

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**

**11 August 2022**

Application No:	SMD/2022/0230	
Location	Wildwood, Farley Lane, Farley	
Proposal	Eco House Replacement Dwelling (Revised Scheme)	
Applicant	Mr & Mrs C Green	
Agent	Miss Kate Walker, Hewitt & Carr Architects	
Parish/ward	Farley	Date registered: 26/04/2022
If you have a question about this report please contact: Chris Johnston, tel: 01538 395400 ext. 4123 email: <a href="mailto:Christopher.johnston@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk">Christopher.johnston@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk</a>		

## **REFERRAL**

The application has been called into Committee by Cllr Plimley to consider whether the carbon efficiencies of the development outweigh the design concerns surrounding whether the materials are in-keeping with the character of the area.

### **1. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION**

<b>REFUSE</b>
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### **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS**

2.1 The application site comprises a detached bungalow constructed circa 1950s. It is built of part render, part buff brick and part reconstituted stone, with a concrete tiled pitched roof.

2.2 The dwellinghouse is located on the southwestern side of Farley Lane, in an isolated position surrounded by farmland to the west and south and woodland to the north and east. Farley Lane bounds the site to the east.

2.3 The dwellinghouse is accessed via a short driveway off Farley Lane. It is prominent when travelling along Farley Lane in a northwesterly direction away from Alton, but is screened when travelling in a southeasterly direction towards Alton. To the northwest of the dwellinghouse are agricultural buildings owned by the applicants.

2.4 To the southeast of the application site are a number of Grade II Listed Buildings comprising the Tudor Lodge, Alton Station waiting room, the former stationmaster's house and a railway bridge and steps. The Grade I Registered Park and Garden, Alton Towers Park, is located on the opposite side of Farley Lane, which also comprises ancient woodland. Alton Conservation Area is in close proximity to the application site, but it is not within it.

2.5 The site is located in the Open Countryside.

### **3. THE APPLICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL**

3.1 This is a revised re-submitted full planning application for an “Eco Home” replacement dwelling. Planning permission was granted for a previous scheme in April 2022 following a Committee decision and the applicants want to alter the approved finishing materials to further improve energy efficiency and further reduce carbon both in energy use and building materials.

3.2 There are no changes to the scale, height, dimensions, form or siting of the previously approved development. The applicant’s agent in the Planning Statement submitted with the application, describes the alterations as follows:

- Provision of standing seam metal cladding to the eastern elevation
- Provision of recessed timber cladding to the eastern elevation
- Provision of recessed timber cladding to the western elevation
- Provision of timber cladding to the gable ends of the building
- Provision of additional window in northern elevation of the building
- Minor changes to position of windows within the proposed recesses
- Changes to interior layout

3.3 The Planning Statement also claims the revised proposal “retains the same eco-credentials as the previously approved scheme but advances these further by utilising more materials with less embodied carbon. The revised proposal further reduces the level of embodied carbon by some 14%.” However, the agent in a subsequent email stated the reduction figure was actually 23% and the 14% figure was an “erroneous figure in an earlier version of the Planning Statement that was subsequently superseded.”

3.4 Details of the application can be viewed at:

<http://publicaccess.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/portal/servlets/ApplicationSearchServlet?PKID=161204>

### **4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

HNT/2021/0011	Upward Extension Prior approval not required 05/05/2021
SMD/2021/0211	Lawful Development Certificate for Proposed Development relating to the proposed erection of single storey side and rear extensions Positive certificate issued 19/05/2021
SMD/2021/0636	Eco House Replacement Dwelling. Approved following Committee decision in April 2022.

