

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

PROPOSAL : Demolition of Ivy Cottage and the erection of thirteen houses, construction of new road access
ADDRESS : Ivy Cottage, Tythe Barn, Alton, ST10 4AZ
APPLICANT : Vital Construction UK Limited
DATE : March 2015 **JOB No.** : 2014-1983

DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Assessment Area

The application site is located partly within the Alton settlement boundary and partly without. It represents a detached stone dwelling, its garden and its orchard. The site measures 0.41ha. and has a vehicular access off the B5032. It is located within an area of frontage development on the north side of the road near the eastern edge of the village.

The site frontage is mostly taken up with Ivy Cottage, a two storey stone former farmhouse and its long single storey side stone extension. The building has a plain front with only two ground floor windows and a central entrance door. It is constructed of coursed local stone with a plain tiled roof. To the rear of Ivy Cottage is its garden and orchard. Behind the site is open agricultural land. To the west of the site is a line of four detached houses beyond which are semi-detached houses. To the east is a small terrace of cottages and a large detached house. Between the application site and the cottages is a farm track which runs alongside the site's eastern boundary to a small agricultural building at the rear.

The application site is within an area of suburb on the east edge of Alton. It is not in the village Conservation Area and has a suburban character comprising a mix of house age, design and size.

Planning Policy

The Development Plan for the area consists of the saved policies of the **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan**. The site is located within the settlement boundary of Leek and in a pocket of residential development on the outskirts of the town. **Policy H4** states that new housing development will be expected to locate within settlement boundaries where it can be serviced and where it is sympathy with the area. This policy is clearly supportive of the proposal- the application site is within the settlement boundary of Alton and is capable of being serviced by local utilities.

Alton village is recognised by the Core Strategy as a "Larger Village" (SS6a Larger Villages Area Strategy). SS6 Rural Areas states that the rural areas will be expected to

provide 1540 houses of which 400 will be “affordable” between 2006 and 2026. To assist this objective the Site Allocation DPD is proposed to define the urban area of the Larger Villages and will allocate sites within these to ensure that this allocation can be met. The proposed modification (M15) proposes an increase in the net number of houses proposed in the rural areas by 44. It is considered that the site that is the subject of this representation can play a positive part in this exercise.

Paragraph 7.15 of the Core Strategy states that the strategy for the rural areas is based on ensuring that villages continue to be vibrant and sustainable communities, and will be expected to provide opportunities for people of all ages. It is expected that the rural areas will maintain an important role within the District in terms of providing homes and jobs to meet local needs with the larger villages and towns addressing the decline in the rural economy and tackling social exclusion. The focus for development is therefore proposed to be on the larger villages (of which Alton is one) which have the existing range of services and facilities and good accessibility to be capable of acting as rural service centres catering for the bulk of the rural area’s needs.

Development is targeted by the Core Strategy to provide for local need at a scale and nature appropriate to the individual settlements and not likely to undermine support for the three main towns. The size of development in the larger villages will therefore be related to their capacity to accommodate further growth. The level of services in Alton Village is clearly at a level that can support additional housing development.

Notwithstanding the government’s amendments to the definition of “brownfield sites” taking residential gardens outside the definition, paragraph 7.28 of the Core Strategy states that “new development will be on a range of brownfield and greenfield sites targeted to support existing services and facilities primarily in and on the edge of the larger villages and varying in scale depending on the size and capacity of each settlement. This consultation relates to a site that is currently on the edge of a Larger Village.

Paragraph 8.1.30 of the Core Strategy recognises that Larger Villages are the most sustainable settlements in the rural areas having a good local social infrastructure, some local employment opportunities and good accessibility to the towns and larger centres. The Larger Villages also have an important role in terms of serving and supporting their immediate surrounding rural areas and smaller villages. The spatial strategy therefore focuses the bulk of rural development within Larger Villages. These are proposed to be defined by a Development Boundary within which development of an appropriate scale and nature will be allowed. The Core Strategy recognises that there is a significant range amongst these villages in terms of their size and facilities and proposes therefore that the scale of development in each area should be relative to their current size and infrastructure capacity (see also para. 7.15). Given the range of facilities that are accessible in Alton and its high level of sustainability, it is considered that Alton is capable of accommodating additional housing that the site that is the subject of this consultation is appropriate for accommodating this increased number.

The site comprises an old cottage that fronts the highway, its garden and an orchard at the rear. The proposed layout indicates the re-siting of that cottage to a new position on the west side of the site to allow a central road access. Informal discussions have taken place with the County regarding visibility splays and these are indicated on the drawing.

