

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of an administrative centre and groom's accommodation in association with an established equestrian centre.

The application site is located within the open countryside on land designated as being within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and an Area of Landscape Enhancement (policy N20), as indicated on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The 8 week determination period expired on the 20th January 2021 and the applicant has agreed an extension of time to the statutory determination period to the 4th February 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to the following matters:-

- 1. Time limit condition**
- 2. Approved plans**
- 3. Occupancy restriction**
- 4. Materials**
- 5. Removal of existing caravan**
- 6. Restriction on additional external lighting**

Reason for Recommendation

Whilst the development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, it is accepted that there are very special circumstances which would outweigh the associated harm to the openness of the Green Belt from this development. Subject to a condition that restricts the occupation of the residential accommodation to the equestrian centre it is considered to represent a sustainable form of development that accords with local and national planning policy.

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with this application

Additional information has been requested during the consideration of the application and the applicant has submitted details to satisfy any concerns. The development is now considered to be a sustainable form of development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

KEY ISSUES

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of an administrative centre and groom's accommodation at this established equestrian centre/ livery.

The application site is located within the open countryside on land designated as being within the Green Belt and an Area of Landscape Enhancement (policy N20), as indicated on the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:-

1. Is the proposal appropriate development within the Green Belt?
2. The principal of living accommodation and its location,
3. Design and impact on the character and quality of the landscape, and
4. Should it be concluded that the development is inappropriate in Green Belt terms do the required very special circumstances exist?

1. Is the proposal appropriate development within the Green Belt?

Paragraph 133 of the NPPF details that “The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

The NPPF further indicates in paragraph 145 that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, however exceptions to this include, amongst other things, the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The proposed development is for the construction of a 2-storey building to serve as an administrative centre and groom's accommodation in connection with an established equestrian business.

The proposed building would be sited immediately adjacent to an existing stable building, forming an 'L' shape. It would measure 14.4m in length and 5.2m in width. It would be 4m to the eaves and 5.5m to the ridge.

The ground floor of the building would serve as administrative accommodation associated with the equestrian centre and consists of a tack room/ kitchen, office/ training room and w/c. The first floor would form self-contained living accommodation, consisting of an open plan kitchen/ living room, bedroom and bathroom.

The application follows a previous planning permission granted in 2007 for a similar building to be used as an administration centre for the equestrian business. This building was not fully constructed but pre commencement conditions were satisfied and foundations (footings) of the building were constructed and on this basis your officers are satisfied that the planning permission remains extant and capable of being implemented.

Whilst the ground floor of the building would be used as part of the equestrian centre business, which is considered to be appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, the first floor accommodation would be for residential use which does not meet any of the exceptions listed in paragraph 145 of the NPPF. On this basis it has to be concluded that the proposed development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and should only be permitted if very special circumstances exist.

The principal of living accommodation and its location

The application site is located within the open countryside in an area that has poor accessibility to services and facilities and only limited accessibility to public transport.

The applicant has indicated that the first floor of the building would be used as groom's accommodation for the equestrian centre and the application confirms that there is an essential need for a person to live on site for care and welfare supervision of the type of horses at the livery element of the business.

The application also sets out that an existing caravan on has been sited on the land for over 10 years and is used for administrative purposes and for necessary overnight stays to supervise the horses. The proposed building would replace this caravan.

As discussed, the previous permission for a similar building could be constructed and a planning application then submitted to use the first floor as living accommodation.

The NPPF does not discourage the conversion of rural buildings into living accommodation and existing legislation set out in the General Permitted Development Order 2015, as amended, allows the conversion of certain existing buildings to residential units provided that a number of criteria are satisfied and a prior approval application is submitted to the Local Planning Authority for consideration.

The extant permission is not a building that would benefit from permitted development rights for its conversion but the principle of its re-use, within an otherwise unsustainable location for new residential dwellings, is relevant.

Furthermore, paragraphs 78 and 79 of the NPPF also encourage houses that enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and where there is an essential need for a rural worker.

