

Conversion of an existing block stable block into residential accommodation.

Whittington Edge Stables, Markfield Road, Ratby, Leicester

Description of Proposal

The conversion of an existing stable into a residential property on the site of Whittington Edge Stables, Markfield Road, Ratby. The stable is vacant and measures 20m in width x 6.4m in depth with a roof ridge height of 4.3m and an eaves height of 2.4m.

Whittington Edge Stables is used for private equestrian purposes. The application site is located in the countryside and within the National Forest, situated to the south of the M1 and accessed via a single width track off the west of Markfield Road. This track is shared with the six of the properties, one being residential three Of the properties have a partial view And these fully support the proposal t the south of the stables is an existing hay barn a further stables adjacent to a ménage and another block of stables with a small barn to the north west. To the north is an open steel barn. There is a mature belt of woodland along the north to form a buffer between the application site and the M1 corridor, and to the east is an existing mature field hedge row. Adjoining the property but screened by woodland is Charnwood acres Where its residents are permitted to live on site for 50 continual weeks of the year

The site has the benefit of its own long standing metered power supply and would need no adjustments for the residential use.

Stables and equestrian use has been on this site since the 1990, the current owners travel from home daily to care for their horses the number of which has reduced, therefore the stable block is no longer in use. The stable block was rebuilt and designed to accommodate a breeding programme using one of there own horses to breed foals for personal use, with the stables large enough for a mare and her foal. Sadly the mare passed away suddenly so the owners are not going to continue this so the stable block is not used.

The proposal involves the reuse of an existing stables into a two-bed residential property The stable area has a concrete floor and is built to all sides with high breeze block. Timber rafters have been installed which extend pass the wall to give a deep external soffit as the previous stable block . The outside is clad in dark brown , to give the same appearance and colour as the previous wooden stable block, with composite wall cladding which is a wood plastic composite incorporating recycled material There are a number of existing door and window openings within the stables which will be reused as part of the conversion.

For full details of what is proposed please refer to the current drawings.

Historic use of the site

The original stable block was built in September 1990 some 33 years ago we have no documented evidence of this but have included a google image of the site in 1999 showing a stable block in the current location.

The appearance of the original building was almost identical to the current building brown wood effect with windows and stable doors, the newer stable block is very similar in appearance.

See attached photos after the google images.

The latest version was Sympathetically rebuilt as we needed to be able to access the bank behind, which wasn't possible with the building in situ, the bank was collapsing and having landslides so I needed to build a retaining wall



Google earth image taken showing metal roofed stables and additional stables on the site.



Google earth image taken 1999 showing a roofed stables and additional barns on the site all used for horses.



Google earth image taken 2006 showing a roofed stables and additional stables on the site all used for horses. All in the same locations as the existing layout.



Current stable block picture taken 2023



Previous stable block in same location

Local Development Plan Policies/ National and Other Guidance

As a change of use from an agricultural building to a dwellinghouse, the applicant should be able to make a permitted development application, which is assessed via Class Q, Part 3, Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. See below why this is not the case.

As part of the pre application submission and reply the council have informed the applicant of the following:-

As the stable was erected in 2019 under planning application 19/01069/FUL, the structure has not been in use for a period of at least 10 years before the date development under Class Q begins, which is in conflict with Q.1(iii). Therefore, the scheme is not suitable for conversion into a dwellinghouse under Class Q, Part 3, Schedule 2 of the GDPO.

Alignment with the requirements of Class R, Part 3, Schedule 2 of the GDPO

we would argue that the stables in some form have been present on the exact site and footprint of the rebuilt stables since 1990. It was in fact guidance from the council that requested that a formal ratification application be made for the rebuilt stables back in 2019. This was due to the replacement of the existing stables to a slightly larger footprint.

For a full planning application, Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) and Policy DM1 of the Site Allocation and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (SADMP) set out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and state that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless other material considerations indicate otherwise,

The main relevant policies to be considered alongside national policies and guidance for a full planning application are as follows:

Site Allocations and development Management Policies (SADMP) Development Plan (2016):
The site has not been put for or allocation within the emerging local plans for the area. the development is not for a mass of housing but the conversion of a single building into a residential property.

- Policy DM1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Along with the conversion of an existing property, the client is looking to install a full air source heating system, topped up with a log burner in the lounge area, which would be fuelled by Horse manure briquettes from the owners horses along with solar and solar thermal arrays, as outlined on the plans attached to the application, these will be ground mounted to ensure the existing stables retain their original look and not look too much like a residential property which would be against the principles of the Good design guides..

The existing waste water is already processed by a sewerage treatment plant which already passes treated water into the local ground. It would be reinforced with the inclusion of grey water recycling of the rain water from the roof of the building for use in the flushing of the wc's.

- Policy DM4: Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation

Policy DM4 of the SADMP allows for sustainable development in the countryside where it meets specific criteria. Criterion B) allows for the reuse of existing buildings where it leads to the enhancement of the immediate setting and Criterion C allows for development which contributes to the diversification of rural businesses. Therefore the proposal is acceptable subject to 5 sub-criteria that must be also met. Criterion i) is most relevant and requires that the development represents no significant adverse effects to the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside location.

The conversion of an existing building that sits well within its surroundings meets this requirement.

- Policy DM7: Preventing Pollution and Flooding

Taking into account flooding, the existing stable block and land uses would remain relatively untouched and therefore would not add to any implied flooding within the site or the wider areas.

Pollution comes in the forms of many things, the site would be heated by electric air sourced heat pumps, there is no gas supply in the area. there would be a limited increase in the electric use on the site but within guidelines.

The existing council bins are collected by the council weekly to the property at the end of the lane within the nursery, the passing bin lorry would be able to collect the refuse from this site on its way through or back. This is not generating any additional trips. The owners and users of the nursery have tried on many occasions to keep the bins at the entrance to the site access road, but have found these to be vandalised or stolen on a regular basis. It is actually the council whom have requested that the bins remain within the site and that they will collect internally.

- Policy DM10: Development and Design

Policy DM10 of the SADMP requires new development to complement or enhance the character of the surrounding area with regards to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials and architectural features. 8.9. The proposed development would not significantly alter the residential nature of the site. The development would be sensitive to its rural surroundings and would by no means detract from its beauty or openness

Policy DM10 of the adopted SADMP requires that development would not have a significant adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of nearby residents and occupiers of adjacent buildings

There are no immediate neighbours surrounding the site Although There are neighbours whose land borders the property. The existing residential property sharing the access road is a sufficient distance from this site to be unaffected by the development. For these reasons it is not considered that the proposed development would have any adverse neighbouring amenity impacts. As the neighbours in support of the conversion

- Policy DM15: Redundant Rural Buildings

The stables area redundant rural building albeit this has been extended and rebuilt twice over the past 30 years. The first time due to storm damage There has been a stable in this location since 1990

- Policy DM17: Highways and Transportation

All new development should be in accordance with the highway design standards. Policy DM18 ensures that development provides appropriate parking provision.

The proposal does not include any changes to the existing access on site off Markfield Road. Although not demonstrating that visibility can be achieved from this point, LCC Highways note that the proposal is unlikely to generate a significant increase in traffic. LCC Highways is also satisfied that the onsite parking and turning facilities demonstrated by the proposed layout would meet the requirements of their Good Design Guide. It is considered reasonable to ensure the implementation of this arrangement is conditioned should planning permission be granted to ensure no adverse impacts upon highways safety. Infact Traffic would be reduced. The owners would be on site, one of which has now retired so they won't be making multiple journeys care for the horses

Highways are happy with the reuse of an existing access to the site and confirm that no additional journeys will be created by the conversion.

- Policy DM18: Vehicle Parking Standards

Vehicle parking standards are met within the site as shown on the proposed scheme drawings.

- Policy DM24: Cultural and Tourism Facilities

Not relevant to this proposal.

The Good Design Guide (2020)

The guide highlights the need to create sustainable places that:-

1 - Enhance the quality of environment for people using it, reflecting place.

The building is an existing building which sits alongside the other buildings and is suitable for its surroundings and setting. The use of the building for a residential property will give the owners a quality residential property in a rural setting which will give them a sense of well being and calm, essential in the reflection of life.

2 - Understanding the relationship between a settlement and the landscape character, spatial considerations of the design.

The building sits within its own site, and has been built to sit easily in with the other buildings and reflect the woodland nature of the site and compliment the outlook and feeling of the setting. The internal spaces are adequate for a couple to live in comfortably.

3 - New development reflects its location.

"Converting agricultural buildings" – This meets this requirement.

The scheme retains the existing features of the building and avoids any domestic add ons. The doors and windows will be inserted into the existing openings and the existing stable doors will be retained as features that could be shuttered if required for security.

Windows and doors avoid new openings, none are to be provided in the building as outlined on the drawings.

Presumption for timber or wood effect window frames is recommended for a development of this type and this has been followed within the drawings and details.

Gardens should not be residential or formal, due to the setting of the building facing the existing fields and landscaping, there is no intention of forming a formal external space.

Within the Design guide , Ratby - Developments should meet the design principles of the national forest.

Main objective it to create new areas of forest, it is intended that we will reinforce the boundaries of the site and form stronger corridors for wildlife, all in local species, plus an additional new woodland area next to the buildings And the creation of a wildlife Meadow All as outlined on the drawings.

Legibility and connectivity - new developments should be easy to navigate and find your way around home and workplaces to green spaces from your doorstep, the owners will work, live and enjoy the use of their land meaning that this requirement is easily met.

Design for low energy Efficiency will be included within the building, all lighting will be LED, all fittings and electronic goods will be A rated.

Renewable energy - wood fuelling and recycled horse manure heating system is to be installed within the lounge for additional heating as and when required when the air source heating is struggling.

Water efficiency - rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling will be included within the scheme. Promotion of sustainable transport – the current owners travel to the site 2 / 3 times daily to care for the horses, this will not occur once they are resident on the site. Therefore, traffic will be greatly reduced

Development Appraisal

Plans and Elevations have been provided as part of the submission which demonstrate the proposed location of the extensions and their design.

The application proposes to convert the existing stable block with the installation of doors and windows within existing openings. See drawings for details. Visually externally you would see little difference in the building facades.

An amount of reinforcement planting and fencing to certain boundaries would occur, all shown on the proposed plans. These would further enhance the look and feel of the site into the existing landscape.

On this basis, it is considered that the changes to the application site's layout would be minor, and the changes to the external elevations of the existing stables would be suitable, and would not result in an overly excessive change to the existing property

It is therefore considered that the minor changes to the building are not significant, the development would offer an enhancement to the surrounding countryside by virtue of the unremarkable appearance of the existing stables and setting and additional planting of trees, pollinators and Wildflower Meadow

Site History

The site in question, Whittington Edge Stables, has previously applied for the removal of an existing barn for the creation of new detached dwelling (16/01066/FUL), and two conversions of an existing stable block into a residential dwelling (17/01033/FUL) and a two-bedroom residential property (18/00315/FUL) respectively.

Application 17/01033/FUL was withdrawn, and the other two specified applications were refused because they conflicted with Policy 21 of the Core Strategy and Policies DM1, DM4, DM10 and DM15 of the SADMP. Application 18/00315/FUL was refused because the applicant failed to demonstrate that the existing building was capable of conversion to residential use without significant rebuilding and alterations.

The existing stable subject to this application was constructed, part retrospectively, under planning application 19/01069/FUL to replace the existing stable building to provide more adequate support and stability to the structure from the site's, "Adverse ground conditions," as described by the applicant in the planning statement submitted to the Local Planning Authority on 20th September 2019.

Principal of a residential property

Development in the countryside is not regarded as a sustainable location for new house building. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless: there is an essential need for a rural worker; it would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset; it would re-use a redundant building and enhance its immediate setting; the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or the design of the proposal is of exceptional quality.

