

**Change of Use of land from agricultural to domestic curtilage,
improvement to access, provision of parking / turning area, and
construction of garage.**

Far End Cottage, Elnor Lane, Whaley Bridge for Mr. M. Shuker

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Background to the application and relevant Planning Policies

The application site, Far End Cottage is located on Elnor Lane some 2.5 km to the south-east of Whaley Bridge Town Centre, and approximately half way between the Built-Up Area Boundary of Whaley Bridge and the village of Fernilee. The cottage is situated just south of Elnor Lane Farm which is also owned and run by the applicant and his family. Being outside of the BUAB, the site lies within the open countryside, within the designated Special Landscape Area.

Far End Cottage comprises a two-storey, four-bedroomed dwellinghouse located in close proximity to the highway. The property is bounded along its entire frontage by a dry gritstone wall, which is less than 1 metre in height, and which forms part of a continuation of field boundary walls along this section of Elnor Lane.

There is an integral single garage located on the north side of the property. Additionally there is a further single parking space to the front of the garage, but the property currently lacks the benefit of on-site turning facilities. This results in the situation where 2 no. vehicles have to park in-line, and it is necessary for vehicles to either reverse into or reverse out of the access onto the highway. The existing vehicular access serving the property is 2.7 metres wide, and constructed at an angle to the adjacent highway. It is also located close to a brow in the hill which severely limits visibility to only 26 metres in the critical northerly direction. The carriageway at this point is only some 4 metres wide. Therefore, to reverse either into or out of the access is a dangerous manoeuvre, and for this reason, it is proposed to create an improved access with a garage and parking / turning area on land in the ownership of the applicant, on the south side of the cottage, where there is increased visibility.

The area subject to this Change of Use application currently forms the lower part of a grass paddock, separated from the field by a stockproof post and rail timber fence. The application site has an average width of 9.3 metres and extends to 20 metres in length. There is an existing field gate giving access directly onto Elnor Lane

As the site is located within the open Countryside and the Special Landscape Area, Policies OC1, OC3, OC4, H14 and TR5 of the High Peak Local Plan (Saved Policies) 2008 are applicable.

Policy OC1 aims to protect the countryside for its' own sake and to direct most new development to existing built-up areas. However, certain forms of development, which are an integral part of the rural economy are acceptable. Whilst most forms of development of an urban character, will normally be resisted in the countryside, the policy does make provision for agricultural developments, farm diversification schemes, recreation and tourism facilities, and small-scale extensions to existing development.

Policy OC3 relating to development within the Special Landscape Area, aims to resist new development or major extensions to existing development unless it can be shown to be essential in its' proposed location or would enhance the character of the area. Where development is permitted within the Special Landscape Area, it will be required to have special regard to the landscape quality of the area in relation to siting, design and landscaping.

Policy OC4 relates to Landscape Character and Design. Where development is considered appropriate in the countryside, as defined in policies OC1 and OC3, it will be required to be of an appropriate design which complements and relates to the particular type of landscape in which it is located. It will be necessary to have regard to and conserve (amongst other factors) the landform, and the scale, layout, design and detailing of vernacular buildings.

Policy H14 relates to domestic extensions and ancillary buildings, which would include garages. The design of the ancillary building should reflect the character of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. The materials of construction and design and external appearance of the new building should blend with the original, and the scale of the outbuilding should not be disproportionate to the original dwelling. There would need to be an adequate level of amenity and privacy afforded to any neighbouring properties, and it will be essential to provide adequate car parking and turning space in accordance with adopted guidelines.

Policy TR5 refers to Access, Parking and Design, and aims to ensure that new development makes safe and appropriate provision for access and egress for all modes of transport including the private car. Such development should include a high standard of design and layout having regard to the parking, access, manoeuvring and highway guidelines set out in Appendix 1 (Parking Standards) of the Local Plan.

It is acknowledged that the development currently proposed, relates to an extension of a domestic use onto adjoining agricultural land of recognised landscape importance. Notwithstanding this, the development proposed should be viewed as having very special circumstances, in that approval of the submitted scheme would provide a significant improvement to highway safety.

Access

The application site is located on a section of Elnor Lane which is particularly narrow in width. Considerable stretches of the lane are single-track only, with the addition of a limited number of passing places. Not only is the road particularly narrow, but it is also tortuous in both vertical and horizontal alignment. Nevertheless, this section of the road is de-restricted, and as such subject to the maximum speed limit of 60 mph. Furthermore, Elnor Lane is a well-trafficked highway, much beyond its' realistic capability, as it serves as a short-cut or "rat-run" for drivers wishing to avoid Whaley Bridge Town Centre, and particularly the traffic lights at Horwich End.

The current access to the property is clearly substandard in terms of highway safety. The position of the narrow gateway, in close proximity to the brow of the hill, gives extremely limited visibility from the north, only 26 metres from the Whaley Bridge direction. This is exacerbated further by the existing angle of the access onto the adopted highway, and the fact that it is necessary to reverse vehicles either into or out of the site. Whilst it is accepted that on-site turning space could be provide within the existing garden area to the north side of the cottage, this would not provide any improvement to visibility due to the close proximity of the brow of the hill. In order to provide a substantial overall improvement to highway safety, it is proposed to create a new domestic access into the adjoining paddock on the south side of the property, by utilising an existing field gate and creating additional parking and turning facilities, and also to construct a detached double garage, as part of an overall Change of Use of the land.

Far End Cottage comprises a four-bedroomed dwelling, and as such the guidelines within Appendix 1 of the High Peak Local Plan recommend a maximum of 3 parking spaces for a dwelling of this size. Currently, the property benefits from only 2 no. on-site parking spaces, these being in-line. However, the property is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Shuker and their grown-up family, who own 4 no. cars in total. Currently it is necessary to park 2 no. of those vehicles within the lay-by area outside of the cottage. The lay-by is only 2.2 metres in width and although this appears as part of the carriageway, it is actually within the ownership of the applicants.

The proposed scheme would thus significantly improve highway safety by providing not only improved visibility, and on-site turning facilities, but also prevent the need for parking adjacent to the carriageway on a single-track lane. A further advantage is that the lay-by could then function as a passing place on the narrow lane.

A vehicular gateway some 2.7m wide, and set back 2.2 metres from the carriageway edge, would be splayed giving increased visibility of 42 metres in the critical northerly direction. Visibility would be further improved by the removal of vegetation within the existing garden area, on the north side of the

cottage, adjacent to the road boundary wall. This would not, however, involve the removal of any significant trees.

The garage would be approached by a new driveway, some 3 metres in width, which would additionally incorporate a turning head 3m x 4m to the front of the building, thus facilitating access and egress to the property in a forward gear, and of great benefit to highway safety.

Design

The cottage is constructed of natural gritstone to the walls, and natural blue slate to the roof. The current scheme proposes to erect a detached garage 6m wide x 6m deep x 3.65m high, in the croft to the south side of the dwelling. The garage would be constructed of an oak framework and walls, with a natural blue slate roof, which would match the roofing materials of the dwellinghouse.

The garage would be open-fronted on the elevation facing the roadside, with a double width entrance doorway with a dividing central supporting post. The roof of the garage would be dual-pitched, with the rear section of the building having the appearance of a lean-to extension.

The garage would be sited some 5.5 metres away from the dwellinghouse. As it would be constructed on a sloping site, and in order to minimise the visual impact of the building within the landscape, it is proposed to excavate the site, and build the garage into the slope. This would involve the construction of a retaining wall around the side and rear elevations of the garage. The retaining wall would have a maximum height of 1.4 metres, and be faced with dry natural gritstone to match the adjacent field boundary structures.

It is proposed to construct a new dry gritstone wall along the eastern boundary of the application site, to separate the proposed extended residential curtilage from the adjoining agricultural land. Additionally, it is proposed that in order to screen the site and to further assimilate the new garage into the landscape, a tree planting scheme of native species would be implemented along the southern boundary of the site, following the existing fence-line.

By constructing the building into the existing landform, the garage would be incorporated into the topography of the site and be readily assimilated into the landscape, and as such comply with the provisions of Policies OC1, OC3 and OC4 of the High Peak Local Plan. The visual impact of the development would be further reduced by the implementation of the proposed landscaping and tree planting.

Conclusion

The development as proposed, to Change the Use of part of an existing paddock adjacent to Far End Cottage to form an extended residential curtilage, is required solely for the purposes of improving the current

substandard access and parking facilities at the property. This would be achieved by repositioning the access further to the south of the existing, thus providing increased visibility at the point of access. The provision of on-site parking and turning facilities and the construction of a double garage on land adjoining the dwelling, would enable the applicant and his family to park all their vehicles off the highway, and to enter and exit the site in a forward gear. The necessity to reverse into or out of the existing severely restricted access will be avoided, and as such the proposed scheme will be of overall benefit, improving safety for all users of the adjacent highway.

On this basis, the improvement to highway safety provides very exceptional circumstances to restrictive planning policies regarding residential development within the Special Landscape Area, and provides justification for approval of the proposed development.