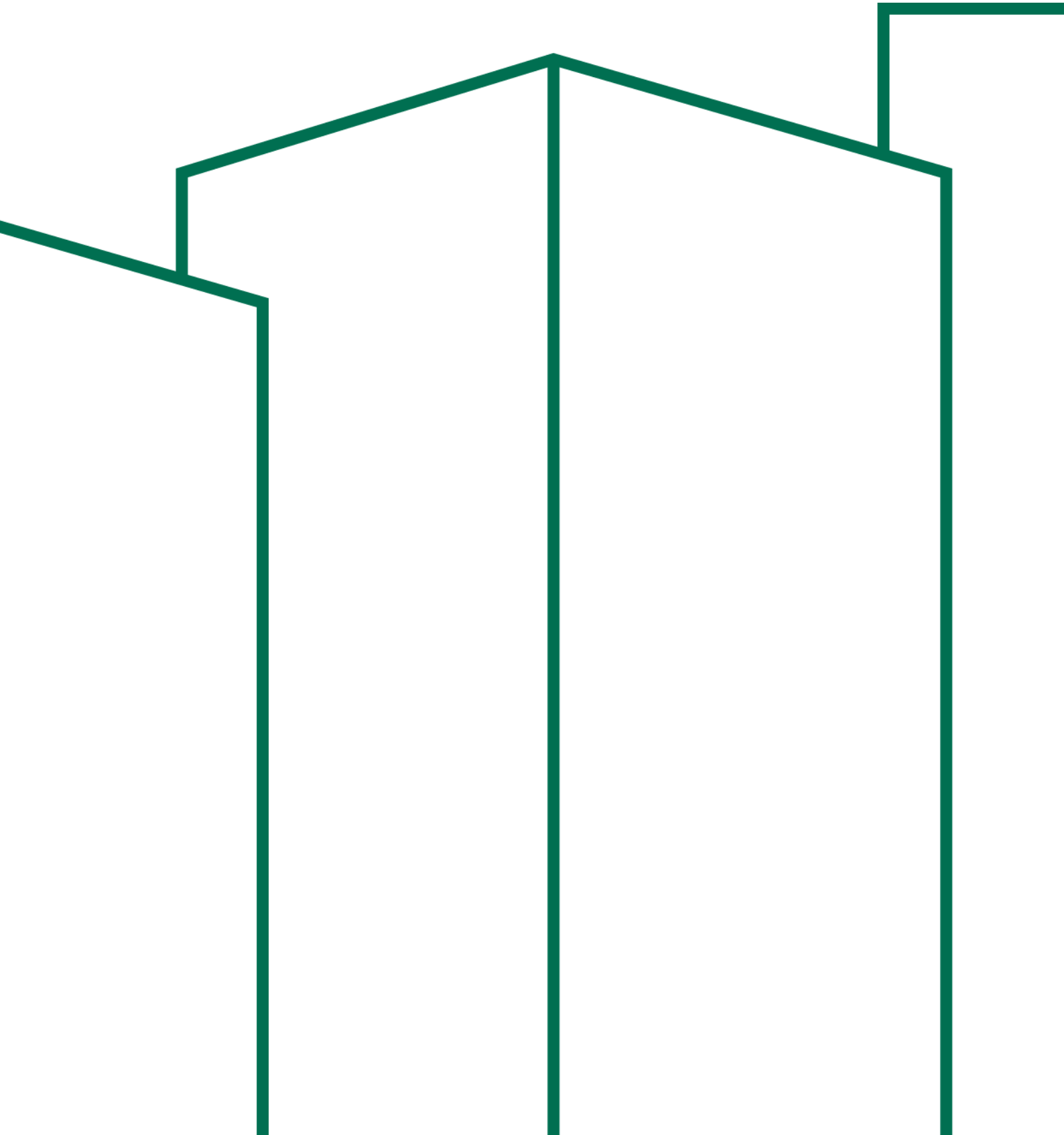




PLANNING STATEMENT

Barn Farm
Cranebrook Lane
Hilton
Lichfield
WS14 0EZ



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany an application for full planning permission submitted to Lichfield District Council on behalf of the applicant. The application seeks planning permission for the Change of Use of an agricultural building to residential, 2no. 4-bedroom dwelling houses (Use Class C3) and the conversion 1no. agricultural building to act as garages associated with the proposed dwelling houses at Barn Farm, Cranebrook Lane, Hilton, Lichfield, WS14 0EZ.

