

GEORGE F. WHITE



PLANNING STATEMENT

Land South West of Field Head House

Longhorsley

G Middleton

ALN511750

March 2021

Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 George F. White (Planning, Architecture and Development) have been instructed by Mr G Middleton (the 'Client') to submit an outline planning application with access and all other matters reserved for the development of up to 5no. dwellings on land south west of Field Head House, Longhorsley.
- 1.2 Having regard to section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this planning statement considers the application's conformity with the Development Plan, relevant national planning policy and other material considerations.
- 1.3 In addition to this statement, the application also comprises the following;
- Location Plan;
 - Existing Site Plan;
 - Indicative Site Plan;
 - Ecological Appraisal; and
 - Contamination Screening Assessment.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site ('the Site') is located north east of Field Head, a small settlement which is approximately 500m to the south of Longhorsley. The A697 is located to the west of the application site. The site is fairly flat and is currently occupied by relatively large agricultural buildings which are considered to be of permanent and substantial construction. Adjacent to the application site, to the west and south west, are existing residential properties.
- 2.2 The site location is detailed on the submitted Location Plan.
- 2.3 The site is bound by:
- Agricultural land to the north;
 - Residential properties to the east and west; and
 - The public highway to the south, with agricultural land beyond.
- 2.4 The site is accessed by an existing access to the south which connects on the public highway, allowing for further connections to the surrounding settlements.
- 2.5 The site is located within the Green Belt, as identified on the emerging Northumberland Local Plan policies map.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Permission for the change of use of agricultural buildings to 4no. dwelling houses was permitted in December 2020 under Class Q – Reference 20/02502/AGTRES

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 This application is in outline including access with all other matters reserved. The submission includes all necessary reports, statements and plans to support the application in outline.
- 4.2 The proposed development is for the demolition of existing buildings for the construction of up to 5no. dwellings. The application seeks to reuse the land and buildings associated with an extant Class Q conversion scheme through planning reference 20/02502/AGTRES. The extant permission demonstrates that the site has consent for 4 dwellings.
- 4.3 It is proposed to utilise the existing access to the south, which is considered suitable for the residential development.
- 4.4 The scale of the proposed development is a reserved matter.
- 4.5 Site layout is a reserved matter. However, the proposed site is of a sufficient size for 5 dwellings with provision of amenity areas and car parking to the Council's published standards. An indicative site layout plan is provided to illustrate the proposed development can be accommodated on site.
- 4.6 A landscaping plan will be submitted as a reserved matter. It is anticipated that the existing boundary treatments will require enhancement.
- 4.7 The appearance of the proposed dwellings is a reserved matter; however, it is anticipated that this will be informed by, and be compatible with, the local vernacular and materials.

PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Planning law (section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released the new National Planning Policy Framework in July 2018 (The Framework), with further alterations in February 2019. The document replaced the first National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and sets out a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 5.3 The Framework confirms at Para 2 that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Government have confirmed that The Framework is a material planning consideration and should be taken account of when making decisions.
- 5.4 It is therefore anticipated that the planning application will be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with regard being had, where relevant, to the statutory development plan.

Statutory Development Plan

- 5.5 The statutory development plan for the site consists of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan 'saved' policies (2007). The site is also located within the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan Area, and as such the proposals are considered against the policies contained within the plan.
- 5.6 It is anticipated that the following policies would be considered in the determination of this application:

Castle Morpeth 'saved' Policies (2007)

- C16 Green Belt
- C17 Green Belt
- H15 New Housing Developments
- H16 Housing in the Countryside

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- H24 Demolition and Rebuilding

Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan (2018)

- LNP 2 Development in the Open Countryside
- LNP3 Development in the Green Belt Extension

5.7 Northumberland Council recently underwent examination of the emerging local plan. It was confirmed by the Inspector, in February 2021, that in its current form the plan is not sound however it is likely it can be made sound subject to modifications. Given the level of unresolved issues the policies contained within the plan can be afforded only limited weight in the determination of this application.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Based upon an assessment of the planning policy and the supporting statements, this section will consider and address the whether the principle of residential development can be considered acceptable in this location.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 Policy Set1 of the Neighbourhood plan defines settlement a settlement boundary for Longhorsley. It identifies that new development should be concentrated within the defined boundary. The site subject of this application falls outside the settlement boundary as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.3 As the site is located outside of the settlement boundary it is treated as the open countryside. Paragraphs 78-79 of the NPPF highlight that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the viability of rural communities. This small-scale development will provide the opportunity to provide high quality and well designed new housing, contributing to meeting the housing requirements of the area and support the local economy. It is further noted at paragraph 79 that the LPA should seek to avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless the proposals meet with the criteria listed. Whilst the proposed development does not meet with any of the criteria listed at paragraph 79 it is not considered to be isolated. There have been a number of cases concerning the interpretation of paragraphs 78-79 including Braintree DC v SSCLG during which Lindblom LJ found:

The word isolated simply connotes a dwelling which is physically separate or remote from a settlement. Whether a proposed new dwelling is, or is not, isolated in this sense will be a matter of fact and planning judgement for the decision maker in the particular circumstances of the case in hand.

What constitutes a settlement for these purposes is also left undefined in the NPPF. The NPPF contains no definitions of a community, a settlement or a village. There is not specified minimum number of dwellings, or population. It is not said that a settlement or development boundary must have been fixed in an adopted or emerging local plan , or that only the land and buildings within that settlement or development boundary would constitute the settlement. In my view a settlement would not necessarily exclude a hamlet or a cluster of dwellings, without for example, a shop or post office of its own, or a school or community hall or a public house nearby. Whether, in a particular case, a group of dwellings constitutes a settlement or a 'village' for the purposes of the policy will again be a matter of fact and planning judgement for the decision maker. In the second sentence of para. 55 (now para. 79) the policy acknowledges that development in one village may support services in another. It does not stipulate that, to be a village, a settlement must have any services of its own, let alone services of any specified kind.

The findings of Lindblom LJ presented the approach of physical and functional isolation which are judgements for the planning decision maker. Further Lindblom concluded that land and buildings outside of a defined settlement can still be considered to form part of the settlement in question. It is therefore for the decision maker to determine how to interpret the NPPF and case law when making their decision.

- 6.4 It is noted at paragraph 68 of the NPPF that small and medium sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area. It is further highlighted that LPAs should promote the development of a good mix of sites, including support for the development of windfall sites.
- 6.5 As previously stated the site subject of this application has an extant planning permission for 4no. dwellings and as a result the site should be considered as previously developed land. As the site is PDL its reuse cannot be considered encroachment into the open countryside. Whilst the site is not within an established settlement is it not considered to be functionally or physically isolated, with a number of buildings and dwellings adjacent to the site. It is further considered that the redevelopment of this PDL site would support the services in nearby villages (paragraph 78 NPPF).
- 6.6 Taking the above information into account and having reviewed the site and its surroundings it is considered that the proposed dwellings will not be physically or functionally isolated, and is considered sustainable in terms of its location and accessibility.

Development in the Green Belt

- 6.7 The site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless the proposed meets with the exceptions listed. Paragraph 145 (g) highlights that an exception to this rule is the limited infilling or the redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. Therefore subject to an assessment on the openness of the Green Belt the proposed development is not considered inappropriate development. Policy LNP3 of the Neighbourhood plan specifically relates to development within the Green Belt, highlighting that inappropriate development will not be supported, reverting back to the NPPF for the definition of what may be deemed appropriate.

Potential Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

- 6.8 The site has the benefit of an extant Class Q consent for 4no. dwellings through the conversion of the existing agricultural buildings. The building on site comprises approximately 546sqm floorspace, and whilst the Class Q development see a reduction in this volume the permission ensures the future use of the site. The proposed is for the development of 5no. dwellings and whilst this is an increase in the number of units, the overall volume of the built form will reduce.
- 6.9 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. All development must preserve this openness and in accordance with paragraph 144 of the NPPF any harm must be afforded significant weight. By virtue of the extant permissions the land in question will not remain permanently open, therefore a degree of harm has already been experienced within this location. It is the applicants view that the existing impact on the openness should be assessed against the potential harm of the proposed development. Therefore the redevelopment of this PDL site is considered to be in accordance with paragraph 145(g) of the NPPF.
- 6.10 The surrounding area is characterised by open countryside and clusters of built development. The proposed dwellings would be in close proximity to a number of existing dwellings and the redevelopment of the site would improve the character and appearance of this cluster. By virtue of the site location between existing residential development, the proposal would constitute limited infilling, as per paragraph 145(g).

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- 6.11 Whilst this application is in outline an indicative site plan has been provided to illustrate that the development would not appear out of keeping within the surrounding context. Further the dwellings would be viewed as part of the existing built development and it is considered that the siting and location would ensure that the proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 6.12 Both the emerging local plan main modifications and NPPF support limited infill development subject to not having a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It is considered that the above information demonstrates that up to 5 dwellings can be accommodated on site whilst retaining the openness of the Green Belt.

Access Considerations

- 6.13 The development would be served by the existing access onto the public highway to the south. It is considered that the existing access is suitable for the proposed development, subject to upgrading to NCC standards.
- 6.14 The existing vehicular access onto the U6017 has a speed limit of 60mph, with no existing pedestrian links which is in keeping with the rural nature of the site. The vehicular movements are likely to be similar to the extant Class Q permission and can therefore be considered acceptable.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The above assessment demonstrates that the proposed development can be found acceptable. The overarching aim of the NPPF is to deliver sufficient homes within appropriate locations. The proposed development is considered to be sustainable as per the definition within the NPPF.
- 7.2 The proposed residential development would provide additional housing on a PDL site, contributing to the Northumberland housing land supply. Windfall sites such as this can provide an important contribution to meeting the county's housing needs, and their contribution should not be dismissed.
- 7.3 The proposed development should be considered acceptable and approved without delay.



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