The shape of the site largely dictates the site layout which comprises a road along the spine of the site with housing either side. Housing is proposed to be mostly 2 and 3 bedroom units although the drawing shows some potential for 3-4 bedroom units at the rear. The proposal therefore provides a range of housing including small and modest accommodation that is capable of meeting local needs.

Each dwelling is provided with adequate garden space and car parking. The layout takes account of the Council's Space about Dwellings standards in its Local Plan and includes indications of landscaping to provide screening within the site and the assimilation of the site into the local landscape.

At the heart of **The National Planning Policy Framework** is the support given to sustainable development. The proposal is considered to represent sustainable development and therefore is supported in principle by the Framework.

In terms of specific policies towards housing, the Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing. It therefore recommends that local planning authorities identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. SMDC is currently unable to demonstrate an up to date five year supply of deliverable housing sites. In these circumstances, it is for the Council to demonstrate strong reasons why the development should not be allowed. The comments of the Policy Team following the pre-application process mirror this view. Section 7 of the Framework promotes good design.

EVALUATION

The application was preceded by a pre-application consultation. The results of this are set out below together with an explanation of how these comments have impacted on the proposal.

Planning Policy

NPPF (Framework):

Para 14 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay and where the plan is absent, silent or policies out of date granting permission unless:

- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, or
- Specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Para 32 - developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment.

Para 47 - Local Planning authorities should:

- Use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period
- Identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% (moved forward from later in the plan period) to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Where there has been a record of persistent under delivery of housing, local planning authorities should increase the buffer to 20%.

Para 49 - Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

Core Strategy:

Policy SS6 - Rural Areas identifies a requirement for around 1680 new dwellings between 2006 and 2026 in accordance with the Area Strategies set out in policies SS6a - SS6c. The Site Allocations DPD will define the urban areas of larger villages by a Development Boundary and will allocate sites for development sufficient to ensure that the requirements set above can be met.

Alton has a good range of services and facilities and is identified as a larger village in Policy SS6a. This policy seeks to increase the range of available and affordable house types and to allocate a range of deliverable housing sites primarily within the built up area in locations across the village with good accessibility to services and facilities. Where development is required to be met on land outside the built-up area this will be only of a small scale and on sites which relate well to the built-up area, can be assimilated into the landscape and have good access.

Policy H1 - New Housing Development sets out criteria regarding mix, density, lifetime homes standards, amenity and design.

Policy H2 requires that residential developments of 5 dwellings (0.16ha) or more shall provide a target of 33% affordable housing.

Policies DC1 (Design Considerations) and T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport) are also relevant.

- Although part of the site is within the development boundary, the majority of the site lies outside in the open countryside where new build housing is generally restricted to that which is essential to local needs.
- The application site is included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) ref (AL024). The SHLAA identifies over 2,000 potential housing sites which have all been assessed and classified in terms of availability, suitability and achievability. It is currently classified as a B, i.e. a site that could be developable for housing and is well related to the existing settlement.
- Ivy house is not listed and there are no TPOs on the site (although trees present) but there may be some historic interest.

- The Council is still at an early stage in its preparation of its site allocations DPD and has not yet undertaken public consultation on site options.
- The Council is required to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Council calculates its 5 year land supply on a district basis. At 1 March 2014 it was 2.17 years which includes a 20% buffer. This means that according to paragraphs 14 and 49 of the Framework, Core Strategy housing policies cannot be considered up-to-date and there should be a general presumption in favour of sustainable development unless 'any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the framework taken as a whole' or specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.
- There is a need for new housing, including affordable housing in Alton which is identified in Policy SS6a. Core Strategy Policy H2 sets out the requirements for affordable housing and how this should be secured. The Councils Strategic Housing market Assessment (HMA) provides the background evidence for this. The housing officer will be able to offer advice regarding tenure.
- Contributions may be required towards education provision.

Although the site is located outside the development boundary, it is not located in Green Belt and in terms of the Framework there are no policies that indicate that development should be restricted. As stated in paragraph 14, adverse impacts will have to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework for permission to be refused.

Comment: The policy conclusions are that although some of the site lies outside the development boundary, it is well related to the settlement, and given that the Council is unable to show a 5 year supply of housing land that permission should be granted unless the Council is able to show significant adverse impacts on the policies of the Framework.

Highways

1. There is a potential housing allocation plot adjacent to the east of this proposed development. The only possible access to that plot would be through this proposal. The layout should be amended and the access realigned to provide an adoptable access terminating at the boundary. Ruth Wooddisse may be able to better advise on the likelihood of this allocation site coming forward.
2. Visibility splay of 2.4mx43m will be required. This is achievable with the proposed layout assuming conservation accept the relocation of Ivy Cottage?
3. The provision of a footway is welcomed. This should be 2m wide from the tie in point into the development although that will mean a step at the tie in with the existing footway. There should be a 2m verge in front of the relocated Ivy Cottage.
4. Carriageway should be a minimum of 5m wide with 2m footway or service strip on each side. It should be put forward for adoption as highway. Extent of the highway should be clearly defined 'on the ground'.
5. Parking should be provided at 2 spaces for up to 3 bed dwellings; 3 spaces for 4 beds and greater.
6. Bellmouth will need to be constructed under a minor works agreement.
7. Bound porous surfacing required in driveways.

8. Drainage interceptors may be required if driveways fall towards the proposed highway.

Comment: The access road makes provision for access into the potential development site to the east. Whilst the area between the turning area and the site boundary is occupied by car parking spaces, these are capable of being moved within a modified layout. However it is noted that an outline application has been submitted for the development of the neighbouring site and this shows an independent vehicular access. Should this be approved, it will give some scope to reduce the specification of the proposed access road. Visibility spays of 2.4mx43m are indicated on the application drawings. The drawings also indicate a 2m wide footpath along the frontage of the site and a 5m wide road and 2m single footpath. Car parking is provided in accordance with guidelines.

Design and Layout

Adopted Core Strategy DC1 states that new development should, in particular, be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

The site plan provided shows a development of a more urban form within this peripheral village location. This is with reference to the larger scale proposal of 13 dwellings which appears cramped within the site area. It would be dominated by the proposed spinal access road, prominent parking spaces and parking courts to emphasise the proposal's urban attributes. Further, the more random grain of development presented would be at odds to the surrounding context. In these respects, the proposal raises serious concerns.

Comment: The layout has been changed significantly since the pre-application consultation. Whilst the nature of the road has been dictated by the County Highways Service, the relationships between dwelling/dwelling and dwelling/road have changed to steer away from the “urban attributes” that represented an important element of the pre-application objection. The access road has been drawn to the County's recommendations to provide a safe entrance to the site and a safe exit onto the main road for both this site and traffic generated by the adjoining site. The access road is proposed to be adopted and it serves the first half of the development site with a turning head that has the capability of being extended into the neighbouring site. Dwellings of modest proportions with vernacular materials and detailing are arranged informally along the road to replicate the site's rural character. Beyond this, a private drive serves a small number of larger houses whose design retains the vernacular details used at the front of the site.

Conservation

The Council's Conservation Officer has met the owner on site some time ago concerning the proposed residential development. The site is outside the Conservation Area and the proposal does not relate to a Listed Building. However, the historic maps show that it is an interesting site worthy of more investigation. The site is clearly an ancient orchard and associated with an area of historic plant nurseries/market gardens. There are many veteran fruit trees still on the site, significant dry stone walls and the stone building to the front would be classed as a non-designated heritage asset. Where

possible the frontage building should be retained in situ and could be extended to the side or rear if required. It is hoped that vehicular access could be secured alongside.

The County HEA identifies the site and states that the historic origins of the site are not fully understood and historic buildings within the zone have potential to illuminate the understanding of the development of the area and its farming. Further, it has a high historical and aesthetic value.

As part of an application for development, the Council requires an historic appraisal of the site and the buildings on it. The frontage building is unusual in its appearance and along with the veteran trees and walls, adds to the distinctive character of the area.

Comment: The application is supported by an independent Heritage Assessment. This concludes that there is evidence of medieval and post medieval agricultural activity on the land. Ivy Cottage itself is thought to be mid 19thC and of only limited architectural or historic value. The report recommends that the loss of this local asset should be compensated by Level 1 recording that would create a record of features of historic interest. Given the limited value of Ivy Cottage, the application proposes to demolish it to provide a safe vehicular access into the site with visibility splays recommended by the County Highway Service. The stone salvaged from the building would be re-used in the development.

Trees

The Council's Trees and Woodlands Officer states that from the desktop information available, it appears that a large proportion (c.60-70%) of the site area is under some form of tree/shrub canopy cover. In some parts of the site, this appears to be quite dense or even continuous, whilst in other parts it is more scattered and there also are some open areas which again from air photos appear to be rough grass/tall ruderal/scrub type character.

In terms of the proposed development, a tree survey and arboricultural implications report in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to demolition, Design and Construction - Recommendations should be required to accompany any planning application. There appears to be established mature hedgerows to some boundaries, which should be identified on the tree survey. Such hedgerows and any notable boundary trees should be retained for screening.

