants, Humble Heritage, as to whether the building that is the subject of this application meets the tests for it to be considered a curtilage listed building. Their Heritage Advice report is included as part of this application, however in summary, they concluded that the building cannot be considered to fall within the curtilage of the listed building as it was built in approximately 2009 when it replaced an earlier piggery barn. As such, they would not expect any future works for this building to require Listed Building Consent.

Any proposed development does however need to consider any impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building.

The NPPF glossary defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.’

Main views of the listed building can currently be appreciated and experienced on the approach to the building from Back Lane. Close up views of the front and rear of the building can also be appreciated within the property boundary, but long range views of the building are limited from public vantage points.

Given the proposals relate to the conversion of an existing building, the development would not materially alter the current views of the listed building. The proposed alterations to the building are considered minimal and are largely limited to existing window and door openings. The stone steps would also be retained. These would be sympathetic in nature and in keeping with the host building and adjacent listed building.

Whilst an element of domestic curtilage is also included within the proposals, this is located on the far (eastern) side of the building to be converted, away from the listed building, and is confined to a relatively small rectangular area. Given the location and size, together with the fact this garden area would be situated at a lower level than the listed building, there is considered to be no material harm to the setting of the listed building.



New Close Farmhouse (left) with the building subject to this application (right)

Paragraph 205 in the NPPF states the following:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.’

In this case, given the nature of the proposals, it is considered that the proposed development would not cause any material harm to the significance of the heritage asset. The proposals are therefore considered to be acceptable and accord with Local Plan LP35 and the aims of Chapter 16 in the NPPF.

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.'

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.'

The Kirklees Housebuilders Design Guide Supplemental Planning Document (SPD) also sets out what the Council considers to be high-quality residential development. The relevant principles in relation to this case and visual amenity are as follows:

Principle 2 – Context

Principle 12 - Parking

Principle 13 – Materials and detailing

Principle 14 – Windows and doors

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 external appearance and character of the building would remain broadly the same following the conversion. Other than some minor alterations to some of the existing openings, no new window or door openings are proposed in the building other than one small conservation style rooflight on the east facing roof slope. This rooflight would be in keeping with the existing fabric of the building. In addition, the alterations proposed to some of the existing openings would be sympathetic in nature and would harmonise well with the appearance of the existing building. The retention of the steps on the northern elevation would also help retain the character and visual appearance of the building.

In terms of the outside areas, the parking area located south of the building would remain as existing. The rear garden area located east of the building is proportionate in size and would be bordered by relatively unintrusive post and rail fencing to match the existing boundary treatment in the vicinity.

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, the relevant principles in the SPD 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.

The Kirklees Housebuilders Design Guide SPD also sets out what the Council considers to be high-quality residential development. The relevant principles in relation to this case and residential amenity are as follows:

Principle 6 – Maintaining high standards of residential amenity

Principle 12 - Parking

Principle 16 – Internal space standards

Principle 17 – Outdoor space

Principle 19 – Waste

There is only one residential property within close proximity of the building subject to this application, New Close Farm Cottage, which is located west /north-west of the building. As the building is already in situ, the proposed conversion would not impact the current outlook and amount of daylight currently enjoyed by the occupants of New Close Farm Cottage.



View of New Close Farm Cottage from the north elevation of the building subject to this application

Given the orientation of the buildings to one another, it is also considered that the conversion of the building to residential would not unduly affect the privacy for occupants of both properties, particularly as the main bedroom windows on the north and west elevations are proposed to be obscurely glazed (with a secondary small window to Bedroom 1 on the western elevation).

The proposed dwelling would have access to a private outdoor amenity space for the future occupants to enjoy. This area is considered to be proportionate in scale in relation to the size of the building. A parking area for two cars also forms part of the proposals and will provide the future occupants with adequate off-street parking provision. The existing bin store located south of the building would accommodate two bins (1 waste / 1 recycling bins) for future residents to dispose of their waste appropriately.

All of the habitable rooms and most of the non-habitable rooms within the building have either a window or glass door opening or a rooflight, which would enable plenty of natural daylight to enter

the property. The internal floor area of the building also complies with the Government's Nationally Described Space Standards, with regard to overall internal floor space for a two bed dwelling; double bedroom sizes, and storage provision.