Site Description and Location

1.2 The application site is located adjacent to a series of existing agricultural buildings and is within the curtilage of Barn Farm. It is located adjacent to a series of agricultural buildings and to the west of a pair of residential semi-detached properties on Cranebrook Lane, Hilton. The Site is situated within a rural setting to the east of the A461 and to the south of the M6 Toll and is located within the Green Belt. The site is accessed from the Cranebrook Lane and the A5 to the north via an existing vehicular access.

1.3 The application site benefits from two existing vehicular accesses to the highway that runs across the eastern boundary of the site. The access to the north of the site runs between the building to be converted and an existing agricultural building into a turning area situated to the rear of the site. The access to the south of the site runs along the side elevation of the existing residential units and runs into an existing vehicle turning area to the rear of the

semi-detached dwellings and leads to the outbuilding to be converted to garages and storage area.

1.4 The application is located within the Green Belt.

Planning History

1.5 The site is subject to the following planning history on the parcel of land to which this application relates.

- 19/01736/FULM – Erection of 1 building for cold storage
- 19/01028/FUL – Erection of 1 lean to open sided building
- 19/00547/ABN – Erection of cold storage
- 18/00632/FULM – Erection of agricultural building
- 18/00434/FUL – Refurbishment of store
- 17/00352/PND – COU agricultural buildings to residential
- 15/01147/ABN – Creation of new access track
- 08/01301/COU – Agricultural land and for the keeping of horses
- 08/00868/FUL – Erection of an agricultural building
- 08/00239/ABN – Agricultural determination – general storage building
- 07/00480/ABN – Agricultural determination – erection of general-purpose building
- 07/00378 – CLE – LDC for stables and the grazing of horses

Application Proposals

1.6 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of one section of the existing building, as well as the change of use to residential to form 2no. residential

units, and to convert an existing agricultural building to form garages and secure cycle storage for the proposed dwellings, as well as associated works to provide private external amenity spaces to the rear.

- 1.7 The design of the proposed new building would retain typical features associated with agricultural outbuildings, with a symmetrical built form, and a pitched roof with gable ends. The principal elevations would each incorporate a recess to provide the front door for each unit. New window openings and roof lights would be incorporated where necessary into the cladding at first floor, and new doors at ground level within the breeze block elements of the structure.

Land Use

- 1.8 The application site is located within the Green Belt, to the south of Lichfield and Wall and to the north of Hilton. The application site is surrounded to the south, east and west by agricultural land and existing residential development. To the north of the site runs the M6 Toll. The site is therefore located within a rural area dominated by agricultural practices with residential properties situated in clusters. The proposed development is entirely consistent with the surrounding pattern of land use and represents development that is in keeping with the surrounding area via the conversion of an existing agricultural building used for storage. There would be a proposed change of use on the land from agricultural to residential (C3) by this application as well as the re-use of 1no. building to the rear of the site to serve as garages for the new dwellings. The proposed development would enhance the visual appearance of the site whilst

not harming or altering the openness of the site within the Green Belt and would result in a betterment compared to the existing situation.

Layout

- 1.9 Development in the vicinity of the application site is characterised by a series of agricultural metal clad buildings to the north, existing residential properties to the east and agricultural fields to the south and west. The land to the west of the site rises with the fields sitting higher than the development site. The site itself contains three agricultural buildings, one metal clad unit, a brick building, and a further metal clad building.
- 1.10 The siting of the proposed buildings for conversion would not change and they would be situated in the same position as the existing buildings. The height of the proposed building to be converted would not change, however the footprint would alter slightly, with one section to be demolished.
- 1.11 The orientation of the proposed buildings subject to development would not be altered. This would result in a development that has no additional impact on the character or the openness of the Green Belt, in fact due to the reduction in scale of the building to be used as dwelling units, it would likely enhance the openness of the Green Belt and surrounding area. Thereby representing no material difference in the setting compared to the existing situation, if not a betterment due to the reduction footprint of the existing building.

Scale

1.12 The proposal is of a similar scale to the existing situation. The height of the proposed conversion would be a consistent height to the existing structure, and the footprint of the proposed structure would represent a smaller size due to the section to be demolished. There would be no alteration to the building to be used for the garages and so would represent a smaller scale and massing than the existing. Therefore, the scale and massing of the proposed development would not harm the character or openness of the area and would likely represent an improvement with regards to its impact on the Green Belt.

External Appearance

1.13 The storage building to be converted to form 2no. residential units, will incorporate traditional design features typical of those found on agricultural outbuildings within a rural setting. The building would incorporate a pitched roof with gable ends. Modest alterations would be made to the building to incorporate new windows and doors where appropriate to facilitate the conversion to residential units. At this stage, no materials for external surfaces are being proposed. It is anticipated that samples of all the proposed materials of construction will be negotiated with the LPA during the planning application process and prior to the commencement of the development.

1.14 There is a wide variety of styles and finishes to the existing outbuildings that are situated to the north and east of the development area. The design of the proposed outbuilding is consistent with and complementary to the overall characteristics of rural areas and those typical of Green Belt locations. The overall appearance of the proposed scheme would represent a significant

improvement in the visual appearance of the site and the wider Green Belt area.

Access

- 1.15 The proposed development will utilise an existing access to Cranebrook Lane to the east. The access has appropriate visibility splays onto the highway and the proposed development would not represent a significant increase in traffic entering and leaving the site. As such it would not represent any harm to pedestrian or highway safety.
- 1.16 The proposed development is able to provide adequate off-street parking for each dwelling as well as provide secure and sheltered cycle storage within the curtilage of each plot.
- 1.17 There is ample space within the application site to accommodate the necessary off-street parking and enable vehicles to turn such that they can enter and leave the site in a forward gear.

Ecology

- 1.18 The application site has been subject to a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Bird Survey dated 27th July 2021 and carried out by Bat-Survey which has been submitted as an application document. The findings of the survey can be summarised as follows: -

‘Summary’

- There is no evidence of bats using the buildings as a place of shelter.
- There was evidence of birds using Barn 2 as a nest site.
- There are no bat roosting opportunities in either barn.
- The conversion of the properties to dwellings, if approved by the Local Authority must not occur if birds are nesting in the building until the young have fledged.
- A method of working must be put in place with contractors to ensure that in the event of bats being found they will not be injured.
- New roosting opportunities for bats can be created by installing a bat boxes on site on the gable end of the building at the rear of the site.

1.19 The recommendations borne out of the survey can be secured by appropriate conditions upon any planning permission that may be granted.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

The Development Plan

2.1 The Development Plan comprises of the Local Plan Strategy (LPS). The following policies of the LPS are considered relevant to the determination of this application: -

- CP1 – Spatial Strategy
- CP3 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- CP5 – Sustainable Transport
- CP6 – Housing Delivery
- NR1 – Countryside Management
- NR2 – Development in the Green Belt
- NR3 – Biodiversity, Protected Species & their Habitats
- NR5 – Natural and Historic Landscapes
- BE1 – High Quality Design
- Policy Rural 1 – Rural Areas
- Policy Rural 2 – Other Rural Settlements

Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

2.2 In December 2015 Lichfield District Council adopted the SPD titled “Sustainable Design”. The SPD gives guidance on how sustainable development can be achieved. The SPD includes within Appendix A guidance in relation to Space About Dwellings, including separation distances between existing and proposed properties and minimum garden sizes.

Rural Development SPD

- 2.3 The Rural Development Plan gives further guidance and clarification on the requirements for development within rural areas, in order to be considered acceptable. A number of sections within this document are considered to be relevant to this application.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.4 Paragraph 2 of the Framework reconfirms the requirement that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.5 Paragraph 2 of the Framework confirms that the Framework is, "**a material consideration in planning decisions**".
- 2.6 Paragraph 7 states that, "**the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development**". Paragraph 8 explains the planning system has three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development: economic, social and an environmental objective.
- 2.7 There will be degrees of conflict between policies and planning objectives. However, paragraph 38 sets out that decision takers should approach decision making in a positive and creative way and should "**use the full range of planning tools available....and work proactively with applicants to ensure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.**" It reads on to say that decision takers "**at every level**

should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”

- 2.8 Paragraph 11 requires applications to be considered with a presumption in favour of development, unless material considerations result in significant harm.
- 2.9 With regard to design and amenity, Section 12 of the Framework underlines the importance that the Government attaches to design and sets out several objectives that developments should aim to ensure in order to facilitate good design. This includes optimising the potential of a site to accommodate development. Development should also respond to local character, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials.
- 2.10 Paragraphs 60 and 70 outline the importance of bringing forward a sufficient and varied amount of housing land, which includes small sites which are able to make an important contribution to housing requirements.
- 2.11 Paragraph 84 (b) gives weight to the importance of decisions enabling the development and diversification of agricultural land.
- 2.12 Paragraph 119 stresses the importance of making effective use of land for new development, including homes.
- 2.13 Section 12 reads on to state that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including

the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

2.14 The application site is located within the Green Belt, as designated within the Local Plan. The NPPF states that, **“local planning authorities should plan positively to.....enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”**

