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Northumberland County Council
Development Services
County Hall
Morpeth
NE61 2EF

Date: 25 August 2023

Our ref: 64881/01/MHE/OJ/26840349v3

Dear Rachel

Householder Application for a single storey extension to an existing residential dwelling at Beech Close Farm, Newton, Stocksfield

We are pleased to submit, on behalf of our client, Mr and Mrs Harvey, an application for a single storey extension to the existing School House at Beech Close Farm, Newton, Stocksfield, Northumberland (Easting: 403784; Northing: 565280).

This application has been prepared following discussions with Officers at Northumberland County Council who have agreed the principle of development of the extension as part of wider ongoing discussions with respect to the rejuvenation of Beech Close Farm.

This letter provides a summary of the site and the proposals before considering the development against the key Development Plan policies. This letter should be read in conjunction with the following documents which have been prepared to accompany this application:

- Application Forms;
- Site Location Plan (ref. 09 001 Rev - P02)
- Site Plan as Existing (ref. 90 003 Rev - P01)
- Existing Level Plan 00 (ref. 01 008 Rev - P01)
- Existing Level Plan 01 (ref. 01 009 - Rev P01)
- Existing Roof Plan (ref. 01 011 Rev - P01)
- Existing Elevations Sheet 1 (ref. 02 007 Rev - P02)
- Existing Elevations Sheet 2 (ref. 02 008 Rev- P02)
- School House Groundworks Plan as existing (ref. 91 011 Rev - P03)
- Proposed Plans (ref. 01 007 Rev - P01)
- Proposed Roof Plan (ref 01 012 Rev - P03)
- Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 (ref. 02 003 Rev – P013)
- Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 (ref. 02 006 Rev – P012)
- School House Groundworks Plan as proposed (ref. 91 010 Rev –P03)

The Site

The application site comprises an existing residential dwelling (referred to as the ‘School House’) which forms part of the wider Beech Close Farm holding in Newton, Stocksfield. The site is located within the Green Belt.

The School House is a 5no. bedroom house located in the central western section of the wider Beech Close Farm site, north of the Main House and east of Longbottom Cottage. Built in 1874, the materials palette is of a high standard comprising a mixture of stone facades, timber window frames, and a roof comprising a mixture of slates and tiles; prior to our client purchasing the site the building was poorly maintained and in need of refurbishment and repair works, which are now being undertaken. The building is not listed.

Access to the site is achieved via two points north of St James Church. These adjoin an unnamed private access road which extends south providing access to Newton and the A69; located less than 2km from the site, this major transport highway provides access to prominent centres across the region including Newcastle, Corbridge, and Hexham.

The School House is currently undergoing refurbishment (which is also being undertaken by our client), in line with works agreed with Northumberland County Council.

Proposed Development

The proposal seeks planning permission for a single storey extension to the southern elevation of the School House. Until very recently, a single storey extension was already in place in this location; as part of the ongoing refurbishment works to the building, our client was seeking to replace the roof of this former extension. Unfortunately, however, upon removal of the roof, it became apparent that asbestos and structural damage to the former extension posed a very significant risk to the health and safety of those working on the site and to the future occupiers of the School House. It was therefore deemed necessary to demolish this extension in its entirety immediately and with a view to reinstating it with the same massing, form, and external materiality, albeit ensuring the structure was safe and all contaminants were appropriately removed from the site. Officers at Northumberland County Council have confirmed that this is an acceptable proposal albeit would require planning permission to undertake. A recent lawful development certificate has also been granted for this building for a range of works including refurbishment to stonework; building upon this, the proposals will include refurbishment of the stone for the proposed extension to ensure it is consistent and appearance with the rest of the property. This application is made in line with the latest correspondence with NCC planning Officers to ensure the correct consents are in place prior to reinstating the extension to the School House.

The proposal is minor in nature and will not adversely impact upon the siting, scale, and design of the School House with the extension serving as a ‘like-for-like’ replacement of what was formerly in situ, and the building maintaining its residential use.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) sets out the overarching policy priorities for the planning system in England against which local plans will be prepared and decisions made on planning applications. The following paragraphs are of relevance to this application.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states there is a "...presumption in favour of sustainable development..." In respect of taking decisions, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means: "approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay" or "where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date". This should be applied to both plan making and decision-taking.

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; indeed, the creation of high-quality buildings and places should be considered fundamental to the planning and development process (paragraph 126).

Under Paragraph 130, development is to function well and add to the over quality of the area, not just for the short term but lifetime of development, including being visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout, and appropriate landscaping.