## 5. PLANNING POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE DECISION

### Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted Sept 2020)

5.1 The Development Plan comprises the Local Plan Development Document (adopted September 2020).

5.2 The following Local Plan policies are relevant to the application:

- SS1 Development Principles
- 1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- H1 New Housing Development
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Revised (2021)

5.3 The following chapters of the NPPF (2021) are particularly relevant to this application:

- 2: Achieving sustainable development
- 5: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
- 4: Decision making
- 9: Promoting sustainable transport
- 12: Achieving well-designed places
- 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

## 6. CONSULTATIONS

### **Public response to consultation**

6.1 One comment was received from Councillor Plimley who states the following:

*“I fully support the revised application for the eco house at Wildwood as it substantially reduces the carbon impact of the property. The design is also incredible and will not only be ascetically pleasing for nearby neighbours, but will also have the wow factor for those visiting the area.”*

### **Farley Parish Council**

6.2 Farley Parish Council support the application.

## Severn Trent Water

6.3 No objection to the proposals and do not require a drainage condition to be applied.

## Environmental Health

6.4 No objection subject to conditions.

## 7. OFFICER COMMENT AND PLANNING BALANCE

7.1 The main issue with this revised scheme is the impact on the character and appearance of the area and whether this is outweighed by the degree of increased eco-credentials of the scheme and further reduction in carbon.

7.2 An extract from the Committee report submitted for the eco dwelling in April 2022 which gives details of the design and eco credentials (7.19 to 7.21) is as follows:

*The Planning Statement submitted with the application outlines that the replacement dwellinghouse will be eco-friendly. Paragraph 1.3 of the statement says the building will adopt:*

*'a "fabric first" approach, and aspiring to be net zero carbon in terms of both build and energy use, and to provide a house which will be flexible in design to suit future family needs. The dwelling has been designed to meet the Passivhaus standard, will utilise low-carbon building materials, and incorporate photovoltaics and solar thermal technology with battery storage, and utilise heat pumps and mechanical ventilation and heat recovering systems. Materials from the existing dwelling will be recycled into the build wherever possible.'*

*The replacement dwelling will have 'exemplary thermal efficiency' and the build materials have been chosen as they 'have low embodied carbon'. The design also features overhangs 'to mitigate against overheating' and large glazing will 'optimise solar gain'. The dwellinghouse will be constructed using a timber frame with pre-insulated cellulose fibre insulation.*

*The Planning Statement states that the resultant replacement dwelling 'is expected to utilise a maximum of just 5.25 MWh/year for heating and cooling compared to the 40MWh/year used by the existing dwellinghouse. It will also achieve an energy efficiency rating of A (score of 95+) which would not be achievable via a retrofit of the existing house. Indeed, the best the existing dwelling would be capable of achieving is Grade C (score of 68).'*

7.3 The exact changes to the approved scheme are as follows:

Front Elevation (facing road): The approved comprised a brick walls.

The proposed brings the metal seam material (for the roof) half-way down the wall and introduces a section of timber cladding at first floor level.

Rear elevation (facing the village to the south): The approved comprised brick walls and metal frames apart from the two first floor gables finished with recessed timber cladding.

The proposed increases the timber cladding so the whole of the upper half is timber clad.

Both side elevations: The approved comprised brick except for the side of the rear projection with brick on the lower half and metal on the upper half.

The proposed replaces brick with timber on the upper half and in the gable.

The roof was approved to be entirely covered with metal seam materials and this has not changed.

7.4 To summarise, there is a significant increase in timber and metal (which was largely restricted to the roof) on the walls and a significant reduction in brick. The dwelling above ground floor would be dominated by timber and metal with brick restricted to the lower half of the walls.

7.5 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan states the following:

*All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should:*

*1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

7.6 The SMDC Design Guide states:

- *New buildings should use facing materials that either match or complement those of the surroundings. Under certain circumstances, new materials can sometimes be used as a foil to more traditional materials to highlight and bring out their qualities.*
- *New buildings should ideally be constructed from the same palette of materials used traditionally in the area. This means for the most part natural stone or brick for walling and Staffordshire blue clay tiles or slate for roofs.*
- *Traditionally, materials have been selected and used in a way that promotes their durability in a harsh climate and ensures that buildings meet the purpose for which they were intended in the most economical way possible.*
- *New materials need to respect the building and its setting. Occasionally, high quality modern materials may be used as substitutes or replacements for*

*traditional materials in exceptional circumstances where appropriate to the design or setting, provided they harmonise well. An example would be terne-coated steel instead of lead for flat roofs. More commonly, modern substitute materials are less appropriate and often less durable.*

- *There is no tradition of external timber boarding in Staffordshire Moorlands.*

7.7 The materials that would be considered appropriate to the local area would include for example, red brick, local stone and Staffs Blue roofing tiles.