2.15 Paragraph 150 (d) states that **“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”

3.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The proposed development is considered in relation to the following material planning considerations: -

1. Principle of development within the Green Belt
2. Openness of the Green Belt
3. Design of the proposed development
4. Impact on existing biodiversity
5. Residential amenity
6. Highway safety

Material Planning Consideration 1: Principle of development within the Green Belt

3.2 The principle of a Change of Use of the building for residential purposes is considered to accord with the requirement set out within Policy CP6 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 150 of the NPPF.

3.3 The Change of Use of the building would comply with Policy CP6, which states that residential development within rural areas would be permitted when it relates to a conversion or change of use scheme. The accompanying structural report confirms that the existing building and framework can accommodate a

conversion. Therefore, it is clear that the building is able to be converted to residential use.

- 3.4 The proposed development also complies with Paragraph 150 (d) of the NPPF, which allows development within the Green Belt when it relates to the extension or alteration of a building, provided it does not result in disproportionate additions above the size of the original building. The proposed conversion and works would not increase the footprint or the height of the existing building, in fact there would be a reduction in the footprint of the building. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed conversion and Change of Use complies with the requirements and is acceptable.
- 3.5 Appendix B, Section 2.2 of the Rural Development SPD outlines 5 tests for conversions of rural buildings to be considered against in order for them to be deemed acceptable. These include good design, minimal impacts on biodiversity and ecology, for the alterations to not be extensive, ensure there is no significant impact on highway safety and preserving residential amenity. It is considered that the proposed development accords with all 5 of the tests set out within Section 2.2 and the principle of the conversion is therefore deemed to be acceptable.
- 3.6 The proposal would provide off-street parking that would lessen the impact of parked cars being visible. Appendix B, Section 3.28 of the Rural Development SPD outlines the importance of garages being provided within the Green Belt to reduce the visual impact of parking. The proposed reuse of an existing building would achieve this and would provide screened parking for No.2 vehicles per dwelling. The proposed development would also allow for the

creation of secure and sheltered cycle storage, which would enhance the proposals sustainable transport options and as such complies with Policy CP5 of the Local Plan. As such the reuse of the existing building to provide garages is considered on balance to be acceptable.

Material Planning Consideration 2: Openness of the Green Belt

- 3.7 The proposed change of use would not result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The site is well contained within its setting and it not highly visible from its surroundings. The site is screened by a large existing agricultural building to the north, residential properties to the east, and vegetation sat on top of a bund to the west.
- 3.8 The proposed conversion of the building would include the removal of a section of the building. The section to be removed is to the east and would sit against the development site boundary. Therefore, the proposed development would result in a reduction in the massing of buildings within the site, and as such would enhance the openness of the site and as such Green Belt.
- 3.9 The proposed external amenity space to the rear of the building to be converted would be contained within the site and screened by the building in question. Therefore, the creation of garden areas would not be highly visible within the Green Belt and as with the alterations to the building, would not harm the openness of the Green Belt. It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with Paragraph 137 of the NPPF.

Material Planning Consideration 3: Design of the Proposed Development

- 3.10 The proposed development would result in the conversion of an existing building on the site which would retain the visual characteristics of the current building. The alterations would be minimal and would consist largely of the insertion of new window and door openings to facilitate the conversion of the building to residential units.
- 3.11 The proposed building for construction is a Portal Frame construction, that would incorporate a pitched roof design with gable ends and has cladding running around the top levels of the elevations and breeze block construction at the lower portions. The proposed conversion would retain a structure that incorporates cladding on the top half and breeze blocks at lower levels.
- 3.12 Windows will be incorporated into three elevations and there will be rooflights incorporated into both pitches of the roof. Patio doors would be included within the western elevation fronting onto the proposed garden areas. A recessed area will be incorporated into the southern elevation and another in the eastern elevation to form a porch/canopy area for the front doors of the properties.
- 3.13 There would be no significant alterations to the building as part of the conversion. There would be internal alterations to support the first floor and porch area. However, the proposed alterations are considered to be minimal and appropriate to facilitate a conversion to residential uses.
- 3.14 The design, scale and massing of the proposed conversion are considered appropriate for the setting and are in keeping with the type of building

associated with agricultural practices. As such the proposed development would not result in any additional harm to the character and appearance of the area and would in fact result in an enhancement to the appearance of the area.

3.15 The site is relatively flat and the levels difference between the front of the site fronting onto the highway and the rear of the site is negligible. The land continues to increase in height beyond the rear elevation of the site and as such the proposed development would not appear incongruous or overly prominent within the landscape.

3.16 The proposed development would not result in a material change in the impact on the amenity of adjacent residential properties to that which exists currently. The location of the existing storage building would be set further away from the residential properties due to the removal of the eastern section. Therefore, the development site would not harm the enjoyment of the rear gardens by residents.

Material Planning Consideration 4: Impact on Existing Biodiversity

3.17 This application is accompanied by a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Bird Survey, which has assessed the possible presence of birds and bats within the buildings, and the potential impact on the existing biodiversity within the site as a result of the proposed development. The Assessment has also gone on to make recommendations for the works should permission be granted.

3.18 The Survey has indicated that the site is predominantly characterised by agricultural buildings and that the habitats are predominantly species-poor as

the site comprises of buildings and hardstanding yard areas. The survey has also concluded that there is negligible potential for roosting bats and there was no evidence of bats within either of the buildings considered within this application. There was no evidence of bird nesting in the building to be converted, and low levels of nesting within the building to be demolished and can be accommodated elsewhere within the site.

3.19 The proposed development would result in minimal or no impacts on the roosting potential for bats and birds within the site. With the potential for bird and bat boxes within the site, there is the possibility that the site scheme would result in a betterment in the situation for the encouragement of bird and bat nesting.

3.20 The Survey has made recommendations in terms of mitigation strategies to ensure that the proposed development would not result in any harm or a net loss of biodiversity. These have included manual nesting checks prior to the commencement of development, external lighting to be cowled towards the ground and away from hedgerows, and any works should nests be identified prior to commencement to be carried out outside of nesting season (March-September) or checked manually by a qualified professional. Finally, the Survey has recommended a small number of bat boxes could be erected within the site, in order to provide additional opportunities for roosting bats.

3.21 The proposed development would not result in a significant loss of biodiversity in terms of flora. The site is dominated by out buildings and hardstanding and so the proposed alteration of hardstanding to rear garden space would result in a net growth of biodiversity within the site. The potential to plant trees and

shrubs would represent a significant betterment compared to the existing situation.

3.22 The Survey has stated that based on the findings there is no need for any further or additional surveys to assess the site and potential impact of the proposed development on biodiversity.

3.23 Policy NR3 of the Local Plan states that development will only be permitted where it **“Protects, enhances, restores and implements appropriate conservation management of the biodiversity and/or geodiversity value of the land and buildings.”** The Survey has made recommendations that the proposed development is accompanied with mitigation methods outlined above. Due to the scale of the proposed development, combined with the findings of the Survey and the potential net gain in biodiversity due to the creation of rear garden areas, it is considered that the mitigation measures are appropriate for the nature and scale of the development. Nesting boxes can be secured and located on the proposed building, by way of planning condition. As such it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy NR3 of the Local Plan and would result in an enhanced situation regarding biodiversity within and around the site.

Material Planning Consideration 5: Residential Amenity

3.24 The building to be converted is situated to the rear of existing residential dwellings on one side, however there are no neighbouring residential properties immediately adjacent on the other three sides of the development. To the north is an existing agricultural building and to the east lies agricultural

fields. A residential property is situated to the south, however it is separated from the building to be converted by a yard, an access road, existing detached garage and garden space, and so is not situated near to the proposed conversion. The section of building to be removed is the element that sits closest to the adjacent semi-detached properties and as such represents a betterment on the existing situation.

3.25 The proposed development would not result in a significant loss of light to the property to the south due to its separation distance and the fact that the building would not be increased in height. The properties to the east would benefit from additional light as a result of the development as the removal of 1 section would push the building further away from the rear elevations of the properties, resulting in a much-improved situation.

3.26 As the buildings that would result from this development are located in the same locations as existing buildings, and due to the removal of a bay, further away from existing properties, there would not be any significant impacts associated with the development being overbearing or leading to a sense of enclosure. In fact, as with the impact on light the proposed development would result in a betterment compared to the existing situation.

