Planning Statement

Smelt Farm

Denbighshire | EHPI Group, Irish Square, St Asaph, LL17 0RN

55 Well Street, Ruthin, Denbighshire, LL15 1AF

| 0174 579 8500

Proposed Conversion of Agricultural Outbuilding to a Dwelling - Smelt Farm, Ffrwd Road, Ffrith, Wrexham

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the conversion of an existing redundant agricultural outbuilding at Smelt Farm, Ffrwd Road, Ffrith, near Wrexham, to form a single residential dwelling.

Although a formal Design and Access Statement is not strictly required for a change of use and conversion of this nature, this document has been prepared to accompany the application in order to explain the background to the proposal, describe the site and its context, and demonstrate how the development accords with national and local planning policy. The statement has been informed by the principles set out in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11), Technical Advice Note 6 (Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities), Technical Advice Note 12 (Design), and the relevant policies of Wrexham County Borough Council.

The proposal seeks to secure the long-term future of a redundant rural building through sensitive conversion, avoiding the need for new build development in the open countryside. The approach reflects Welsh Government objectives to promote sustainable development, make efficient use of existing resources, and protect the character and appearance of rural areas.

Site Location and Description

Smelt Farm is located on Ffrwd Road, also known locally as Minera Road, in a rural area to the south-west of Wrexham. The site lies outside any defined settlement boundary and is therefore situated within the open countryside as identified by the Wrexham Local Development Plan.

The surrounding area is characterised by agricultural land, small farmsteads and sporadic residential properties. Development in the locality is generally low density and reflects the historic agricultural use of the land, with buildings arranged around traditional farmyards rather than along formal streets.

The wider farm complex comprises a modern farmhouse, constructed in the latter part of the twentieth century, together with a number of former agricultural buildings. These include a single-storey brick-built shippon with an attached former dairy, which forms the subject of this application, along with a Dutch barn, a piggery and a separate storage building. All of the buildings are arranged broadly parallel to the highway and are set back from the carriageway at varying distances.

The application building is of simple agricultural form and construction, with solid brick external walls and a corrugated asbestos and steel sheet roof. Although the building has not been in agricultural use for some time, it remains structurally sound and is well suited to conversion without the need for substantial rebuilding.

Access and Highways

Vehicular access to Smelt Farm is taken from Ffrwd Road via existing access points that have historically served the farm. When the holding was operated as a working dairy, these accesses accommodated regular movements by farm vehicles, agricultural machinery and milk collection lorries without difficulty or recorded highway safety issues.

Since the cessation of agricultural operations, traffic movements to and from the site have reduced significantly. The proposed conversion to a single dwelling would generate a modest level of traffic that would be well below historic levels. As such, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any adverse impact on highway safety or the free flow of traffic along Ffrwd Road.

Adequate space exists within the former farmyard to provide off-road parking and turning facilities, ensuring that vehicles can enter and leave the site safely in a forward gear.

Site History and Background

Smelt Farm was formerly a small family-run agricultural holding with approximately forty acres of associated land. The farm operated primarily as a dairy, with the shippon and attached dairy forming an integral part of that use. The dairy also served as the base for a local milk delivery service run by the applicant's father.

Following the decline of small-scale dairy farming and subsequent personal circumstances, agricultural activity at the site gradually ceased in approximately 20**, and the farm buildings became surplus to requirements. The applicant's father sadly passed away in ****, marking the end of the farm's long-standing dairy operation.

The farmhouse is now occupied by the applicants, who are employed full time in non-agricultural occupations. Despite the redundancy of the outbuildings, the applicants have continued to maintain the site responsibly, ensuring that buildings, boundary treatments, hedgerows, fences and watercourses are kept in good order.

The proposed conversion represents a natural and logical progression in the life of the site, allowing an existing building to be brought back into productive use while maintaining the rural character of the farmstead.

Heritage and Planning Designations

There are no listed buildings on the application site or within its immediate surroundings. The site does not lie within a Conservation Area, nor is it subject to any specific heritage or landscape designation.

While the building is not an example of high-quality vernacular architecture, it is a recognisable component of the historic farm complex and contributes to the established rural character of the area. Its retention and conversion are therefore preferable to neglect or demolition, in accordance with the objectives of national planning policy.

Planning Policy Context

National planning policy in Wales, as set out in Planning Policy Wales, strongly supports the principles of sustainable development and the re-use of existing buildings, particularly in rural areas. The Welsh Government recognises that the conversion of suitable rural buildings can make an important contribution to housing supply while reducing pressure for new development in the countryside.

Technical Advice Note 6 emphasises that local planning authorities should support the re-use of existing rural buildings where they are no longer required for employment or agricultural purposes, provided that the conversion is sympathetic in scale and design and does not give rise to unacceptable impacts.

Technical Advice Note 12 highlights the importance of good design, stating that development should respond positively to local context, respect existing building forms, and enhance the quality of the built environment.

At the local level, the Wrexham Local Development Plan supports the conversion of rural buildings to residential use where they are structurally sound, capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding, and where the proposal respects the character of the countryside and the original building. The Plan also seeks to ensure that such developments do not result in isolated or sporadic new housing that would undermine rural character.

The proposed development has been carefully designed to meet these policy objectives and is considered to accord fully with both national and local planning guidance.

The Proposed Development

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use, repair and conversion of the existing redundant shippon and former dairy to form a single dwelling. No extension of the building footprint is proposed, and the development would be contained entirely within the envelope of the existing structure.

The building is not considered suitable for alternative commercial or employment uses due to its relatively remote location, limited access potential and close relationship with the existing farmhouse. Residential use is therefore considered to be the most appropriate and sustainable option, ensuring the long-term future of the building.

The design approach has been informed by a desire to work with the existing structure, making only those alterations necessary to achieve a viable and comfortable dwelling while retaining the agricultural character of the building.

Layout, Scale and Design

As the proposal involves the conversion of an existing building, the siting and footprint will remain unchanged. The overall scale and form of the building will therefore continue to reflect its original agricultural use.

In order to achieve practical internal accommodation and acceptable ceiling heights at first-floor level, it is necessary to raise the ridge height of the roof. This increase has been carefully assessed in relation to the surrounding context. The resulting ridge height will not exceed that of the adjacent farmhouse, and due to the lie of the land and existing screening, it will not appear visually dominant or intrusive when viewed from the public highway.

A modest raised patio area is proposed to the rear of the building to provide private amenity space for future occupants. This area has been designed to integrate with the existing ground levels and will also perform a structural function in supporting the rear wall of the building.

Structural Considerations

The building has been assessed and is considered to be structurally sound, capable of conversion without the need for major demolition or reconstruction. The external walls and foundations are robust and suitable for reuse.

Some historic cracking has been identified in the rear retaining wall, likely as a result of changes in ground levels over time. This will be addressed through appropriate structural measures, including

buttressing, which will be incorporated into the design of the rear patio. This approach allows the necessary structural support to be provided in a manner that is both functional and visually discreet.

Appearance and Materials

The existing corrugated asbestos and steel roof is no longer suitable and will be removed in its entirety. The replacement roof will be finished in natural Welsh slate, laid to an appropriate pitch with traditional ridge detailing. This material choice reflects local building traditions and will significantly enhance the appearance of the building.

The introduction of a limited number of conservation-style rooflights is proposed to provide natural light to the internal spaces. These will be modest in size, carefully positioned and proportionate to the scale of the roof.

The external walls are constructed in mixed brickwork of varying quality. Given the random nature of the brickwork, it is proposed to apply a white painted sand and cement render. This finish is typical of converted rural buildings in the area and will provide a cohesive and visually attractive appearance.

Existing openings that have been blocked up will be reinstated where appropriate, while some enlarged openings will be reduced in size to achieve a more balanced elevation. Any new openings will be kept to a minimum and will be predominantly located on the rear elevation, thereby minimising any impact on the street scene.

Windows will be timber-framed, double-glazed units with traditional proportions and detailing. They will be set back within the reveals and finished with tiled sills. Doors will also be timber, suitably insulated and painted to match the window joinery.

Landscaping and External Works

The proposal includes the removal of a number of redundant structures within the former farmyard, including the Dutch barn and the brick-built storage shed. Their demolition will reduce visual clutter and improve the overall appearance of the site.

The piggery may be retained and repaired, subject to practical considerations, preserving an element of the site's agricultural history.

The immediate area around the converted dwelling will be landscaped with topsoil and grassed to form a modest private garden area. The residential curtilage will be kept deliberately small and confined to the former farmyard, ensuring that the development does not encroach into the surrounding open countryside.

Access, Parking and Accessibility

Vehicular and pedestrian access will continue to be taken from the existing access points onto Ffrwd Road. Internal access will utilise the existing concrete hardstanding areas.

Parking provision for four vehicles will be provided within the site, sufficient to meet the needs of the dwelling and visitors without detracting from the rural character of the site.

The site is relatively level, and access to the dwelling will be designed to accord with the principles set out in Approved Document M of the Building Regulations, ensuring safe and convenient access.

Sustainability and Drainage

The proposed conversion represents a sustainable form of development through the reuse of an existing building and the avoidance of unnecessary new construction. The dwelling will incorporate high levels of insulation to floors, walls and roof, exceeding minimum building regulation standards where practicable.

The use of renewable or low-carbon heating technologies, such as ground-source or air-source heat pumps, will be explored as part of the detailed design. Materials will be sourced locally wherever possible, supporting the local economy and reducing the environmental impact associated with transportation.

Foul drainage will be served by a small private treatment works, designed and installed in accordance with current regulations.

Refuse and Recycling

Refuse and recycling storage will be provided within the curtilage of the dwelling in a discreet screened area. Collection will be in accordance with Wrexham County Borough Council's established door-to-door collection system.

Conclusion

The proposed conversion of the redundant agricultural outbuilding at Smelt Farm represents a sustainable and sympathetic form of development that is fully consistent with national and local planning policy.

The proposal will secure the long-term future of an existing rural building, enhance the appearance of the site, and provide a high-quality dwelling without causing harm to the character of the countryside or the amenity of neighbouring properties.

It is considered that the development accords with the objectives of Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Notes 6 and 12, and the policies of Wrexham County Borough Council. Planning permission is therefore respectfully requested.

Denbighshire | EHPI Group, Irish Square, St Asaph, LL17 0RN

55 Well Street, Ruthin, Denbighshire, LL15 1AF

| 0174 579 8500

www.clwydianplanning.co.uk