As discussed, the proposed building and first floor accommodation would be occupied by a person employed at the existing equestrian centre. The application also confirms that a suitable condition which restricts the occupation of the accommodation is acceptable.

A condition which restricts the occupation of the first floor to persons employed at the equestrian centre is necessary and reasonable due to the unsustainable location of the site. Subject to this condition the development is considered acceptable and in accordance with the guidance and requirements of the NPPF.

Design and impact on the character and quality of the landscape

Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

The site lies within an Area of Landscape Enhancement (Policy N20) as indicated by the Local Development Framework Proposals Map. This policy seeks development that will enhance the character and quality of the landscape. Within these areas it will be necessary to demonstrate that development will not further erode the character or quality of the landscape.

The proposed building would be sited immediately adjacent to the existing stable building, forming an 'L' shape. It would measure 14.4m in length and 5.2m in width. It would be 4m to the eaves and 5.5m to the ridge.

It would be constructed from block work with rendered walls and a Grey powder coated profiled composite roof.

It would be seen within the context of the existing buildings of the equestrian centre and views of it from any main vantage points would be restricted due to it being set back within the site, behind existing buildings. However, there would be views from the country lane to the east and south-east.

It also has to be acknowledged that the proposed building would have no greater harm on the landscape than the previous planning permission granted in 2007

Subject to a condition which secure appropriate facing and roof materials it is considered that the proposed building would not harm the character and appearance of the landscape and it accords with Policy N20 of the Local Plan, Policy CSP1 of the Core Spatial Strategy and the requirements of the NPPF.

Do the required very special circumstances exist (to justify inappropriate development)?

As the residential use of the first floor accommodation is considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, very special circumstances are required that would outweigh the harm caused by the inappropriate development, and any other harm, to the Green Belt.

Paragraph 144 of the NPPF sets out that; "When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

As discussed, the proposed building would measure 14.4m in length and 5.2m in width and would be 2 storeys.

Planning permission has previously been granted for a similar building which remains extant and the proposed building would have no greater harm on the openness of the Green Belt than that building.

The building is required in association with an established rural business and paragraph 83 of the NPPF sets out that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.

Subject to a condition which restricts the occupation of the first floor residential accommodation it is accepted that there is a need for the building and it would have no greater harm on the Green Belt. A condition which secures the removal of the existing caravan is also necessary and reasonable.

The proposed building has an acceptable appearance and given the circumstances and justification provided, it is considered that the necessary very special circumstances exist that would outweigh the harm on the Green Belt.

APPENDIX

Policies and proposals in the Development Plan relevant to this decision:

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy \(CSS\) 2006-2026](#)

Policy ASP6: Rural Area Spatial Policy
Policy CSP1: Design Quality

[Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan \(NLP\) 2011](#)

Policy S3: Development in the Green Belt
Policy N17: Landscape Character - General Considerations
Policy N20: Area of Landscape Enhancement
Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements

Other Material Considerations

[National Planning Policy](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (February 2019)

[Planning Practice Guidance](#) (March 2014)

[Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents](#)

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document](#) (2010)

[Relevant Planning History](#)

03/01145/FUL Retention of menage (equestrian exercise area) and installation of floodlighting Permitted

07/00552/FUL Erection of building to provide administration centre Permitted

[Consultation Responses](#)

Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council raises no objection subject to any grant of permission requiring the removal of the existing caravan and annexe from the site by a planning condition.

The **Highways Authority** raises no objections.

The **Environmental Health Division** has no objections subject to conditions which restrict the installation of additional lighting and restrict the occupancy of the grooms accommodation to those associated with the operation of the surrounding equestrian centre.

Cadent Gas (National Grid) advises that they have apparatus in the vicinity of the site which may be affected by the activities specified.

[Representations](#)

None received

[Applicants/agents submission](#)

The requisite plans and application forms have been submitted and a detailed planning justification statement has been submitted which identifies a number of key points for consideration in the determination of the application.

All of the application documents can be viewed on the Council's website using the following link:

<http://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/PLAN/20/01019/FUL>

Background Papers

Planning files referred to
Planning Documents referred to

Date report prepared

20 January 2021