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

Highway Matters

Local Plan Policy LP21 states that,

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

The existing access from Wickens Lane / Back Lane is proposed to be used (part of which – Back Lane – serves as a public footpath). The distance between the driveway of the application site and the junction of Back Lane / Wickens Lane is 195 metres. Although this section of track is straight, and therefore visibility is good, three existing passing places are shown along Back Lane on the location plan, which help to prevent vehicles having to reverse along the lane should they meet one another.

Furthermore, the lane only currently serves three other houses and so not only are levels of traffic generation very low, but there has been a degree of the vehicle movements associated with the current use of the building.

Visibility from Back Lane onto Wickens Lane is good in both directions relative to the low speeds encountered.

Two designated parking spaces are proposed for the new dwelling on an existing area of hardstanding. This amount of parking provision is considered to be acceptable and complies with the guidance for two-bed properties in the Kirklees Highways Design Guide SPD. There is adequate turning available within the site to ensure that vehicles can exit in a forward gear. A freestanding electric vehicle charging point is also proposed to be provided adjacent to the parking area.

Two no. bins are proposed to be located in the existing bin store south of the building (1 waste and 1 recycling). A refuse collection vehicle already serves the adjacent dwellings, and it is therefore considered acceptable that this provision extends to the new property also.

The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in relation to highway safety and accords with Local Plan Policies LP21 and LP22, the guidance within the Kirklees Highways Design Guide and the aims of Chapter 9 in the NPPF.

Ecology – Bats

A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment has been carried out by Knight Sky Ecology and accompanies the application. A thorough inspection of the building was carried out both internally and externally. No evidence of a bat roost or potential roost features were recorded. As a result, the proposed development is considered to be of negligible risk of impacts to bats and as such, bats do not present a constraint to the development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Government Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain states at Paragraph 002:

“The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain has been designed as a post-permission matter to ensure that the biodiversity gain objective of achieving at least a 10% gain in biodiversity value will be met for development granted planning permission. Once planning permission has been granted, unless exempt, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of that development.”

As the Guidance also confirms (Para 024), “the biodiversity gain condition has its own separate statutory basis, as a planning condition under paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The condition is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England.”

In accordance with Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the minimum information needed to accompany the application is contained within the application form accompanying this application.

In terms of addressing the issue of biodiversity net gain, the pre-development biodiversity value of the site is 0.21 habitat units which comprises a small section of existing field which is to be used as garden within the residential curtilage. This area is species poor and contains a mix of frequent rye grass, rough meadow grass and cocks-foot.

In order to compensate for the small loss of grassland and to achieve at least a 10% net gain, tree planting is considered to be the most feasible option at the site. A total of three native trees needs to be planted and there are sufficiently sized areas within the land holding to plant these trees. The combined value of the created habitats post-development would be 0.23 habitat units. This would result in a biodiversity net gain of 0.02 habitat units or 11.69%.

As such, the information provided with this application is considered to address relevant statutory requirements and complies with Local Plan Policy LP30, the aims of Chapter 15 in the NPPF and principle 9 in the Housebuilders Design Guide SPD.

Climate Change

A Climate Change Statement is submitted as part of the application. The following climate change mitigation measures form part of the development proposals:

- Use of sustainable materials
- Low energy lighting
- Energy metered
- High quality insulation
- Low consumption sanitaryware appliances
- Energy efficient windows and doors
- Free-standing electric vehicle charging point

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

Drainage

The building and the adjacent dwellings are already connected to a package treatment plant which is located in the northern area of the site. The package treatment plant is a Conder APS 20 and is able to serve up to 20 people. At present, the package treatment plant currently serves 10 people and as such there is ample capacity for it to serve the dwelling also.

Conclusion

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of the existing store / workshop to one residential dwelling with associated parking and outdoor amenity space.

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. The proposals are also considered to be acceptable in terms of heritage impact, visual amenity, residential amenity, highway safety, ecology, biodiversity, drainage and climate change mitigation.

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

Robert Halstead Chartered Surveyors & Town Planners

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