

PROPOSAL: Proposed Conversion of redundant buildings to 4no. Dwellings and erection of 3no. Detached Dwellings.

ADDRESS: Stone Bar Farm,
Moor lane,
Birdwell,
Barnsley,
S70 5TY

APPLICANT: Mr S Woodruff – Crown Homes

DATE: 21st April 2018

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Introduction

RBA Town Planning has been instructed by the Applicant Mr. S. Woodruff of Crown Homes to prepare a Planning Justification Statement to accompany the Planning Application submitted by JEA Building Design Services.

The Applicant is seeking Full Planning Consent for the conversion of redundant buildings to dwelling houses and the erection of detached dwellings on an area of land associated with and including Stone Bar Farm.

The Application site is designated as Green Belt within the Councils Development Plan, new development within Green Belt locations is severely restricted with new buildings considered inappropriate unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. This statement shall set out current Planning Policy and Guidance at both National and Local Level and identify special circumstances to warrant approval of the proposed development.

This Statement is provided in terms of Green Belt justification, considerations such as Heritage, Access and Landscape are identified within the Design & Access Statement. This statement should be read in conjunction with the proposed plans and all other documentation submitted as part of the application.

Site & Surroundings

The Application Site, Stone Bar Farm, is located on the edge of Birdwell, Barnsley, a Village location with services and amenities associated with a village of its size and scale that supports its population. The map excerpt identifies the site in relation to the main body of the village.



More widely the site is approximately 4.5 miles from Barnsley Town Centre, the main Service Centre for the district, with Corton Wood retail park being located approximately 2.5 miles away. The site is well positioned in terms of highway infrastructure with close proximity to the M1 junction, in addition to the A61 to Sheffield and the A6195 to Doncaster.

The Application Site, a former Dairy Farm ceased operations from the Applicants recollection in excess of 15 years ago, with only the farm house being in use for its prescribed residential purpose. The land associated with the former Farming Enterprise is no longer within ownership with associated land being only that identified within the redline boundary of the application.

The Application Site consists of two parts, a courtyard of redundant agricultural buildings and an area of land beyond which lays home to a number of dilapidated brick and timber structures that were once used in connection with the farming operation. The following photographs provide a general indication of the site.





Proposal

The Applicant seeks Full Planning Consent for the conversion of existing redundant buildings to 4no. 3-bedroom dwellings and the erection of 3no. 3/4-bedroom detached dwellings on land associated with the former use.

It is proposed to convert the existing buildings with minimal alteration to the existing fabric, size, scale or fenestration. It is proposed to construct a small extension to the single storey barn and a detached garage.

The existing structures on the adjacent land are to be demolished given that the structural condition is poor and not capable of conversion. The combined footprint of the structures equates to the total amount of footprint proposed in the 3 detached dwellings.

Policy

The following Policies are considered relevant to development proposals within Green belt locations;

National Planning Policy Framework – Achieving Sustainable Development

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **An economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **A social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality-built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **An environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions.

National Planning Policy Framework – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For **plan-making** this means that:

- local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless: any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

For **decision-taking** this means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless: any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted

National Planning Policy Framework – Delivering a wide choice of quality homes

Local planning authorities may make an allowance for windfall sites in the five-year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends, and should not include residential gardens.

Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

National Planning Policy Framework – Protecting Green Belt

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- 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 replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or

- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:

- mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
- development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.

Unitary Development Plan - Policy GS7

Without prejudice and subject to the application of policies GS8, GS8a, GS8b, GS8c, GS8d, GS8e and GS9 in this plan, Development within the green belt will not be permitted Unless it maintains the openness of and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the green belt.

Unitary Development Plan Policy GS8

Within the green belt, the construction of new buildings will Not be permitted, except in very special circumstances, unless it is for the following purposes:

- A)** agriculture or forestry
- B)** essential facilities for outdoor sport or outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, or for other uses of land which preserve the Openness of the green belt and which do not conflict with the Purposes of including land in it
- C)** the replacement of existing dwellings in compliance with Policy GS8e.

Unitary Development Plan Policy GS8a

In the green belt, the change of use and/or alteration and/or Extension of an existing building will be permitted provided that:

A) the building as altered and extended or used, in accordance with the development permitted, will not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the green belt and the purpose of Including land in it

B) the building as altered and extended or used in accordance with the Development permitted, will not adversely affect the amenity of residents or the appearance of the locality, nor lead to traffic or Safety problems

C) any building proposed for conversion is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for substantial alterations

D) the development will not result in the loss of an essential component of an agricultural holding and is compatible with the viability of continuing agricultural activity

E) any proposed alteration or extension is architecturally consistent with the existing building and respects its height, shape mass and plan form, the existing external materials, and its overall setting

F) the site curtilage must be limited to an area reasonable to fulfil the functions of the proposed use and will not in its appearance or use adversely affect the amenity of local residents or the appearance of the locality

G) A proposal to change the use of a non-residential building to residential

Use will be permitted only if:

i) the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure a Suitable agricultural, business, leisure, tourism or other use which would contribute to the local rural economy without conflict with other policies of the plan, or

ii) the residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for Non-residential use, or

iii) residential use would be a significantly better way of retaining and enhancing the character and appearance of the building than a non-residential use.

H) There is no conflict with the other policies of the plan where, following the conversion of a building from agricultural use, permitted development rights may allow the erection of new farm buildings within the same agricultural unit or holding which might have a seriously detrimental effect on the openness of the green belt and/or on the landscape, the council will remove permitted development rights by planning condition. Where permission is granted for conversion to a dwelling the council will normally, as a condition of planning permission, remove permitted development rights so as to control alterations and extensions to the Building and the erection of outbuildings.

Assessment

The proposal in terms of Green Belt Policy is considered to be made of two parts, the conversion of existing redundant buildings and the second the demolition and redevelopment of existing structures and construction of new dwelling houses. The conversion aspect of the scheme therefore would be considered appropriate development with the Green Belt location with the construction of new buildings inappropriate. Whilst the application should be viewed as a whole, it is proposed, for the purpose of clarity that the merits of each be identified in isolation.

Conversion of Existing Redundant Buildings

This aspect of the proposal is in principle considered appropriate to the Green Belt location, paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework Document outlines that *“other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. One of the forms of development identified as being appropriate is “the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction”*

The Architectural Company submitting the Application JEA Building Design Services has undertaken a walk over site survey to assess the quality of the buildings and conversion capabilities. The comments are identified below and can also be found within the Design and Access Statement;

“The structures of the buildings have been visually inspected, and they comprise typical traditional materials and constructions of solid stone walls supporting timber trusses and purlins supporting common rafters finished with a mix of roof coverings, including just one section of surviving stone slates but predominantly more contemporary tiles and a section of profiled sheeting. There are the usual signs of historic movement and one or two defective stone heads and timber lintels over wider span openings but all these can be resolved with isolated repairs in matching materials as shown on the drawings and therefore we see no reason why the existing buildings aren’t suitable for conversion and the conversion works themselves will stiffen and strengthen the existing structures and help preserve them for the long term”.

The buildings proposed for conversion would have been used by the farming operation that ceased a number of years ago and whilst the Farm House, the Courtyard building, and adjacent land and structure remain no other land is owned or associated by lease to the farm. The site therefore has no potential for farming use, it is also, considering the sites location and building condition any other use is highly unlikely and the most appropriate use would be that of dwelling houses.

The buildings are in a poor state of repair in terms of immediate use, however, it has been identified that they are of sound construction capable of conversion with limited structural work, by virtue of this it is considered that the proposed conversion would meet with the principle aims of the NPPF and the Councils Development Plan Policies.

The next approach in considering the appropriateness of the conversion would be one of the impacts the resulting development would have upon the Openness of the Green Belt location. The buildings already exist and result in impact, the issue of whether the limited extension to the buildings to facility living accommodation, the detached garage block and domestic curtilage significantly increases the impacts to the detriment of the area it what should be considered. It is our contention that given the surrounding built environment including highway infrastructure, the site low lying position in terms of the public domain it is considered that no adverse impacts upon the open character of the Green Belt will arise as a result of the proposed development.

It is considered that on balance the proposal in terms of the conversion would in all respects conform to the principle aims of both National and Local Planning Policy and Guidance.

Erection of Detached Dwellings (Special Circumstances)

The provision of new buildings within the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated to outweigh harm by virtue of its inappropriateness. There is no definition as to what would constitute special circumstances, however special circumstances would usually be unique to the application site and outweigh the harm already identified by being inappropriate.

In this instance, the area of land on which the proposed new dwellings are proposed forms part of a larger parcel of land that was previously within agricultural use. The land sits behind the original Farm House and Courtyard style agricultural buildings with the only access as is existing going passed the Farm House and Buildings. On the land sits former agricultural structures that are in poor condition and have no significant purpose or any real potential for future use, with the former farm also have no realistic use for agricultural purposes going forward.

Whilst this area of land may not fall within the definition of previously developed land for the purposes of Planning in that the structures relate to agriculture, however, in terms of sustainability the land is of no particular use moving forward, it has been subject to development and retains structures that have impact by virtue of volume and footprint. Given the highly sustainable location and the built environment in which the site is positioned, to not utilise the land for significant purpose would be inefficient and a proposed sympathetic use for residential purposes would seek to adhere to the aims of the NPPF and the delivery of sustainable development and efficient use of land.

The existing structures combined with the lack of use of the land result in visually harmful impacts which ultimately in our opinion affect the character and appearance. It is proposed that the combined footprint of the structures on site would be split over the three dwellings and repositioned within the site to lessen any visual impacts from the adjacent highway infrastructure. It is considered that this offset would represent an effective re-use of land and provide benefits to the supply of housing within this highly sustainable area. The NPPF outlines that Councils should not consider relevant policies for the supply of housing up-to-date if they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Local Authority have a current shortfall in the supply of housing land and housing across the district with the current plan being significantly outdated. It is acknowledged that there is an emerging plan, however, it is likely to be sometime before the plan is adopted given the call for sites is now only in consultation period.

It considered that the above would constitute special circumstances unique to the site enough to outweigh harm on the Green Belt Location.

Conclusion

It is our contention that the proposed redevelopment of the site meets with the principal aims of both Government and Local Policy and Guidance in terms of development within the Green Belt and protecting the openness of such.

It is considered that the proposal would not conflict with the purposes of including land within Green Belt and that Very Special Circumstances have been demonstrated to outweigh any harm upon the location.

It is with respect that ask you to concur with our Assessment and allow the development subject to appropriate Planning Conditions.