3.27 As part of the proposed conversion, windows will be incorporated into the roof on the northern elevation to serve a range of habitable and non-habitable rooms. These windows will look onto the side elevation of the adjacent agricultural building. The windows that would be incorporated in the eastern elevation would be obscure glazed as they serve bathrooms. As such there would be no impacts associated with overlooking or loss of privacy. The new

openings and windows on the southern elevation of the building would look out across the yard and onto the side elevation of the neighbouring detached garage. Therefore, the proposed development would not significantly harm the privacy of surrounding residential properties.

3.28 It is acknowledged that the existence of the adjacent agricultural building and its operation could represent a constraint in terms of the impact of noise on future residents of the converted building. However, the agricultural building is already surrounded by residential properties on two sides and the creation of 2 residential units in this location would not be significantly different from the situation that exists currently. The use of the agricultural building for its operations and its impacts on residential properties would have been assessed as part of the previous COU application. As such it was determined at that stage that residential properties adjacent to the building would not significantly harm their amenity and the same can be said for the proposed residential units as it would not be materially different from the existing situation. Further to this, any impacts can be designed out by layout and the use of suitable materials such as windows and insulation. As such it is not considered that the impact of noise from the adjacent building would significantly impact on the amenity of future residents.

3.29 Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in significant harm to the amenity of surrounding properties and accords with the requirements set out within the Sustainable Development SPD and Sections 4.9-4.11 of the Rural Development SPD. In fact, it would result in a betterment on the existing situation and therefore it is considered to comply with the Sustainable Design SPD.

Material Planning Consideration 6: Highway Safety

- 3.30 The proposed development would result in 2no. 4-bedroom dwellings, as such it would be necessary to provide 3 off-street parking spaces for each property. The proposed development would be accompanied by garaged parking for 2 vehicles for each dwelling, additional frontage parking would be provided to the front of the garages. Therefore, the proposed development can provide the required level of parking provision. In addition to the garages providing suitable off-street parking for vehicles, they will also provide secure and sheltered cycle storage for both properties.
- 3.31 The proposed dwellings would utilise existing vehicle accesses. These accesses provide adequate visibility splays onto the highway and provide appropriate entry and exit points onto the highway. It is to be noted that the proposed vehicular access shown is designed according to the dimensions of the reduced width access approved under application 19/01736/FULM.
- 3.32 The proposed development would provide adequate space for vehicles to manoeuvre allowing vehicles to enter and leave the highway in forward gear. It also ensures continued parking for the cottages that front Cranebrook Lane.
- 3.33 The proposed development would not result in any harm to pedestrian or highway safety, and due to the scale of the proposed development would not result in a significant increase in the level of traffic on the surrounding highway network.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt to the south of Lichfield and Wall and sits within the settlement of Hilton. The site is adjacent to Cranebrook Lane and is accessed from the A5.
- 4.2 The proposed development is considered to be appropriate development and accords with exception (d) of Paragraph 150 of the NPPF and Policies CP6 and NR2 of the Local Plan and The Rural Development SPD. Great weight has been placed on the re-use of buildings within rural areas to provide housing by Local Policy. It is therefore considered that the principle of development is deemed to be acceptable.
- 4.3 The architectural style of the proposed outbuilding is considered to be typical of an agricultural storage building and is of a scale and massing that is consistent with the existing outbuilding. The conversion would retain significant elements of the existing structures and would not result in large modifications. The proposed building would make a positive contribution to the quality of the surrounding environment and is in line with national policy and Policy BE1 of the Local Plan.
- 4.4 In respect of the potential impact on biodiversity within and surrounding the site, an Ecological Assessment has been carried out and submitted with this application. It concluded that the existing habitats are of poor quality and provide low to negligible ecological value. The proposed development would not result in significant harm to the biodiversity associated with the site, it would likely result in a net gain within the site, and mitigation measures have

been recommended to ensure that no harm is to existing flora and fauna. The proposed development as such is considered to accord with national policy and Policy NR3 of the Local Plan.

- 4.5 In light of the above circumstances, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the Local Plan, Sustainable Development SPD, Rural Development SPD and National Planning Policy. It is respectfully submitted that the proposed development should be approved subject to condition and without delay.

AB/JAG/5530

19 August 2021

PLANNING STATEMENT

Barn Farm

Hilton

Lichfield

WS14 0EZ

Our Reference: AB/JAG/ 5530

Date: 18 August 2021

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