Paragraph 149 gives regard to the acceptability of development in the Green Belt. Development is considered appropriate if it, amongst other measures, involves:

- c) 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.

Local Planning Policy

The adopted development plan for the area is the Northumberland Local Plan ("NLP") (adopted March 2022). The following policies are relevant for the purposes of this application:

Policy STP2 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) - sets out how the Council will take a positive approach to planning applications and development proposals that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy STP3 (Principles of sustainable development) - sets out the principles that development proposals will be expected to adhere to in applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development and in delivering against the Council's economic, social, and environmental objectives.

Policy STP8 (Development in the Green Belt) - sets out the Council's approach to considering development within the Green Belt, consistent with the current version of the NPPF. Of particular note in this respect is the Council's notion that development, which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, as defined in national planning policy, will be supported.

Policy HOU 1 (Making the best use of Existing Buildings) - seeks to make the best use of existing buildings, enabling for sustainable, high quality and attractive residential buildings to be created and promoted.

Policy QOP1 (Design Principles) - sets out the design principles against which planning applications will be assessed, having regard to the Northumberland Design Guide.

Policy QOP2 (Good Design and Amenity) - requires development to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and not cause unacceptable harm to those living in, working in, or visiting the local area.

Policy ENV7 (Historic Environment and Heritage Assets) - sets out that development proposals will be assessed, and decisions made, that ensure the conservation and enhancement of the significance, quality, and integrity of Northumberland's heritage assets and their settings.

Policy Assessment

Principle of Development

The key test in establishing the principle of development for the site is whether the proposals constitute acceptable development in the Green Belt.

NLP Policy STP8 seeks to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and sets out that development in the Green Belt is to be determined in accordance with National Planning Policy. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 continues by setting out various exceptions where development in the Green Belt is acceptable including, under criterion c: "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".

There is no definition of a 'proportionate' extension to a building in the Green Belt and each case must be considered on its own merits. We are aware that NCC typically accept extensions to residential properties such as this, using 30% as an approximate 'rule of thumb'. The proposed development would comprise a marginal addition to the existing building in this part of the site, having a volume of 80m³ (constituting an 8% increase to the size of the School House which has an existing volume of 1,008m³) and has been designed so that it is consistent in appearance with the former extension, which was only removed due to health and safety concerns when replacing the roof. The appearance of the extension respects the existing character of the building and surrounding area, whilst also appropriately differentiating between the old and new elements of the Main House. The proposed development therefore comprises a proportionate extension and alteration to an existing building and would be acceptable in accordance with NLP policies STP7 and STP8 and paragraph 149 of the NPPF.

Other Relevant Planning Policies

Design

A suite of plans has been prepared to accompany the application which set out the design of the extension and demonstrate that it would not appear incongruous to the existing building. The extension has been designed in accordance with the materials and features of the existing building utilising stone facades, timber window frames, and a slate roof. This ensures consistency with the extension that was

recently removed due to health and safety concerns whilst ensuring development remains sympathetic to the existing building. The proposal is therefore in accordance with NLP Policies QOP1 and QOP2 which seek to ensure development provides a high standard of design and amenity for existing and future users.

Heritage

The School House is not listed and is not located within a conservation area; it however acknowledged that the building has some historic significance and may be considered as a non-designated heritage asset by the Council. Cognisant of this, the design proposals have been carefully developed to ensure there is no unacceptable impact on the School House. The proposal would not result in any harm to the significance of the building. The element of the building proposed to be reinstated did not form part of the original School House, and was added as part of a later phase of development in the early-20th-century. The rear of the building has been added to and altered over time and is capable of accommodating the changes. The principal façade would not be affected and the proposed materials and details are appropriate and sensitive to the age and design of the existing building. Given this, it is considered the development would have a neutral impact overall with its significance preserved, thereby in accordance with NLP Policy ENV 7.

Access and Connectivity

The site is currently accessed via two points to the west of the site which connect to an unnamed private road. Access will remain as existing with no alterations proposed; as such, the proposal is considered acceptable on this basis.

Summary

The proposal constitutes an appropriate extension to an existing dwelling which reflects and is consistent with the previous extension removed following health and safety concerns after discovering asbestos in the roof, and subsequent structural issues with the remainder of the extension.

The proposal complies with relevant local and national planning policy and would constitute an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and would not lead to any adverse impacts.

We trust the information provided is sufficient to validate and progress the determination of this application at the earliest opportunity. Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my colleague, Dominic Crowley.

Yours sincerely



Michael Hepburn

Senior Director

BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI