THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO DWELLINGHOUSES AT PARSONS BRAKE FARM, BURTON ROAD, HANBURY, STAFFORDSHIRE

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2014
THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO DWELLINGHOUSES AT PARSONS BRAKE FARM, BURTON ROAD, HANBURY, STAFFORDSHIRE

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THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER
Full planning application for the conversion of agricultural
buildings to dwellings at Parsons Brake Farm, Burton Road, Hanbury

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Design & Access Statement (DAS) accompanies the full planning application made by Savills UK for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses at Parsons Brake Farm, Burton Road, Hanbury, Staffordshire. This application seeks full planning permission for “the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into residential units (plots 1a, 1b and 2); a new build element to form a fourth residential dwelling unit (plot 3); conversion of rear barn into garages; improvement to the existing farmhouse access and creation of a new vehicular access point off Burton Road”. The location of the site is shown on the site location plan.

1.1.2 Design and Access Statements are required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The purpose of this document is firstly, to provide information concerning the design process of the development; secondly, to outline the design principles that have led to the form and type of development proposed; and thirdly to set the application site in its current as well as its historic context.

1.1.3 This statement explains the design process that has been followed. The document should also be read in conjunction with the Planning Supporting Statement and other supporting documentation that accompanies the application.

1.1.4 The Design and Access Statement has been prepared to be compliant with the DCLG publication “Guidance on information requirements and validation” (March, 2010) and the East Staffordshire Borough Council Validation Check List. The statement has also been prepared using advice on how best to prepare a DAS as given in the CABE publication “Design and Access Statement: how to write, read and use them”.

1.1.5 ESBC expect the following to be included in a DAS:

(a) Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development.
(b) Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes the context into account.
(c) Explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account
(d) State what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation; and
(e) Explain how any specific issue which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

This DAS is broken down into two sections. The first section explains the design process followed, appraising the site's context (present and historic), involvement in the design process and evaluation of the appraisal. The second part explains the design principles adopted.

An appraisal of the context comprising of an:
- Assessment of the site's immediate and wider context;
- Evaluation of the assessment; and
- Design of the scheme

An explanation of design principle and concepts adopted in terms of:
- Amount
- Layout
- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance; and
- Accessibility

2 DESIGN PROCESS

2.1 Site location and context

2.1.1 The immediate surroundings can be defined through the application site boundary (edged red) which comprises of a farmstead situated outside the settlement boundary in open countryside. The farmstead contains a main farmhouse with a group of affiliated agricultural outbuildings tightly “clustered” together to form two defined courtyards.

2.1.2 Another notable site distinction is the way in which the outbuildings are situated immediately up to the highway boundary providing a built up edge along the road frontage. All the traditional outbuildings are redundant, including the farmhouse itself. The modern multi-purpose building however are used, but this is on an occasional, ad hoc basis. The land around the site is in arable production, whereas these are livestock buildings. They are not therefore necessary, or convenient for farming requirements. The existing access leads onto the concrete yard. The farmstead includes both traditional and modern agricultural buildings.
2.1.3 The above analytical description of the immediate site context demonstrates the site falls into the category of farmstead being most suitable for conversion because the visual impact of conversion is limited by the presence of existing buildings associated with the farm house including access and parking. Overall the farmstead is a well-established site with linear outbuildings that form a courtyard arrangement.

2.1.4 A site constraints check was undertaken. The desk based site check identified that there are no known statutory or local designations. The farmhouse and outbuildings are neither listed nor fall within a conservation area. This is not only informed the preparation of the application, but is important when determining the planning application; the farmstead is not of any special architectural value or historic importance worthy of designation as a heritage asset.

2.1.5 The application site does fall within the National Forest. The proposed development would therefore need to be enhanced through appropriate landscaping and tree planting as required.

2.1.6 The wider surroundings comprise of agricultural fields where the application site is bounded to the south, east and north west boundaries by agricultural land. This large expanse of land is under the ownership and control of the applicant, forming part of the Duchy of Lancaster’s rural land holding within East Staffordshire. The site is located in close proximity to the village of Hanbury in rural Staffordshire.

2.1.7 To the north is dense woodland (known as Parsons Brake), separated from the application site by a classified road with a 60mph speed limit. The nearest property is Woodside bungalow sited 300 metres away from Parsons Brake Farm. The application site itself (farmstead) and its immediate surroundings (agricultural fields and dense woodland) shows the wider context of the site is characterised as being characteristically rural in nature.

2.1.8 Hanbury Grange is 1,100 metres away from Parsons Brake Farm, it represents a nearby, and recent example of a barn conversion project in the wider surrounding area. This scheme was implemented by Savills UK again on behalf of the Duchy of Lancaster. It involved conversion of redundant buildings to form four residential dwellings and four units for use as garaging, storage and workshops, it received planning permission on 24/07/2009 under planning ref. PA/26540/010/JI. The scheme is now complete. When viewed during the site visit, it was considered to be a good example of a barn conversion to residential use.
2.2 Historic context

2.2.1 Farmsteads and their buildings are an integral part of the rural landscape and how it has changed over centuries. Ordnance Survey maps (dating back to 1883) were used in order to examine and then understand the historic form of the farmstead. The historic maps were subsequently used to inform the design and layout of the proposed conversion scheme in accordance with the advice given in the ESBC Re-use of Rural Buildings SPD. See Planning Supporting Statement for the OS maps and further details.

2.2.2 Historically, the maps show that there has always been a building footprint in the location of the proposed new build element. The form of the farmstead has through time always included a building footprint in this location creating a ‘U’ shaped courtyard arrangement, as shown on the historic maps provided. The historical precedence for a ‘U’ shaped courtyard arrangement has thus been demonstrated. Given its historical form, shown in the farmsteads morphology, the new build element would sit comfortably with the other farm buildings.

2.2.3 Overall, the reconstructed L-shaped building joined to the existing outbuildings to retain a U shaped courtyard arrangement is considered to be in keeping with the historic form and character of the farmstead.

2.3 Planning Policy Context

Introduction
2.3.1 A detailed assessment of the planning policy framework is set out in the Planning Supporting Statement, which accompanies the planning application. This section specifically focuses on the planning policies relevant to the design and access proposals for the development.

National Planning Policy

2.3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development that articulates sustainable development should go ahead without delay. The NPPF supports new homes in the countryside where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an overall enhancement in the immediate setting.

2.3.3 The Framework contains the following policies, relevant to the design and access components of development:

- **Section 6 - Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes** - To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership, local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

- **Section 7 - Requiring good design** - Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles of particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proposed to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Sustainable Development

2.3.4 Agricultural outbuildings that remain redundant and unused are regarded as a wasted resource. Bringing redundant agricultural buildings back into an active use is therefore regarded as sustainable. Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements, replacing poor design with better design. A group of run down agricultural buildings would become re-invigorated with the overall effect of creating a vibrant and sustainable place to live.
Local Planning Policy

2.3.5 The Council’s Adopted Local Plan, forms a key part of the development plan covering East Staffordshire and was adopted on 20th July 2006. It provides the basis for determining all planning applications received by the authority.

2.3.6 The Adopted Local Plan will in due course be replaced by the New Local Plan. Following consultation of the Preferred Options document, the Council has now published the full version of the Local Plan that it intends to submit to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate). In the meantime, with respect to design and access issues, the saved policies of the Local Plan 2006 remain relevant to the consideration of the development purposes including the following policies;

- Policy B1 Design
- Policy BE15 - Conversion of Rural Buildings
- Policy CSP6 National Forest
- Policy NE14 National Forest planting scheme
- Policy NE15 National Forest Implementation of Planting Schemes
- Policy T1 Transport General Principles for New Development

2.3.7 The ESBC Re-use of Rural Buildings Supplementary Planning Document SPD (adopted, 2010) has also been used to inform design. This guidance brings together various planning issues that arise in the consideration of proposals for the re-use of rural buildings. It sets out general design guidance on how to approach conversion work, without destroying the rural character of the building. Whilst the guidance was used to inform the design and layout of this scheme, it’s worth reiterating the document is guidance and guidance only.

2.3.8 All policy considerations should be taken in light of the new Permitted Development rights for conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use. Any policy or design guide should be considered in line with the current planning context for barn conversions as stipulated under the new Permitted Development rights.

2.3.9 The applicant considers that the proposal should be considered appropriate in the context of the guidance, the new Permitted Development rights, and the Local Plan given the scheme
compliance, high quality design and its sustainability as demonstrated in this statement.

2.4 Involvement - pre-application consultation

2.4.1 The proposed scheme was discussed with East Staffs Borough Council. A frontloaded, proactive approach was taken gaining involvement from the LPA as early as possible in the process. A site visit tour was undertaken to gain a further understanding on how the application site works. The site visit involved walking around each section of the site where both parties (Wardell Armstrong acting as planning consultant and ESBC planning officer) commenting on the strengths, weaknesses and characteristics of the site.

2.4.2 Verbal comments were received from the planning officer during the site visit, and were followed up by written advice within an email received on 23/07/2014. The formal advice highlighted the key issues and what’s expected from the LPA as part of any forthcoming scheme (please refer to the Planning Supporting Statement for further details).

2.4.3 Both the desk based study of the site context, a site tour and a structural inspection of the outbuildings by an appropriately qualified building survey, provided an opportunity to comprehensively evaluate the site characteristics.

2.5 Physical Context

2.5.1 A structural survey of the outbuildings was undertaken on [insert date] which found that the outbuildings are suitable for conversion. The survey demonstrates that the outbuildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial demolition and reconstruction.

2.6 Evaluation

2.6.1 A SWOT analysis provides an evaluative tool to evaluate the proposed development (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The strongest section of the farmstead is the linear outbuilding connected to the main farmhouse through a linear store.</td>
<td>The re-use of existing farm buildings, provides an opportunity for sustainable development in the countryside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The outbuildings were surveyed to be in a suitable condition for conversion.

It was discussed on-site the agricultural outbuilding at the rear could be upgraded to provide garaging / storage facilities.

As part of the conversion scheme there is also an opportunity to demolish the existing modern agricultural buildings and replace them with a more sympathetic traditional barn reconstruction. This opportunity would provide a visual enhancement and result in betterment in design that visually improves the farmsteads setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was observed during the site visit that the farmhouse has been heavily modified and altered. The farmhouse includes a single storey rear extension weak in design.</td>
<td>The LPA would not support conversion of the rear barn into a dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another weak area in the farm complex is the presence of large modern agricultural buildings with an industrial style and bulky visual appearance.</td>
<td>Ecological considerations were highlighted as a possible constraint during the site visit due to work on traditional agricultural buildings, the presence of ponds and dense woodland in the immediate surrounding area. Therefore, the LPA have advised that any application would require the submission of a protected species report to ensure that the conversion scheme would not have a detrimental impact upon any protected species currently present in the buildings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1** – SWOT analysis of the proposed development
3 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section sets out the rationale which has informed the design and layout of the conversion scheme. It considers the inherent and underlying characteristics of the site and how these should shape and structure the development. Overlying this, the process considers the extent of development.

3.2 The proposed scheme

3.2.1 The proposal is for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings into residential units. The conversion of the existing farmstead buildings within this development will create four residential units which will each have garaging or storage space.

3.3 Use

3.3.1 This planning application therefore seeks the change of use of the existing buildings and land within its curtilage from use as agricultural to residential dwellinghouses.

3.4 Amount of development

3.4.1 The cumulative floor space of the existing outbuildings to be converted into residential use totals 350 square metres. As demonstrated in the Planning Supporting Statement, this element of the proposed scheme can be construed as Permitted Development with the amount of area falling under the PD threshold of 450 square metres.
3.4.2 The size of the outbuildings would allow for three residential units an optimum amount without affecting the traditional character of the buildings as well as ensuring sufficient amenity space is provided as part of the scheme.

3.4.3 Since receiving pre-application advice from ESBC the amount of barns to be converted into residential use has been significantly reduced. The applicant has reduced the amount of development that is physically possible in this developed, development plot. The rear barn is now going to be converted to garages rather than a residential unit. It should also be noted that the application does not include reconstruction of the demolished barns at the rear (marked by the concrete barn plinths) in accordance with LPA advice.

3.4.4 The amount of new build proposed is minimal, not extensive. In fact there would be a reduction in the footprint with the demolition of the existing livestock buildings and replacement with the new build element.

3.4.5 Overall, the amount of development is not considered extensive but suitable for the site.

3.5 Layout

3.5.1 The proposed site plan shows the layout of the site. The general arrangement of the outbuildings remains the same, albeit the two livestock buildings will be replaced with a smaller scale and more sympathetically reconstructed, new build element that retains a ‘U’ shaped courtyard arrangement. The creation of a new access and the reinstatement of the existing access are critical to the way in which the buildings and spaces in and around the site work together. The new access arrangement allows for the closure of the existing access point, which in turns allows the existing concrete yard to be turned into formal garden spaces to provide adequate amenity space for the residential units.

3.5.2 This addresses a concern expressed in the pre-app comments. The relationship between the existing dwelling and the new dwelling can be defined through the closure and reinstatement of the existing access to the farmhouse as this allows for each dwelling to benefit from private amenity space. The driveway and paved yard would be separated from the residential units through a new brick wall creating private garden space to the farmhouse. The re-arrangement of entrance points can explain how the site is laid out,
and the rationale behind closure, reinstatement, and creation of new entrances to ensure adequate amenity space is provided.

3.5.3 Careful consideration has been given to the layout of windows and the internal arrangement of rooms in the converted barns. This level of detail shows a full appreciation towards the workings of the site.

3.6 Scale

3.6.1 The size of the outbuildings would not be increased. The new build element will be single storey in height to be subservient to the main existing barn it would be attached to.

3.7 Appearance

3.7.1 Principally, the proposal is to use a vernacular design that respects the local distinctiveness and historic character of the farmstead. In order to examine the visual appearance the proposal has been broken down into its elements.

No. 1A & No. 1B

3.7.2 Starting with the strongest, most traditional architectural element (No. 1A and 1B). To retain the character and architectural integrity of the most characteristic rural outbuilding on this site, alterations to the existing fabric are to be kept to a minimum. To retain its simplistic character, the proposed alterations on the front and rear elevations are considered to be minimal.

3.7.3 The proposed fenestration details for this element of the scheme make use of existing openings and utilise the scale of these openings appropriately. Every effort has been made to ensure that new openings are only inserted into the fabric of the building only when it’s necessary to facilitate the new use.

3.7.4 A limited number of new openings are proposed on the most traditional outbuilding. This includes the insertion of a new door opening on the front elevation and two new first floor windows. The window openings match the style, the size and proportions of those on the original building. Therefore the new window details and materials are consistent with the existing building. These limited numbers of new openings are required to facilitate a sensitive conversion.
3.7.5 The existing window openings and details with stone lintels and stone cills are to be retained on the South East elevation. The two new window openings will match existing in terms of design and appearance thereby preserving the rural character and appearance.

3.7.6 Where existing openings are to be closed or glazed, these features have been treated in such a manner that the full extent of the original opening retains its identity. This is demonstrated on the proposed rear elevation, where fixed doors are to be retained with infill wall behind. Whilst there are no door openings on the rear elevation, the elevation will retain its existing architectural appearance through the use of dummy doors and therefore does not lose its identity. Timber vertical boarding with a semi circular, high level window will replace the barn doors allowing light to enter the habitable room. This architectural feature is commonly used on barn conversions and the material treatment is considered to be sympathetic.

Figure 3 – photo showing the existing linear outbuilding

3.7.7 Existing openings make appropriate use of full height glazing units. Architecturally full height glazing units can provide an interesting design feature with a nice visual contrast between new and old. Glazing is particularly good at emphasising old materials. It also allows light to penetrate into the building. Full height glazing with a strong vertical emphasis is the most appropriate method of treatment for large openings. The glazing units on the north east and south west elevation are therefore considered to comply with advice given in the SPD.
3.7.8 Four sets of roof lights will be inserted on the roof plane of unit 1 b. The proposed roof lights will have a black finish and be fitted with outer faces flush with the plane of the roof.

3.7.9 A matt black metal flue pipe and cowl would also be in keeping with the traditional character of agricultural buildings situated in discrete locations on the roof plane. A cross shaped plaque is another feature that would be included on the front elevation.

3.7.10 In summary the proposal for No. 1A & 1B involves retention and preservation of existing openings and features in line with the SPD.

No. 2 (L-shaped barn) & No. 3 (new build replica barn style design)

3.7.12 The original plans for this element of the proposal involved incorporating car ports into the fabric of the outbuilding. This would have resulted in significant alterations and extensive amount of openings. The client was advised to re-design this section of the proposal to include further living floorspace. Further covered car parking space could be provided through conversion of rear barn into garages.

3.7.13 The insertion of windows and doors on the front elevation of the existing L-shaped barn utilises the existing openings. Only one new window will be inserted into the existing fabric of the outbuilding. Fenestration details are simple, in keeping with the character of the rural building. The Duchy of Lancaster pediment provides the building with a place identify and also forms a unique, visually interesting architectural feature, which would be retained on the projecting gable as part of the refurbishment.

3.7.14 The proposed reconstructed barn has a hipped roof design. It forms an L-shaped extension, extending out the same distance as the traditional barn it adjoins. Together these two elements form a ‘U’ shaped arrangement that respects the historic character of the farmstead.

3.7.15 With regards to the proposed materials, features and details, the proposed use of materials to match as close as possible to blend into the characteristics of the existing barns respecting local vernacular. The fenestration details on the roadside elevation
include barn air vent slits. Such architectural features provide character and visual interest on traditional rural buildings.

3.7.16 The rear elevation of the adjoining new build and existing barn, includes new windows and door openings, acceptable under the new permitted development rights for barn conversions. The fenestration details remain simple. The use of vertical timber boarding around the windows gives an acceptable visual appearance similar to the recently converted barns at Hanbury Grange.

3.7.17 In summary, the design of the new build replica barn reinforces local distinctiveness. It’s been proper to ensure the new build element reinforces the local vernacular due to its sitting within street view. Through its sympathetic design the new build element would blend in with the old barns. The design is therefore considered to be in keeping with the character of the rural area.

**Visual enhancement**

3.7.18 Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built environment; this includes replacing poor design with better design. The visual appearance of the new build element that reflects a traditional style outbuilding is considered to provide a visual enhancement to the immediate Farmstead setting. The proposal involves demolition of the two bulky sheds, which have no local characteristics, in contrast to traditional farmsteads. A sympathetically designed, re-constructed barn element traditional in its design principles provides betterment and a planning gain since it replaces a dilapidated, ever increasingly overgrown and industrial style farm building.
Figure 5 – Photo of the existing agricultural building worn out in appearance with overgrown vegetation

Garage design

3.7.19 The building surveyor has highlighted that the barn at the back of the site is of a pre-cast concrete portal frame construction. A structural solution to maintain a stable and safe building is possible. The fairly shallow pitched roof of the barn is presently covered with corrugated cement sheets and double roof light sheets incorporated into the roof slope on both sides.

3.7.20 Whilst it would be preferable to use plain clay tiles, structurally this is problematic and not feasible. The pre-cast concrete and steel framed barn is not designed to support loads from a clay tiled roof, additionally the roof pitch is too shallow for traditional plain clay tiles. It is therefore proposed that the re-roofing of the rear barn includes new corrugated fibre cement sheets of slate blue grey colour (to match the blue plain clay tiles on the other traditional brick buildings). New roof-light sheets would also be inserted to match existing appearance. This is seen to be an improvement to the buildings existing roof.
3.8 Landscaping

3.8.1 A landscape proposal is shown on the site plan. Due to the site's location in countryside and the National Forest, tree planting is proposed within the curtilage and along the boundaries. Existing hedgerow and tree cover around the boundary of the site under the ownership of the applicant will be retained. The new tree planting would therefore enhance the existing screening to the site. The proposed landscaping scheme has involved a careful selection of both hard and soft landscape treatments that are considered sympathetic to its rural location (for more details see Planning Supporting Statement).

3.9 Access and circulation

3.9.1 Staffordshire County Council Highways Authority was consulted at the pre-application stage. No objections were raised in the email response from SCC Highways Authority dated 07/05/2014.

3.9.2 The existing access point to the outbuildings would be closed off and re-landscaped to blend in with its surroundings. This application seeks approval for a new vehicular access point in the north section of the development site. This new access point would serve no. 1a, 1b, 2 and 3.

3.9.3 The internal layout of the site includes turning heads and off road car parking spaces. It would improve access and manoeuvrability for vehicles around the development. All vehicles entering and leaving the site should be able to easily access and manoeuvre around the site from this new access point.
3.9.4 The exiting access to the farmhouse would also be reinstated. Visibility remains good in both directions and locations. Alterations to the access arrangements and circulation within the site remain satisfactory, and therefore not considered to compromise the safety and efficient use of the highways network. The access roads can accommodate traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development in terms of number, size and type of vehicles.

3.9.5 The proposed development provides for adequate access for drivers, servicing and parking arrangements.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support the full planning application for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses, including the change of use of land (including land within the curtilage) on land at Parsons Brake Farm, Hanbury, Staffordshire. It details the design process that the scheme has gone through during its preparation and the design principles adopted. Overall it can be concluded that the design of the proposed barn conversion and associated elements are in keeping with the character of the existing farmstead, preserves the character of the surrounding area, with no visual impact or harm on the character or appearance of the countryside. The new access arrangement is designed to ensure highway safety is maintained. This DAS should be read alongside the Planning Supporting Statement.
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