Comment: The application is supported by a Tree Report. This identifies that the majority of the 42 trees on the site are part of an old orchard that has been neglected for many years. Consequently many of the trees have decay and are not recommended for retention. Only two trees are categorized above a "low" status- an ash and a Norway maple. The Norway maple (T12) is outside the site and its RPA has little impact on the proposed development. The ash (T36) is proposed to be retained. Additional tree planting is proposed, largely within the hedgerows around the site.

Ecology

The site appears to be potentially biodiverse and any application would need to be accompanied by a full Phase 1 Habitat Survey extended to consider protected animal species of all taxa and conducted at the appropriate time of year. This would be determined by the appointed ecologist making an initial scoping visit and search of known records from the available databases in particular Staffordshire Ecological Record. The work to buildings would need in particular to consider bats in accordance with Natural England / Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines. The site appears to include

ancient orchard trees. Consideration should perhaps be given to obtaining specialist advice to establish the veracity or otherwise of this suggestion and any implications.

Comment: The bat and bird report identifies Ivy Cottage as a building with a potential for providing roosting for both birds and bats. The remains of a large bird nest was found in the loft space, and whilst the survey was undertaken outside the bat roosting season, the construction of the building would allow for bat roosting opportunities. The biodiversity report acknowledges that the land at the rear of the site, because of its past use as an orchard has the potential to be of value for British wildlife. However, given the time that the survey was undertaken it is recognised that further survey work requires to be undertaken to accurately measure the value of the site and building.

Environmental Health

The site looks like it was previously used as an orchard from around 1925 to 1990. Whilst this is unlikely that any residual contamination would be of such magnitude to prevent development, in the past, apple / fruit growers did often use some Arsenic (As) and lead (Pb) based pesticides (e.g., calcium arsenate, lead arsenate and copper arsenate), which could have persisted/built up in the surrounding soils. Given the sensitive end use of the proposed development, the Council would anticipate that a Phase 1 Contamination Risk Assessment would therefore accompany any submission. It is likely that should the Phase 1 confirm that the site was used for fruit growing, some intrusive investigations would be needed to ensure the soils are suitable for reuse.

Only 3 properties would be likely to be impacted by road noise: Plots 1, 2 and Ivy Cottage. It would be expected the developer takes account of road noise in the construction of these properties specifically (high specification glazing, doors etc). However, noise is a relatively insignificant issue for this development and the Council would only require details of the construction of these properties which could be covered in a simple pre-construction condition or provided within the application. Building regulations would take account of transmission sound between properties.

Comment: The application is supported by a report by Wardle Armstrong on the possible contamination of the land at the rear of Ivy Cottage. Of the ten sample holes and the three clay samples, there was only one point at which the contaminant (lead in this case) was higher than the recommended GAC value. The report's conclusion was that given the low overall reading of contaminants on the site, the single high reading was not of significance.

Other

The proposal may trigger education contributions and Core Strategy Policy H2 explains affordable housing contributions requirements for developments of 5 or more dwellings or a site area of 0.16ha outside of towns.

Comment: It is acknowledged that the application may generate financial contributions toward public services. When these are known the applicant will prepare a S106 that provides for this. Affordable housing is an important issue in the Staffordshire Moorlands. However, provision of affordable housing has a cost to it that some sites are incapable of satisfying. This application is supported by a financial statement showing that the development is incapable of providing "affordable" housing in its policy sense. The site does, however, make provision for smaller "more affordable" housing within the development.

DESIGN

Use

The application proposes the erection of 13 dwellings on the site. The proposed use is therefore residential.

Amount

The proposal is for the erection of 13 dwellings. These comprise a mix of 2x2 bedroom, 6x3 bedroom and 5x4 bedroom dwellings.

Layout

The application site is a long, narrow site. The requirements of the County Highway Service dictate the visibility that is required to provide a safe access to both this site and the adjoining potential development site. Dwellings of a modest scale have been arranged alongside the road in an informal pattern to respect the rural character of the area.

Scale

The application proposes two storey dwellings.

Landscaping

Landscaping is proposed around the perimeter of the site in accordance with the recommendations of the Tree Report.

Appearance

The proposed development uses vernacular architecture to bolster the attractive rural character of the area. Dwellings at the front of the site face the road in a traditional way and use natural sandstone in their construction.

ACCESS

VEHICULAR AND TRANSPORT LINKS

The site is located within the development boundary of Alton. Consequently, it is considered to represent sustainable development. The village centre is about 420m to the north of the site and therefore within comfortable walking or cycling distance. The village centre contains a range of small shops, a doctors surgery and other local services.

INCLUSIVE ACCESS

The development is capable of providing for occupation by less abled people through compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations.