

Proposed vehicular access at Hillside Farm, Dolly Lane, Buxworth

For Mr. M. Wheelton

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The application site

Hillside Farm is located on Dolly Lane approximately 0.6 km north of the junction of Dolly Lane with Brierley Green, Buxworth. The farmhouse forms one of a small collection of properties along with Ancoats Cottage, Hillside Barn, which has an extant planning consent for conversion, and the adjacent cattery premises. The farm is essentially a smallholding of limited acreage, with the main agricultural activity being the grazing of sheep.

The barn at Hillside Farm was granted planning consent for conversion to residential use including the construction of a side extension, in August 1989 under planning application no.028347. Work commenced on the conversion scheme in July 1994, when the foundations for the side extension were put in place up to damp-proof course level; these being inspected and approved under the Building Regulations. Since that time no further work has been carried out on the barn, but as the development was commenced, the planning consent remains extant.

The existing original vehicular access to the farm lies on the western side of Ancoats Cottage, and currently serves the farmhouse, the barn and the farm buildings. However, the access appears severely sub-standard, being narrow in width and constrained by the domestic garage of Ancoats Cottage on the eastern side, whilst visibility to the west is compromised by a neighbours boundary wall over 1 metre in height. The existing access is located on the brow of a hill, close to a junction on the lane, with extremely limited visibility in both directions.

The original owners of the farm have now sadly passed away, and the property has been left to their son and daughter. It is now proposed that work on the barn will be completed for occupation by their daughter, whilst the ownership of the farmhouse has transferred to their son.

In order that Hillside Farmhouse and Hillside Barn may be separated into different ownerships, and additionally in the interests of improved highway safety, it is now proposed to construct a new vehicular access onto Dolly Lane at a point to the south-eastern side of the Farmhouse.

Relevant Planning Policies

As the site is located within the open Countryside, the designated Green Belt and the Special Landscape Area, Policies OC1, OC2, OC3, OC4 and TR5 of the High Peak

Local Plan (Saved Policies) 2008 are applicable. Additionally, Policies TR13 and TR14 relating to Long-Distance Trails are also relevant, as Dolly Lane forms part of the Pennine Cycleway.

Policy OC1 relating to Countryside, 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 (as in this case).

Policy OC2 relates to Green Belt Development and as such restricts inappropriate new development unless there are very special circumstances. Acceptable development would include agriculture and forestry, recreational facilities, and limited extensions or alterations to existing dwellings.

Policy OC3 relating to development within the Special Landscape Area, aims to resist new 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 to conserve (amongst other factors) the landform, and the scale, layout, design and detailing of vernacular buildings.

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.

Policy TR13 relates to Long-Distance Trails and Local Trails, and makes provision for improvement to these strategic routes.

Policy TR14 relates to the Protection and Construction of Trails, and allows for consent to be granted where development will not unduly obstruct or prejudice the enjoyment of trails due to its' use, siting, scale, design, external appearance, boundary treatment or environmental effects.

Access

The application site is located on a section of Dolly Lane which is narrow in width, with considerable lengths of the lane being single-track only. Not only is the road particularly narrow, but it is also tortuous in both vertical and horizontal alignment. The road is de-restricted, and as such subject to the maximum speed limit of 60 mph, although the reality is that due to the nature of the road, traffic is travelling at much slower speeds.

The proposed new access would be located some 35 metres to the south-east of the farmhouse, at a point on Dolly Lane where there is significantly improved visibility in both directions, and away from the brow of the hill and the junction. The new access would be 8 metres in width, and would have clear visibility in an uphill direction of over 60 metres, and clear visibility downhill of over 85 metres, taken from a centre point of the opening, 2.4 metres back from the edge of the carriageway.

A site meeting was held on 15 January 2012 with the Area Highway Engineer, Mr. Ian Turkington, who advised that in his opinion, the proposed access was likely to be acceptable from a highway safety point of view. He advised that the recommended distance for visibility splays on a de-restricted road of this nature is 87 metres, from a central point 2.4 m. back from the edge of the carriageway. This would be achieved in a south-easterly direction. Although visibility to the north-west falls short of this recommended distance, in this case traffic approaching from that direction is travelling at significantly slower speeds due to the curvature of the road near the brow of the hill, and as such visibility of 60 metres should be regarded as adequate. Additionally, as part of the proposed new access, the existing highway verge would be battered back to facilitate the required visibility splays.

There is currently a sloping 2 metre-wide verge along the south-western side of the carriageway of Dolly Lane in this location, upon which are a number of trees and shrubs. However, the trees are in poor condition, and have been earmarked for removal by the County Highways Authority as they overhand the carriageway, and as such currently form a hazard.

The finished surface of the proposed new access would be tarmacadam for a distance of 6 metres back from the carriageway. However, the parking and turning area would be finished with rolled stone hardcore

The current access to the property is clearly substandard in terms of highway safety, and the scheme now submitted would significantly improve highway safety by providing improved visibility and on-site turning facilities, and as such would comply with Policy TR5. The development would also provide improved safety for cyclists using the adjacent Pennine Cycleway along Dolly Lane, and therefore additionally comply with Policies TR13 and TR14.

Design

The site is located within the designated Countryside, Green Belt and Special Landscape Area. However, the new access, together with the associated parking and turning area, would be located on land within the curtilage of the farmhouse. There is currently a walled garden directly on the eastern side of the house, with a further area known as the Cherry Orchard, and a second walled vegetable garden. The works required for the formation of the access would be undertaken within the Cherry Orchard, and therefore would not impinge into the field onto the adjacent agricultural land.

Due to the topography of the land, the construction of the access would require some fairly significant engineering works in order to obtain acceptable gradients. It would be necessary for a curved retaining wall 800mm high to be constructed either side of the point of access. The existing boundary structure between the garden and the highway will be reinstated, and additional hedging will be planted along the boundary. Whilst it is acknowledged that the engineering works required to facilitate the proposed development will have a visual impact for users of the lane, this will be minimised as far as possible by screening along the top of the bank which forms the roadside boundary. Furthermore, the vast improvement to highway safety by the improved visibility, would amount to very special circumstances, and as such should render the proposal acceptable.

Being within the established residential curtilage of the farmhouse, the formation of a new domestic access should be acceptable in principle, subject to other material considerations such as highway safety and visual amenity. The design of the proposed access is such that it will be incorporated into the topography of the site, and integrated sympathetically into the landscape, thus minimising any impact on the visual amenities of the area. As such, the development would not detract from the character of the Countryside or the Special Landscape Area.

The existing topography together with extensive tree cover along both sides of Dolly Lane for the majority of its' length from Brierley Green to the application site, will limit the visibility of the site from long-distance viewpoints on the south side of the Black Brook Valley.

The development as proposed therefore, will comply with the provisions of Policies OC1, OC2, OC3 and OC4 of the High Peak Local Plan.

Conclusion

The development as proposed is required solely for the purposes of improving the current substandard access and parking facilities at the property. This would be achieved by creating a new vehicular opening further to the south-east of the existing, thus providing increased visibility at the point of access. This, together with

the provision of on-site parking and turning facilities within the proposed scheme, will be of overall benefit, improving safety for all users of the adjacent highway.

On this basis, whilst acknowledging that the site lies within the Countryside, Green Belt and Special Landscape Area, the significant improvement to highway safety provides justification for approving the proposed development.