



Planning, Design and Access Statement

Prepared in support of an application for the

**Change of use of land and buildings from residential and
agricultural to Class E.**

At land at

**Waterloo Cross Cottages
Cullompton
EX15 3ES**

T. 01884 38662

Introduction

This planning, design and access statement has been prepared by XL Planning Ltd to support a full planning application submitted to Mid Devon District Council for the change of use of land and buildings from two residential cottages and agricultural outbuildings to a Class E use for offices, specifically within use classes E(c) and E(g). This application relates to the change of use only and does not include any operational development. The purpose of this statement is to provide the local planning authority with the relevant background information to the proposal and the necessary objective criteria to address the key development control issues associated with the determination of this application.

This document will firstly outline the site location, the surrounding area, and the relevant overarching planning policy framework, before justifying the design and access considerations for the proposed development alongside addressing any other material considerations.

Overall, the proposed commercial development is not considered to result in any unacceptable harm or adverse impacts upon the site or its primary surroundings and is an appropriate use of the site, therefore planning permission should be granted.

The Site and Surrounding Area

The application site is not located within any designated landscapes, nor are the buildings located in close proximity to any heritage assets. The site is in flood zone 1 and is not considered to be at any undue risk of flooding.

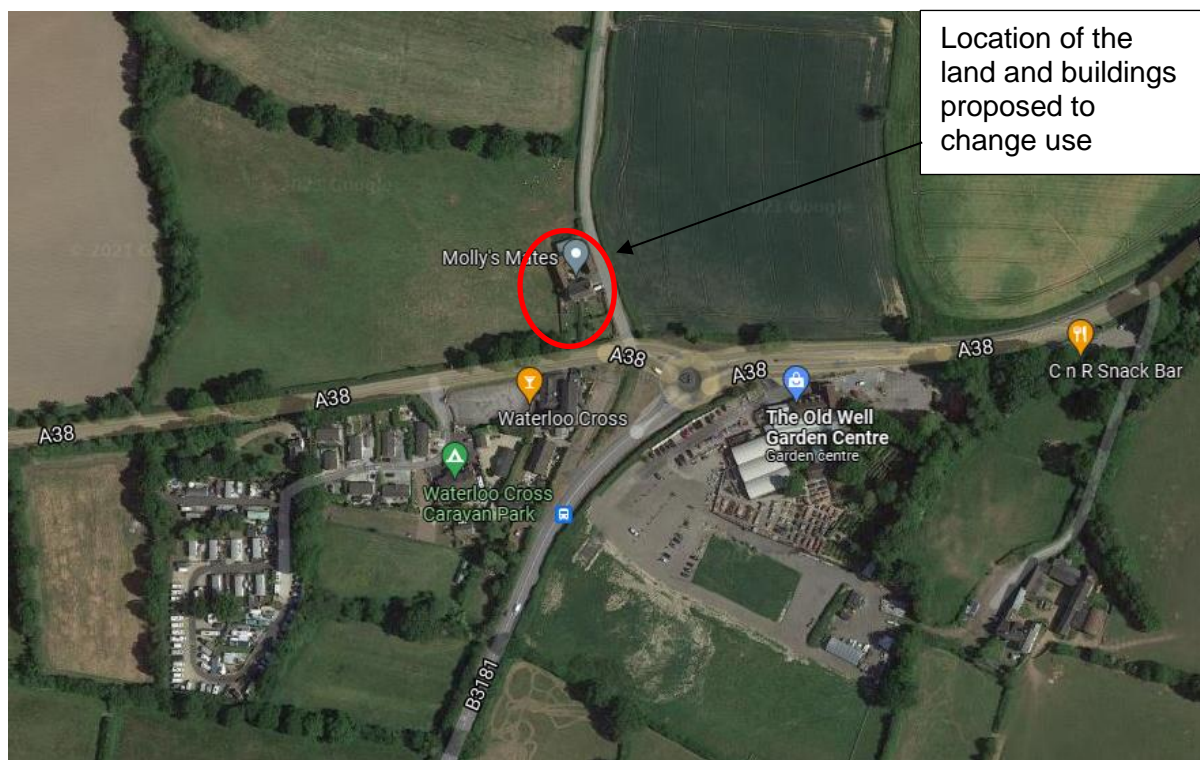
The application site is accessed from the A38 using the existing access road. The site has excellent transport links to Exeter, Taunton and villages within the immediate surroundings by virtue of the M5 and A38 road networks.

