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PLANNING AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Forge Farm Bestwood Road Bestwood NG6 8SS

Conversion of farm buildings to four dwellings

June 2021

Introduction

The report is submitted in support of a planning application for the conversion of farm buildings and is accompanied by a Structural Report, Heritage Report, Transport Assessment, Bat Survey, and Contaminated Land Assessment.

The Site

Forge Farm is a working farm located to the east of Bestwood Road, on the edge of Bestwood Country Park. The site lies within the Green Belt.

It comprises an occupied farmhouse and attached vacant cottage to the rear, and associated single storey and two storey farm buildings. The principal buildings date from the early 1800's and are attractive, of substantial construction and in a reasonable state of repair. They have undergone only limited alterations since their construction.

The buildings are not statutorily listed nor in a Conservation Area, but are recognised as being of Local Heritage Interest.

The farm buildings are arranged around the four sides of a crew-yard which has been roofed with corrugated sheeting and is used as a cow shed. The original farm buildings are mostly vacant with some storage. There are also some more modern buildings that are used for stabling horses.

The site lies just outside Bestwood Village and Bestwood Business Park adjoins the northern boundary.

To the west of Bestwood Road is a new residential estate.

Bestwood Road is a classified road (the B683) with a 30 mph speed limit. The site is accessed by a track that goes under the former railway line – now a public footpath which is part of the River Leen Valley Trail.

Zenith Planning and Design 38 Greenhills Road Eastwood Nottingham NG16 3DG
Alison Dudley Dip. Town Planning Tel 01773 770553 email alison.dudley1@btinternet.com



Aerial photo of farmhouse and farm buildings

Photographs of the buildings are appended to this statement.

Pre Application Enquiry

A pre application enquiry re the conversion of the farm buildings to four dwellings was submitted to Gedling Borough Council in November 2020 and a written response was received in February 2021.

The Council advised that the principle of conversion was acceptable subject to the details respecting the historic integrity and layout of the buildings, retaining their character and setting. Extensions to the existing buildings were considered to be contrary to Green Belt policy.

The Conservation Officer identified that there were features of the buildings that should be retained if possible including the King post trusses in some of the buildings and original agricultural fittings and advised that existing and blocked up original openings should be used and new openings avoided, that existing timber windows and doors should be retained and repaired rather than replaced. The principle of inserting mezzanine floors was acceptable provided these maintained the internal spatial character of the buildings. Also sub-divisions of open floors should be kept to a minimum. Later extensions such as the stables could be replaced provided the design of the replacement extensions reflected their former use e.g. in the design of the openings. Gravel or grass-crete were recommended for surfacing parking areas.

Notts CC Highways Authority raised concerns about visibility splays to the site access and advised that a bin store would need to be provided within 15 metres of the highway and that access would be needed for emergency vehicles if the dwellings were more than 45 metres from the highway.

The Council's Scientific Officer requested a Contamination Assessment and Air Quality Assessment.

Proposal

It is proposed to convert the farm buildings to four residential units – 1 x 5 bed, 1 x 4 bed and 2 x 3 beds.

Plot 1 is a three storey barn with single storey attachments. The current floorspace is 230 sq m and it is proposed to undertake demolition of 5 sq metres and construct a small infill extension between the stables to the south of plots 1 and 2 and another small extension replacing the external stone stairs to the west of the barn, with a total floorspace of 27 sq m.

Plot 2 is a barn which is the same height as Plot 1 but has two internal floors (the first floor is on the same level as the second floor in plot 1) and a partial mezzanine at first floor level. The current floorspace is 369 sq m and following the alterations, which will increase the size of the mezzanine, the proposed floorspace will be 377 sq m. The first floor is currently open to the roof trusses. This will be retained in the main bedroom and the guest bedroom but ceilings will be introduced to the rest of the first floor rooms. No extensions are proposed.

Plot 3 is a single storey units of 162 sq m. No extensions are proposed

Plot 4 is also single storey. The floorspace is currently 178 sq m and a small infill extension of 18 sq is proposed.

Where appropriate, the conversion makes use of existing window and door openings. However, it is proposed to replace the existing windows which are in poor repair with either uPVC or metal framed flush casement windows in order to reduce future maintenance costs. These will be of a high quality designed to be used in conservation projects.

It is also proposed to insert conservation rooflights into the roofs of all four plots in order to improve internal levels of daylight without increasing the number of windows in the elevations.

The cow shed would be removed from the courtyard and this area would be used to provide 10 parking spaces accessed through the existing gated entrance between Plots 3 and 4. A further 3 spaces are proposed to the rear of the farmhouse.

The new floorspace would be significantly less than the floorspace to be demolished.

It is also proposed that the farmhouse and attached cottage would be altered internally to become one dwelling and the details of the internal layout are included in the submitted plans, but it is not considered that this would constitute development requiring planning permission.

National and Local Planning Policies

Green Belt

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019).

The NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

The NPPF in paragraph 134 describes Green Belt as having five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns, and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Para 143 of the NPPF states that “inappropriate development” is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in “very special circumstances”. LPA’s are advised that “very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The NPPF goes on to define the types of development which are considered not to be inappropriate.

These include the “re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction”, provided the development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The construction of new buildings is usually regarded as inappropriate development with a number of notable exceptions including “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”.

The Local Plan Part 2 which was adopted in July 2018 has similar policies for development in the Green Belt.

Policy LPD12 – Reuse of Buildings within the Green Belt which states that the reuse is not inappropriate provided

- i) the proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- ii) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, are structurally sound, and capable of re-use without major alterations, adaptations or reconstruction.

The policy also states that the proposal should not result in the need to construct additional agricultural buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that the buildings to be re-used are no longer suitable for agricultural use.