7.8 The approved application as originally submitted is virtually identical to the introduction of timber cladding on the ground floor of the front elevation, separating the brick. The Council had concerns about the original scheme due to the large amount of metal and timber and not enough traditional local materials and which therefore did not reinforce local distinctiveness. As a result of negotiations and a, the scheme was changed to the one presented previously at Committee, showing a mix of both modern and traditional materials, a compromise which also still maintained an energy efficiency rating of A (score of 95+) in line with the aims to create a net zero carbon home. The amended version was approved at Committee.

7.9 The new proposal effectively reverts back to the original scheme that the Council did not accept with what could be describes as an imbalance between the traditional and modern materials.

7.10 Para. 135 of the NPPF (in Section 12: Achieving Well Designed Places) is particularly relevant here. It states:

*Local planning authorities should seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).*

7.11 It is considered the proposal would now run contrary to para 135 of the NPPF as it is considered that the appearance of the revised house has now been diminished as it no longer reflects local distinctiveness due to the increase in materials that are non-traditional to the area.

7.12 The applicant's agent claims the new revised scheme would lead to a further reduction in embodied carbon by some 23%, an amended figure from what was stated in the Planning Statement accompanying the application which was 14%. A reason was not given for the discrepancy. However, Officers consider that the predicted further 14% or 23% reduction in carbon does not compensate for the deterioration in design caused by the significantly increased use of non-traditional materials, especially when the amended scheme approved at Committee had already, in any case, achieved a significant reduction in carbon in relation to the existing bungalow to be replaced even if "retro-fitted" and was regarded as achieving an energy efficiency rating of A (score of 95+) in line with the aims to create a net zero carbon home.

## **CONCLUSION/PLANNING BALANCE**

7.13 The amended scheme, by virtue of the change in materials involving the significant increase in non-traditional materials such as metal and timber in place of traditional brick, would create a dwelling which does not re-enforce local distinctiveness and which would not harmonise with the local area. It was considered a balance or compromise was reached with the previous scheme which allowed the use of some modern materials (such a roof wholly made of metal seam and prominent rear gable projections mostly covered with the same material) in order for the applicants to achieve their goal of a net zero carbon home with an “A” energy efficiency rating. However, the new application reverts back to the scheme initially put forward which in the opinion of the Council leads the modern materials to be over-dominant and which not achieve that balance. It is considered the benefit of the further reduction in carbon (of 14 or 23%) from a home already considered to have an “A” rating would not outweigh the resultant harm to the character and appearance of the area caused by the amended design.

7.14 Whilst the use of sustainable building materials is important and to be encouraged, in line with policy it is necessary for development to comply with all adopted policies of the Council not only those relating to climate change. It is also necessary to ensure compliance with design policies and the adopted Design Guide which seeks to protect the local character and distinctiveness of the Moorlands, a key element of which is the use of locally typical materials. It is considered that the approved scheme achieves a balance between those aims and complies with all the relevant policies. The revised application, however, whilst achieving an improvement in carbon terms does so at the expense of the design quality and contribution to the distinctive character of the local area, contrary to Policy DC1 of the local plan and the adopted Design Guide. Accordingly the revised application is therefore recommended for refusal.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

### **A. That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:**

**The proposed dwelling, by virtue of the amount of modern metal and timber materials, which are not materials that are traditional to the local area, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would not re-enforce local distinctiveness. It is not considered the further reduction in embodied carbon in relation to the previously approved “Eco Home” scheme would outweigh the level of harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy DC1 ‘Design Considerations’ of the Local Plan, the Council’s adopted Design Guide and also contrary to Para. 135 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).**

### **B. In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee’s decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Development Services has**

**delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Applications Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's Decision.**

# Site Location Plan