The site is primarily surrounded by other commercial uses, including the Waterloo Cross Inn (public house), The Old Well (garden centre), Swallow Court (commercial units) and Junction 27 Services. The site is also surrounded by agricultural land and buildings, albeit a large proportion of the agricultural land (approximately 71 hectares) to the south west of the

T. 01884 38662

application site is allocated for commercial development under policy J27 of the Mid Devon Local Plan.

The Site Location



Site Location (Image reproduced from Google Maps 2021)

Planning History

After researching the Mid Devon website, the following planning history is available for the site:

03/00553/FULL - Conversion of agricultural buildings to office accommodation - Withdrawn

90/00246/OUT - Outline for the erection of office buildings 195,000 sq.ft., light & general ind. builds. 180,000 sq ft ware-house 150,000 sq ft, 180 bed hotel, on site sewage treatment works, access, est. rds. car park - Refused

T. 01884 38662

Policy Context

The following section of this statement highlights the current national and local planning policies which are relevant to the proposed development.

National Policy Context

Revised National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied; with a presumption in favour of sustainable development remaining at the heart.

Chapter 6 of the NPPF concerns building a strong and competitive economy and states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth, including through the development of previously developed land.

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF concerns supporting a prosperous rural economy and states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;

Furthermore, at paragraph 85 of the NPPF it is stated that:

85. Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

T. 01884 38662

Paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure all developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

Local Policy Context

Policy S1 – Sustainable Development Priorities concerns the overall vision for the district, including aspirations to building a strong competitive economy, supporting a prosperous rural economy through the conversion of existing buildings and promoting sustainable transport links, amongst other things.

Policy S6 – Employment specifically concerns employment development and meeting the districts needs through the creation of 147,000 square metres of commercial floor space during the plan period.

Policy S14 – Countryside concerns development outside of defined settlements and states that such developments should preserve and where possible enhance the character,

T. 01884 38662

appearance and biodiversity of the countryside while promoting sustainable diversification of the rural economy. At paragraph (b) the policy provides support for:

b) Appropriately scaled retail, employment, farm diversification, tourism and leisure related development (including appropriate conversion of existing buildings);

In addition to the strategic policies, the relevant development management policies are as follows:

Policy DM1 - High quality design:

Designs of new development must be of high quality, based upon and demonstrating the following principles:

a) Clear understanding of the characteristics of the site, its wider context and the surrounding area;

b) Efficient and effective use of the site, having regard to criterion (a);

c) Positive contribution to local character including any heritage or biodiversity assets and the setting of heritage assets;

d) Creation of safe and accessible places that also encourage and enable sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling;

e) Visually attractive places that are well integrated with surrounding buildings, streets and landscapes, and do not have an unacceptably adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of the proposed or neighbouring properties and uses, taking account of:

i) Architecture

ii) Siting, layout, scale and massing

iii) Orientation and fenestration

iv) Materials, landscaping and green infrastructure

f) Appropriate drainage including sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), including arrangements for future maintenance, and connection of foul drainage to a mains sewer where available;

g) Adequate levels of daylight, sunlight and privacy to private amenity spaces and principal windows;

h) Suitably sized rooms and overall floorspace which allows for adequate storage and movement within the building together as set out in the Nationally Described Space Standard with external spaces for recycling, refuse and cycle storage; and

T. 01884 38662

i) On sites of 10 houses or more the provision of 20% of dwellings built to Level 2 of Building Regulations Part M 'access to and use of dwellings'.

DM5 – Parking:

Development must provide an appropriate level of parking, taking into account:

- a) The accessibility of the site, including the availability of public transport; and*
- b) The type, mix and use of development.*

Design must enable and encourage the maximum use of sustainable modes of transport, including provision for cyclists and low-emission vehicles. Within the towns of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton, infrastructure for electric vehicles should be built into development. The Council will seek parking provision and electric vehicle infrastructure according to the following standards, the variation of which must be justified on a case-by-case basis.