The policy also contains restrictions on the re-use of buildings that are located in the countryside where any new homes would be isolated from existing settlements and / or facilities but this does not apply to this site which is on the fringe of the urban area of Nottingham and immediately adjacent to Bestwood Village.

Policy LPD13 – Extensions to Buildings within the Green Belt which states that planning permission will be granted for extensions or alterations to buildings provided the proposals do not result in the floorspace of the building being over 50% larger than when originally constructed or as it existed on 1st July 1948.

The extensions or alterations are expected to

- i) be in keeping with the surrounding character in terms of height, bulk, form and general design
- ii) conserve any historic significance the building may have
- iii) not adversely affect valuable views into or out of settlements or previously developed sites
- iv) not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt or the reason for including land within it

Heritage

The NPPF requires that heritage assets be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. (para 184).

Applicants for planning permission are required by the NPPF to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Para 197 relates to “non-designated” heritage assets and states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the

application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect these assets, the NPPF advises that a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Local Plan Policy LPD31 – Locally Important Heritage Assets states that the retention of Locally Important Heritage Assets is encouraged and that planning permission will only be granted where the asset's significance is preserved or, where relevant, enhanced.

Other Local Plan policies relevant to the application include:

Policy LPD 32 which sets out the criteria for assessing impact on the amenity of residents or occupiers.

Policy LPD 7 Contaminated Land

Policy LPD 11 Air Quality

Policy LPD 40 Housing development on unallocated sites

Policy LPD 57 Parking Standards

Policy LPD 61 Highway Safety

Policy LPD 18 Protecting and Enhancing Bio-Diversity

Assessment against Planning Policy

Both national and local planning policy support the re-use of existing buildings within the Green Belt provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction. The Local Plan policy LPD 12 goes beyond this and also requires that the buildings should be capable of re-use without major alterations, adaptations or reconstruction. The policy does not define what is meant by major alterations nor does it specifically mention extensions, and therefore each case must be considered on the specifics of the proposal and its merits.

The Structural Report has demonstrated that the buildings are in reasonable condition and capable of conversion. The alterations proposed to the existing buildings are not substantial and are designed to work with the existing fabric of the buildings in order to retain their agricultural character and respect the heritage significance of the buildings. The existing buildings already have many window and door openings which can be re-used in the conversion. It is proposed to increase the size of the mezzanine in Plot 2, but this will still allow the original height of the internal space to

be appreciated. The King trusses in plot 2 will be retained as a feature that is open to view as requested by the Conservation Officer in part of the top floor. Three small extensions are proposed, two to Unit 1 with a net increase in floorspace of 22 sq m and one to unit 4 of 18 sq m replacing a derelict pig sty of the same size. The % increase in floorspace across the four buildings will be 5% but should be balanced against the floorspace to be lost by the demolition of the cow shed (61 sq m). Furthermore, the proposed extensions will have no impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Therefore neither the change of use nor the building works proposed would conflict with Green Belt policy.

The Heritage Statement has assessed the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of the buildings and concluded that the alterations are sympathetic to the character of the agricultural heritage of the buildings and will not be damage their significance.

The Highways Report has demonstrated that there would be a reduction in vehicle movements compared to the existing traffic conditions generated by the farm operation. Although the land surrounding the buildings will still be in agricultural use, this will be at a less intensive level than currently. The type of vehicles accessing the site would also change from large commercial vehicles associated with the farm operation to becoming mainly car-based activity from residents. The proposals would therefore not "*intensify*" the use of the existing access.

A visibility assessment of the site access has been undertaken by the Highways consultants and drawings produced to demonstrate that the required splays can be achieved if measured to a point 1.5 metres from the edge of the carriageway, a methodology which is supported by the Manual for Streets 2 Document. Given that there have been no accidents recorded in the vicinity of the site access, this demonstrates that the existing access currently operates without any highway safety problems. It has also been demonstrated that emergency vehicles including fire engines can access the site and that a bin store can be located within 15 metres of Bestwood Road.

The proposed parking layout comprises 10 parking spaces for the converted units (which is in accordance with the Local Plan standard which requires 10 spaces for houses of this size in this location) and 3 spaces for the retained farmhouse/cottage.

The Bat and Bird Report has highlighted that a Bat licence will be required for works to Units 1 and 2 (Building B1 in the Survey) due to the presence of a bat roost and recommended that 2 nesting boxes on poles for barn owls be provided before any works are commenced due to the presence of possible daytime roosts.

The desk top Contaminated Land Study has identified the potential for contaminants in the form of Heavy Metals (the site was previously an Iron Works), Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons, Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons, SVOC/VOC, pesticides and herbicides and recommended a Phase 2 Study be undertaken prior to commencement of the development. The Study also identified asbestos in some of the buildings but this has now been removed as has all scrap metal.

The Council's Scientific Officer requested an assessment of impact on Air Quality in accordance with the methodology in the document "Air Quality and Environment Mitigation – guidance for developers 2019". The Guidance classifies the development as "small" and as the buildings are more than 20 metres than a highway and the site is not located close to an existing Air Quality Management Area no further assessment is required

Summary

The proposal is for the conversion of existing farm buildings which are no longer suited to modern farming methods and are therefore redundant. The buildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion without detriment to their character.

It has been demonstrated above that the development would comply with the requirements of Policies LPD12 and 13 and would not impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It would therefore also be in accordance with national Green Belt policy as set out in the NPPF.

The proposal would provide a satisfactory environment for future residents and would not impact on any adjoining residents. It would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety.

The site is not in an isolated location and is close to all amenities. It would therefore represent a sustainable form of development in accordance with national planning policy as set out in the NPPF and would comply with all relevant Local Plan policies.

PHOTOGRAPHS

See separate Appendix