Policy DM15 of the adopted SADMP states that proposed development outside the settlement boundary for the re-use and/or adaptation of redundant or disused rural buildings is supported where the applicant demonstrates: the building is no longer viable in its current use Due to the number of horses and the number of stables, the applicant has ; the applicant has adequately demonstrated the building is in a structurally sound condition and is capable of conversion without significant rebuild or alteration; any proposed extension(s) or alterations are proportionate to the size, scale, mass, and footprint of the original building and situated within the original curtilage; and the proposed development accords with Policy DM10, Development and Design, and relevant design guidance.

The nearest settlement to the application site is the Key Rural Centre of Ratby. The facilities of Ratby can still be easily reached from the application site by nearby public rights of way (i.e. R35 footpath) Which the applicants readily use to reach the amenities in the village of Ratby and by car. Ratby offers key connections to several settlements within the borough. It is therefore considered that the site would be in reasonable proximity to support the local community facilities of the Key Rural Centre and add to its economic wellbeing. Reference needs to be made to the proximity drawing and recent and past approvals in the area Which allow use the car to access Ratby village

Although Paragraph 80 of the NPPF supports the re-use of redundant buildings, the application does not currently suggest how it enhances its immediate setting. The buildings are no longer viable for its current use due to the fact that the owners have lost a horse recently and they currently have 8 stables on the site catering for 3 horses, the capacity without this is 6

As the stable building was constructed and approved, part retrospectively, by the Local Planning Authority in 2019, these issues would require addressing by the applicant in order to mitigate any conflict with Paragraph 80 of the NPPF and Policy DM15 of the SADMP.

The application has provided information in regard to the extension(s) or alterations required in converting the stable into a residential property, but these are required to be proportionate to the size, scale, mass and footprint of the original building to be in accordance with Policy DM15(c).

The building the client wishes to convert has never been used as stables. The plan was to use it for her breeding operation with two large stables Giving sufficient space for Mare and foals. While construction was in progress, very sadly, her brood mare died and due to other family issues she has decided not to continue with the breeding program and therefore this building is redundant as stables

Her other horses use the other two stable blocks. Both of which have direct access to their paddocks.

The client's mother is in her 90th year and has dementia and mobility issues. She struggles to walk unaided and cannot use stairs. She is currently residing in a privately funded Care Home. She is brought to see the horses weekly as this is very good for her mental and physical well-being.

The client also wants to be able to provide her suitable accommodation for her to come for respite visits, being able to stay over and also provide a home for her when finances dictate.

Impact upon the Character of the Area

Policy 21 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriately related to its setting within the Forest and that the development respects the character and appearance of the wider countryside. Policy DM15 of the SADMP requires all development proposals for the re-use of redundant rural buildings to result in the enhancement of the immediate setting. Policy DM4 of the adopted SADMP requires that development in the countryside does not have a significant adverse effect on the open character or appearance of the surrounding landscape. Policy DM10 of the SADMP requires new development to complement or enhance the character of the surrounding area with regards to scale, layout, density, mass, design, materials, and architectural features.

The application has provided information on the alterations that are required to convert the stables into a residential property, therefore there is little or no impact that this development has on the character of the surrounding area and the intrinsic value of the open countryside as has been shown.

Some weight needs to be given to the large number of OPEN COUNTRYSIDE planning appeals and applications that have been made in and around the site, the closest being 75 dwellings under 22/00648/OUT and 90 dwellings under 20/00467/FUL both on Markfield Lane.

Impact upon Neighbouring Residential Amenity

Policy DM10 of the adopted SADMP states that proposals should not adversely affect the occupiers of the neighbouring properties.

The nearest neighbouring property is Faulkner's Nurseries, Markfield Road, Ratby situated to the southwest of the application site and in excess of 170 metres from the application site. And they are fully supportive of this conversion.

Given this separation distance it is not considered that this proposal would result in any impacts upon any neighbouring properties.

However, on a previous application 18/00315/FUL, Hinckley & Bosworth Council's Environmental Services Pollution Officer stated that noise pollution has an impact on the site due to the scheme being very close to the M1. This is considered to have a significant adverse impact on the future occupiers of the proposed development, which is in conflict of Policy DM10 of the SADMP. That due to the large number of houses that have been built closer to the M1 in the recent developments. We think this is now outdated.

However, as the Pollution Officer recommended that a mechanical ventilation is installed in all noise sensitive rooms to allow ventilation without the need to open a window.

Although the scheme does not have an impact on neighbouring residential amenity, it is considered that the mechanical ventilation strategy as outlined above will be installed within the property.

In addition to this there are a number of residential dwellings along Markfield Road and on Cow Lane very close to the proposed development. There has also been a significant number of new dwellings and conversions built and that are currently in progress within the last 12 months that are extremely close. These are all clearly visible from the road and majority are not sympathetic to the surrounding countryside.

These include,

Whittington Rough - A conversion to residential. And 2 holiday cottages

Whittington Edge - Large extension And recently garage conversion into a holiday let And recently a garage conversion into a holiday let

Farm - A large detached house with extensive farm buildings

Oak Farm - Converting stables to a residential dwelling.

To summarise, the scheme does not have an impact on any neighbouring residential amenities and there is no significant impact on proposed residential users of the converted property. All in line with the policies of DM10 of the adopted SADMP.

Impact upon Highway Safety and Vehicle Parking Standards

Policy DM17 of the SADMP supports development that would not have any significant adverse impacts on the highway network or highway safety. Policy DM18 of the SADMP requires developments to demonstrate an adequate level of off-street parking provision.

The existing access track serving the site is taken from the west of Markfield Road, Ratby.

The track is single width and has good visibility to the south of Markfield Road, however, given the proposed development replaces an existing use as stables, the traffic movements associated with one residential property does not result in any material increase in traffic using the existing track serving the site. The use of the track will in fact be reduced as the owner will no longer need to travel back and forth daily to tend to the horses.

The current planning approval referenced 22/00118/FUL for the holiday lets on Whittington Edge across the main road highlighted that the nearest settlement to the application site is the facilities of Ratby and can easily be reached from the site from nearby public rights of way and by **CAR**. The planning approved site is at least a KM further away from the centre of Ratby by the public footpaths around the site and actually has to pass our site to get to these areas. The proximity plan shows this clearly.

Travel by car which has been stated as being allowed under the application is comparable in distance for both sites.

Therefore, the proposed development does not have any significant adverse impacts on the highway network or highway safety and adequate parking and turning provision is provided within the application site. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policies DM17 and DM18 of the adopted SADMP.

Photographs of the existing site.



View facing south with the stables behind, showing the sparse boundary treatment.



Photo showing a public right of way Marker at the entrance to the site off Markfield Road



Internal view of the existing gate to the site.



Existing view of the stables

Conclusion

The site is located Within an area of countryside, close to the village of Ratby There are two footpaths one on the drive , both make the amenities of Ratby within easy walking distance. It is surrounded by other residential properties, With four being within half a mile of the application site. We would like to highlight to the Council that the adjacent property of Charnwood Acres Caravan Park which has a large number of resident owners who live on site for 50 weeks of the year, this site was considered acceptable in regard to local uses and proximity of services and this site should be given the same allowances.

According to the nature, design and layout of the proposed development, the proposal would be a form of sustainable countryside development which would have a positive impact upon its intrinsic character With the planting of trees, hedge row, and wildlife Meadow The development would neither cause any significant harm to neighbouring residential amenity and would not have any significant highways safety impacts. The proposal therefore satisfies policies 7 and 23 of the Core Strategy and policies DM1, DM4, DM10, DM11, DM15, DM17, DM18 and DM24 of the SADMP

The owners parents have dementia and mobility issues and finds it hard to walk unaided. The family have found that time spent with the horses on the site has been beneficial for her mental health and would like to extend this to short stays at the property away from the 24hr care home and provide a suitable place to live when their finances dictate they have to move from their privately funded care home which they had to sell at their house to fund

The owners have gone to great efforts and expense to ensure their property sits in aesthetically and design seamlessly within its environment

They have owned this property since 1990, and have spent a lot of time there with their parents enjoying the effect, this has on their mental health and well-being and would just like to be able to spend their retirement enjoying their animals And the environment