Policy DM9 – Conversion of Rural Buildings

The conversion of redundant or disused rural buildings of substantial and permanent construction which positively contribute to an area's rural character for residential, tourism or employment uses will be permitted where:

- a) A suitable access to the building is in place or can be created without damaging the surrounding area's rural character and the road network can support the proposed use;*
- b) The building can be converted without significant alteration, extension or rebuilding;*
- c) The design will retain the original character of the building and its surroundings; and*
- d) The development will retain any nature conservation interest associated with the site or building, and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible.*

DM18 - Rural employment development:

In countryside locations, planning permission will be granted for new-build employment development or expansion of existing businesses, provided that the development is of an appropriate use and scale for its location. Proposals must demonstrate that:

- a) The development would not lead to an unacceptable impact on the local road network;*

T. 01884 38662

- b) There would not be an unacceptable adverse impact to the character and appearance of the countryside; and*
- c) There are insufficient suitable sites or premises in the immediate area to meet the needs of the proposal.*

The Case for Permission

The application proposal is a form of rural employment development and seeks to change the use of an existing pair of cottages and redundant outbuildings to a light commercial use under Class E. The pair of farm cottages have been previously let to tenants, however, it is the case that both cottages are in an extremely poor state of repair and are no longer in an appropriate condition to be re-let. In addition, the buildings to the rear of the cottages are redundant agricultural buildings that do not have any viable agricultural use, as their size and proximity to the dwellings does not lend itself to modern agricultural practices.

The properties now requires significant investment to bring the accommodation up to modern standards and it is not considered viable to invest this money in the properties to continue the residential use. It is the case that the dwellings are not located in a desirable location for residential tenants/occupants, particularly given the level of employment development currently surrounding the site, along with the future proposals.

The Mid Devon Local Plan supports rural employment development, including through the conversion of existing buildings. The buildings subject to this application are substantial and attractive brick built buildings that form a courtyard, with the dwellings facing the A38 and the agricultural buildings to the rear of the pair of cottages. Whilst there are various permitted development avenues that could be considered, a change of use of the site as a whole is considered to be the most appropriate option, to ensure there is no conflict between different uses on the site.

There is a huge unmet demand for small commercial units and offices in the area for small businesses and start-ups. Swallow Court, the nearby commercial development containing offices is permanently full and unable to meet the demand of new enquiries. As such, a small scale development utilising these existing buildings, would be hugely beneficial for small

businesses in the area, providing much needed small employment units in a popular location with excellent transport links.

Appearance, Layout and Scale

This application seeks the change of use only and does not propose any operational development. It is considered that the buildings can be utilised for the proposal use with internal works only. Should any operational development be necessary, this would be subject to a further separate application.

The buildings are characterful in terms of their overall appearance and it is in the interests of the immediate surroundings that these publicly visible buildings are retained and maintained, through the creation of a new and viable use. There would be no unacceptable adverse impact to the character and appearance of the countryside surroundings and the proposal is considered to meet with policy DM18 in this respect.

Access

The site is accessed from a lane that leads onto the A38. There are no works proposed to the access, which is considered suitable to serve the proposed use. The use would not have any detrimental impacts on the highway network, taking into account the vehicular movements associated with the existing residential and agricultural uses on the site. There are existing hardstanding parking areas adjacent to the buildings that would be utilised to serve the proposal. Overall, the proposal would not detrimentally impact on the local highway network and would be served by appropriate parking, in accordance with policies DM1 and DM5.

Ecology

The proposed change of use does not include any operational development. Therefore it is not considered that the proposal would have any impact on the ecological interests of the site. Any necessary operational development will be subject to a separate planning application and the applicant is aware of the legal duties relating to bats and birds, should they be found at the property. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with policy DM1 in this respect and no further survey work is necessary at this stage.

T. 01884 38662

Surface Water and Foul Waste

There would be no additional surface water associated with the application proposal as the buildings are existing and there will be no additional hardstanding created as part of the proposal. Foul waste will continue to be managed in accordance with the existing arrangements. Overall, the proposal meets with the requirements of Policy DM1 in this respect.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposed change of use of this group of attractive rural buildings from residential and agricultural to a commercial use within Class is considered to be an appropriate form of development in this rural location. The proposal would meet an currently unmet need for small scale employment development in the area and would not result in any harm to the character of the area or the highway network. Taking these factors into account, the proposal is deemed to comply with both the national planning policy guidance and local plan policy requirements from S1, S9, S14, DM1, DM5, DM9 and DM18 of the Mid Devon Local Plan.