

Planning statement in support
of a planning application and
listed building consent for the
restoration of Hill Farm

Hill Farm, Hockley Brook Lane,
Belbroughton, Stourbridge, DY9 0AD

Prepared by Fisher German LLP
on Behalf of Mr Richard Fairbairn



Project Title:

Planning application and listed building consent for the restoration of Hill Farm

Address:

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01 Introduction

- 1.1 We act on behalf of Mr Richard Fairbairn in respect to the planning and listed building applications for the restoration of Hill Farmhouse.
- 1.2 Hill Farm is located approximately 1.24km south east of the village of Belbroughton. The farmhouse lies to the north west corner of Hill Farm. The Farmhouse was previously under a separate ownership from the wider farm and occupied by an elderly lady. When the previous owner passed away the property was marketed, and the owners of Hill Farm purchased the property with the intention to restore the property.
- 1.3 As part of the renovation works, it is sort to undertake repairs, restore the property back to its historic layout and demolish and replace the existing link and rebuild the outbuilding currently connected and used as an extension of living space to the host dwelling.
- 1.4 As the property is Grade II Listed, both listed building consent and full planning permission are sought for the operational works.
- 1.5 The following sections of this Planning Statement provide details of the site and surrounding area, proposed development, and consideration of the relevant policy criteria from the adopted Local Development Framework for the consideration of the operational development required.

02 Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 As identified within the aerial imagery (figure 1) and the submitted location plan, the site lies within the north west corner of the farm.
- 2.2 The Grade II Listed property 'Hill Farmhouse' was initially listed by Historic England on 17th July 1986. The property is described as an early to mid 18th century with mid 19th and 20th century additions farmhouse. The property is of brick construction with a sandstone base and plain roof tiles. The main element of the property is set over two storeys and the remainder is 1.5 storeys and single storey.



Figure 1: Aerial imagery of the site (Source: Google Earth)

03 Planning History

- 3.1 A review of the Council's online planning application register confirms that there is no relevant planning history for Hill Farmhouse itself.

04 Site Constraints

- 4.1 Having reviewed the Bromsgrove District Council Policies Map the site constraints are: -
- Green Belt
 - Listed Building (Grade II Listed Hill Farmhouse)
 - Public Rights of Way (paths 551 B, 556 D, 559 D)

05 Planning Policy Context

Planning Legislation

- 5.1 The determination of a planning application is to be made pursuant to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which is to be read in conjunction with section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 38(6) requires the local planning authority to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material circumstances which 'indicate otherwise'. Section 70(2) provides that in determining applications the local planning authority ... 'shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations'...

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's planning policies for England and is split up into 17 chapters, each focusing on a different topic. Those most pertinent to the development potential of the site are listed below.

Introduction

- 5.3 The NPPF, outlines the Government's planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally.
- 5.4 Paragraph 1 of the NPPF ... 'sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans can provide for sufficient housing and other development in a sustainable manner....'
- 5.5 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF recognises that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 3 of the NPPF confirms that the Framework should be read as a whole, including its footnotes and annexes.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 5.6 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF recognises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be

summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom - have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

- 5.7 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies the three key dimensions to achieve sustainable development; economic, social and environmental, as outlined below: -
- a) Economic objective – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
 - b) Social objective – supporting a strong, vibrant and healthy community; and
 - c) Environmental objective – contributing to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.
- 5.8 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF recognises ... 'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development' ...
- 5.9 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF also states that for decision-taking this means ... 'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay' ...
- 5.10 Paragraph 12 of the NPPF recognises ... 'The presumption in favour of sustainable development'... and states that ... 'the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed' ...

Decision-making

- 5.11 In accordance with Paragraph 38 of the NPPF ... 'Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available' ... 'Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible' ...
- 5.12 The NPPF also recognises, within Paragraph 41 that ... 'the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage ... the greater the benefits'... and ... 'This assists local

planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs'...

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- 5.13 Paragraph 96 of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should ... '*aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places*' ... which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles.

Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

- 5.14 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF recognises that ... 'The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities' ... whilst Paragraph 135 of the NPPF notes that development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development whilst also being visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping. Development should also be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

Protecting Green Belt Land

- 5.15 Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states ... 'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'...
- 5.16 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF outlines ... 'A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:
- 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;
 - d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;...

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- 5.17 This section of the NPPF sets out ways in which planning can support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. Paragraph 165 of the NPPF states that ... '*inappropriate development in areas*

at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk' ...

- 5.18 Paragraph 172 of the NPPF sets out that LPA's should ensure when determining planning applications that flood risk elsewhere is not increased. Furthermore, where appropriate applications should be supported by site-specific flood-risk assessments.

Habitats and biodiversity

- 5.19 Paragraph 185 of the NPPF requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. This includes by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 5.20 In consideration of the historic environment paragraph 200 states that ... 'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting'...

- 5.21 Paragraph 203 outlines ... 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

- 5.22 Paragraph 205 highlighting that ... 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'...

Annex 1: Implementation

- 5.23 Annex 1 of the NPPF sets out how the Framework is to be implemented. It also confirms that the policies of the revised Framework are material considerations for the determination of planning applications from the date of publication. Policies contained within plans adopted before the replacement framework should not be considered out

of date, but instead weight must be assessed according to their degree of consistency with the revised Framework.

The Local Planning Policy Framework

5.24 The Local Development Plan is made up of the following documents –

- Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2011-2030
- Worcestershire County Council Waster Core Strategy, 2012 (WCS)

5.25 The relevant Policies for the proposed development are: –

BDP Policies

BDP1 Sustainable Development

BDP2 Settlement Hierarchy

BDP4 Green Belt

BDP15 Rural Renaissance

BDP16 Sustainable Transport

BDP19 High Quality Design

BDP20 Managing the Historic Environment

BDP21 Natural Environment

BDP22 Climate Change

BDP23 Water Management

WCS Policies

WCS 1 – Presumption in favor of sustainable development

Supplementary Planning Document's (SPD)

High Quality Design SPD 2019

06 Assessment of Proposal

Principle of Development

6.1 The site lies beyond any settlement boundary, as identified within Policy BDP2 and is located within the Green Belt.

- 6.2 The proposal would involve restoring an existing listed farmhouse to ensure its long term vitality and use. The works would involve reconfiguration of the internal layout removing modern partition walls, restoring the staircase back to its original location and replacing an existing link extension and rebuilding an existing outbuilding currently linked to the property.
- 6.3 The majority of the works would be internal, and repair works which would require listed building consent but not necessarily constitute development under Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Due to the structural integrity of the rear lean-to extension and the adjoining outbuilding, as evidenced within the Structural Engineer's report, these elements need to be rebuilt. The link is also sought to be demolished and replaced for one that is more sensitively designed than the current.
- 6.4 Policy BDP15 (Rural Renaissance) offers support for limited extension, alteration, or replacement of existing buildings where the extensions or alterations are not disproportionate to the size of the original building, and in the case of a replacement building the new building is not materially larger than the building it replaces (in line with BDP4).
- 6.5 As demonstrated by the submitted plans, the proposal would not result in any extensions or alterations that would be disproportionate additions over and above the original building nor would any replacement be materially larger than the existing. It is noted that policy BDP15 also references that proposals within the Green Belt must accord with Policy BDP4, which will be discussed further below.

Green Belt

- 6.6 The site also lies within the Green Belt. Policy BDP4 offers support for extensions to existing residential dwellings provided that extensions do not exceed a maximum of 40% increase of the original dwelling or an increase up to a maximum total floor space of 140m² ('original' dwelling plus extension(s)) provided that this scale of development has no adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.7 The proposed works of replacing the rear lean-to, link and outbuilding would not exceed the 40% increase to the floor area of the original dwelling. There would be a modest increase to the outbuilding so this could be better utilised in terms of internal space. This would involve extending the outbuilding by 500mm to the front and rear elevations. In terms of the increase to the floor area overall, this would constitute a 23.4% increase, which would be well within the allowance of 40%. Moreover, the extension of the outbuilding has been designed within a sympathetic way to retain the character

and its subservience to the host dwelling, by the outbuilding maintaining a set back from the principal elevation as well as having a lower ridge line. It is also important to highlight that the replacement link would sit on a smaller footprint to the existing and this would be constructed out of transparent material which would allow views through it and providing a perceived openness.

- 6.8 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policy BDP4, as well as the Green Belt policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design

- 6.9 Policy BDP19 sets out amongst other things that development should ensure that it enhances the character and distinctiveness of the local area.
- 6.10 As identified within the submitted plans, the main aim of the proposal is to restore the dwelling to bring it to today's current living standards and provide the necessary works to ensure its long-term vitality as a residential dwelling and as a heritage asset.
- 6.11 The proposal would include internal alterations, elements of the dwelling being rebuilt, various repairs to the fenestration and upgrades in terms of the external appearance and the amenity area to ensure this is fully functional space.
- 6.12 Internal alterations have been kept to a minimum to ensure historic fabric of the property is retained where feasible. The proposed internal work include the relocation of the staircase back to the original position and the removal of a partition wall. These works have been informed by the building recording undertaken by Archaeological Building Recording Services, which has demonstrated that the existing staircase is not the original historic location and the partition wall sought to be removed is a modern stud wall. A structural survey was carried out by Shire Consulting, and this has outlined that the farmhouse is generally in a good structural condition however water ingress from holes in the roof have led to isolated areas of deterioration that require repair. Internally, repairs will be required to floorboards, and these will be replaced locally where necessary.
- 6.13 External works would include repair works to the existing fenestration, repointing of the brickwork, partially rebuilding chimneys, the replacement of the existing render and replacement and rebuild of the rear lean-to, the link, and the outbuilding.
- 6.14 As the plans show the aim is to restore the Hill Farmhouse so it can be once again utilised as a family home whilst preserving the historic significance of the building. The

majority of the works would be working with the existing building and undertaking repair works. For this reason, new openings on the main farmhouse have been limited and all the existing openings would be utilised and existing fenestration would be repaired where possible and replaced with fenestration to match the existing.

- 6.15 External works would also include the replacement of the existing cement rendering to a natural lime render. It is seen that the replacement of the existing render would be a betterment in terms of efficiency of the building and the design and would allow for further inspections of the condition of the original brickwork underneath.
- 6.16 The most extensive works would be to the existing link, outbuilding and rear lean-to extension, which the structural survey has identified are in precarious state and in need of being rebuilt. Historic mapping appears to suggest that the link and outbuilding are original features. The architecture and materials, however, suggest that these elements were replaced and are later additions. It is not inherently obvious when these were added onto the property but based on the construction it is assumed sometime circa to the 1960s. The existing link is of brick construction with a flat felt roof. The outbuilding connected to the link is more traditional however this has clearly been modified and possibly extended which is evident by localised areas with engineering bricks.
- 6.17 The existing link is tired and in need of replacement. Whilst the link is constructed out of brick these are engineering bricks which do not match the bricks on the existing dwelling or attached outbuilding. The bricks being at odds with the host dwelling and makes it an incongruous feature when viewed against the property.
- 6.18 For this reason, it is sought to replace the link with a better quality designed one. As the plans show the link proposed would be glazed. It is seen that a glazed link would assist in clearly distinguishing between the host listed property and the attached outbuilding. This is seen as important as the link would clearly be identified as a later addition and would not compete with host dwelling. Moreover, the link would be built on a smaller footprint and set back from the principal elevation.
- 6.19 The existing outbuilding as confirmed by the structural survey undertaken by Shire Consulting is in a precarious state and consequently to be preserved would need to be rebuilt. As shown by the plans this would be done in a sympathetic manner utilising matching bricks and roof tiles and keeping to the same linear planform, maintaining the appearance of a historic farmstead. It is sought to extend the outbuilding by 1m in depth by adding 500mm to the front and rear elevations.

Extending the outbuilding would provide further useable living space and this has been designed to ensure that the outbuilding remains subservient to the host dwelling and has maintained a set back from the principal elevation of the main farmhouse.

- 6.20 In overall terms, it is considered that the proposal would not only enhance the design quality and efficiency of the dwelling but would ensure that it conserves and enhances a heritage asset, which adds to the local distinctiveness of the area, thus according with the aims of BDP19.

Heritage

- 6.21 A Heritage Report and building recording have been carried out by Archaeological Building Recording Services to support the application.
- 6.22 The Heritage Assessment has been carried out in line with paragraph 200 of the NPPF. The Heritage Assessment concludes that the proposed works would be sympathetic to the significance and setting of the building and ensure the property is brought up to date for a long-term residential use. This is seen to accord with Policy BDP20, which sets out that the Council will support development proposals which sustain and enhance the significance of Heritage Assets including their setting. The restoration of the property back into a family home would not only enhance the heritage asset but would ensure its long-term maintenance.
- 6.23 The proposal would result in limited loss of historic fabric with the internal alterations and rebuilding of the outbuilding and rear lean to. This has however, been mitigated through a programme of historic building inspection and recording to adhere with Policy BDP20.18, which has increased the understanding of the building as a heritage asset. In the case of the staircase the building recording has revealed that this is not the original staircase and has identified the original location for the staircase, which the proposal seeks to utilise.
- 6.24 The removal and replacement of the cement render would be an improvement, as the cement render is not an original feature on the property. It is recognised that a conservation and repair scheme will be required for the brickwork underneath the render, but this cannot be confirmed until the render is removed.
- 6.25 As outlined within the structural survey and building recording the removal and replacement of the rear lean-to and outbuilding are absolutely necessary to preserve

the heritage asset and avoid total loss of these features. These would be rebuilt and repurpose as much of the historic fabric of the bricks and clay tiles as possible.

- 6.26 It is understood that the engineering operations to re-level the garden area may require archaeological input, but this would need to be confirmed by the County Archaeologist at Worcestershire County Council.
- 6.27 It is considered that works are essential to preserve the heritage asset and ensure its long-term use and enhancement. It is seen that with the mitigation measures of the building recording and re-use of the historic fabric the proposal would accord with BDP20.

Biodiversity

- 6.28 To support the application a baseline ecological report was carried out by Elizabeth McKay. Due to the age, the rural location and there being gaps within the roof structure, a full bat survey was undertaken. In addition to this, recommendations have been made for nesting birds and Great Crested Newts as these could not be ruled out from using the site.

Bats

- 6.29 In order to understand whether bats were present within the site three dusk emergence surveys were carried out between August and September 2023. On all three of the surveys several Soprano Pipistrelle bats were seen emerging from the roof of the property. It was concluded that a maternity roost of Soprano Pipistrelle Bats were using the building.
- 6.30 Due to the above a protected species licence will be required to progress the development. For a licence to be granted it must be determined at this stage if Natural England will likely grant a licence and therefore consideration of the 3 tests should be given at this stage.

The tests are –

1) Regulation 53(2)(e) states: a licence can be granted for the purposes of "preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".

(2) Regulation 53(9)(a) states: the appropriate authority shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied "that there is no satisfactory alternative".

(3) Regulation 53(9)(b) states: the appropriate authority shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied "that the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range."

- 6.31 In regard to the first test, the application would be restoring a listed farmhouse to bring it back into a viable use to ensure its future conservation. The conservation of the listed building is seen to be in the public interest as it would restore and preserve a statutory listed heritage asset and prevent it from deteriorating and being lost forever. Whilst the property is a private residence there are several public rights of way across the site which would provide vantage points of the listed building.
- 6.32 It is considered that there is no alternative satisfactory alternative as the proposal involves an irreplaceable heritage asset in need of repair.
- 6.33 In terms of the final test, mitigation measures have been put forward within the bat survey report undertaken by Elizabeth McKay. The mitigation measures include the timing of works being undertaken, utilising special bat friendly materials for the internal roof lining and timber treatment. Additional measures include incorporating 30 purpose bat access files to the north and south aspects of the roof as well as minimising external lighting.
- 6.34 It is deemed that provided these measures are carried out that a bat licence would be forthcoming.
- 6.35 The survey also makes recommendations for nesting birds as the survey showed evidence of these at the eaves on the south facing aspect of the property and above the lintel of the front door. Recommendations for mitigating harm to nesting birds include timing of works avoiding nesting bird season, 2 compensatory 28mm Chillon Woodstone nest boxes being added onto the east facing gable of the outbuilding and hedgerow planting being carried out to the north of the property.
- 6.36 A method statement has also been included as the presence of Great Crested Newts cannot be ruled out. This include measures such as ensuring the ground is clear from rubble, earth, tiles, brick, or waste and these are stored on pallets off the ground.
- 6.37 Provided all the mitigation measures are carried out in accordance with the report undertaken by Elizabeth McKay, the proposal would maintain the favourable conservation status of populations of protected species and as such accord with policy BDP21.

Water Management and Drainage

- 6.38 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 so is at a low risk of fluvial flooding. The Environment Agency Flood map also shows that the site is at a low risk of surface water flooding.
- 6.39 Whilst the proposal involves an existing residential property, the property is of an age where the drainage is likely to be non-existent or outdated. As part of the proposal is therefore sought to manage surface water through a soakaway sited in a suitable location within the garden.
- 6.40 Foul drainage would be managed by connecting to an existing biodisc treatment plant. This is considered the most appropriate method given the rural locality of the site and there being no option to connect to the mains foul drainage.

Highway Matters

- 6.41 It is not anticipated that the proposal would raise any highway concerns. Whilst the property is accessed by a single private track, the proposal would not increase the number of residential units on site and as such there should be no adverse impact in respect to traffic generation.
- 6.42 Car parking is provided to south of the property within a shared courtyard. The shared courtyard would provide sufficient space for 3 vehicles to meet the standards for 4-5 bedroom property as set out within the Worcestershire Streetscape Design Guide.
- 6.43 Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any highway issues surrounding the proposal.

07 Conclusion

- 7.1 In consideration of the above, it is concluded that the proposal sought would be a sympathetic way to restoring to the existing listed building of Hill Farmhouse. The main key benefit of the proposal is it would bring back the farmhouse into a functioning use and prevent any further deterioration of the listed building.
- 7.2 It is considered that the proposal would accord with the relevant local and national planning policies which are discussed above, subject the ecology recommendations being followed and bat licence being sought from Natural England.
- 7.3 It is therefore, respectively requested that the planning application and listed building consent is granted.