

Rob Duncan  
Planning  
Consultancy



# **PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**ALTON BRIDGE HOTEL, STATION ROAD,  
ALTON**

**SEPTEMBER 2016**



**Site Address:**

Alton Bridge Hotel, Station Road, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4BX

**Applicant:**

Mrs. S. Williamson

**Proposal:**

Retention of extension to outbuilding, 2no. lamp standards  
and overflow car park

**Planning Statement:**

**Date Issued:** 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016

**Job Reference:** RDP/2016/125

**Report Prepared By:**

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mrs. S. Williamson to seek retrospective planning permission for the retention of two lamp standards, and an extension to an existing outbuilding, and the creation of an overflow car park at the Alton Bridge Hotel, Station Road, Alton. The component parts of the application break down as follows:

### Lamp Standards

1.2 Two lamp standards have been erected on the site. These each stand to a height of 2.76 metres, and are constructed from cast iron with a painted white finish. The lamp standards provide external illumination to the beer garden at the northernmost end of the site.

### Extension to Outbuilding

1.3 Works have been undertaken to extend an existing outbuilding on the site to provide additional storage associated with the operation of the public house. The extension encompasses an area of some 40.83m<sup>2</sup> and stands to a maximum height of 2.8 metres.

### Overflow Car Park

1.4 To the west of the main beer garden and to the north of the outbuilding referred to above, there is an open, flat area of land that has recently been laid as hardstanding upon which an overflow car park has been created. This has capacity for approximately 8 vehicles and was created in order to address existing car parking deficiencies on the site.

## **2 Site Description**

2.1 The Alton Bridge Hotel is a pleasant, two storey hotel, located on Station Road, a short distance west of its junction with Farley Lane/New Road. Station Road separates the hotel from its associated beer garden, which extends northwards towards the banks of the River Churnet. The site benefits from a modest area of parking immediately adjacent to the hotel (3 spaces), with further parking located on the access track/hardstanding that runs through the beer garden to the north (5 spaces). Within the site, and to the northwest of the hotel, lies an existing building that is utilised as a storage facility for the hotel. In front of that building lies the area of hardstanding that has been laid to create the overflow car park. These parts of the site lie outside the defined settlement boundary of Alton and are thus within the rural area. The site as a whole also lies within the Alton Conservation Area, and to the immediate west of the Grade II Listed Alton Bridge. A further Grade II Listed Building (The Talbot Public House) lies to the southeast of the main hotel building.

## **3 Planning Policy**

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS6a of the Core Strategy relates to the Larger Villages Strategy and states that the Council will retain and enhance the role of the larger villages (which includes Alton) as rural service centres by, amongst others:

- *Enabling appropriate development which supports and increases the range of quality of services and facilities available to the rural areas;*
- *Protecting services and facilities which are essential to sustain rural living;*

3.3 Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy relates to the Other Rural Areas Strategy and states that these areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs and sustain the rural economy by, amongst others:

- *Allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building;*
- *Allowing community facilities which meet a local need, where that need cannot be met in a settlement within the hierarchy. In such cases the development should be in a sustainable location close to an existing serviced settlement;*
- *Enabling the limited expansion or re-development of an existing authorised business for employment uses;*

3.4 Policy C1 of the Core Strategy relates to Creating Sustainable Communities and states that in order to create sustainable communities the Council will, amongst others:

- *support proposals which protect, retain or enhance existing community facilities;*
- *require development proposals to incorporate high quality locally distinctive design features and layouts that will reduce crime and the fear of crime and support inclusive communities;*

3.5 Policy R1 of the Core Strategy relates to Rural Diversification and states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to Design Considerations and states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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.

3.7 Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to the Historic Environment and states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient

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monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains. It will seek to achieve this by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance; and preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

- 3.8 Policy SD4 of the Core Strategy states that development proposed within the floodplain will be guided to first make use of areas at no or low risk of flooding before areas at higher risk, where this is viable or possible and compatible with other policies aimed at achieving a sustainable pattern of development. Development deemed acceptable within areas at risk of flooding due to national or other policies or other material considerations, must be subject to a flood risk assessment. Additionally, approved schemes must be designed and controlled to mitigate the effects of flooding on the site and the potential impact of the development on flooding elsewhere in the floodplain.

#### **4 Other Material Considerations**

##### ***National Planning Policy Framework***

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development and seeks to secure high quality design and safeguard heritage assets. The content of this document is explored in more detail in the Planning Assessment below.
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## 5 Planning Assessment

5.1 Policies SS6a of the adopted Core Strategy lends support to development which supports and increases the range and quality of services and facilities available to the rural areas, with policy SS6c making provision for community facilities which meet a local need where that need cannot be met within a settlement, whilst also allowing the extension of existing rural buildings in accordance with policies R1 and R2 of the Core Strategy. Similar provisions are set out within policy C1 of the Core Strategy which states that the Council will support proposals which protect, retain or *enhance* existing community facilities. In addition to the above, policy R1 of the Core Strategy states that development will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. It goes on to state that appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution. Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy complements the above, and sets out requirements in terms of design.

### Extension to Outbuilding

5.2 The extension undertaken to the existing outbuilding is modest in its proportions and reflects the scale, dimensions and materials of construction of the building to which it is attached. The extension has facilitated increased storage provision for the hotel and is considered to be reasonably required to support its operation. On approach to the site along Station Road the elevated position of the highway to the east and open nature of the beer garden mean that the end gable and roof of the existing building is visible in



public views. However, as one gets closer to the building, an existing stone wall and mature laurel hedge provide a reasonable degree of screening to the development on approach from both directions, thereby helping to soften the impact of the extension on the character of the area. Public views are also afforded from the nearby Alton Bridge, which is elevated above the site. However, in such views the existing structure is set behind a leylandii hedgerow which helps to limit its intrusion.

- 5.3 Overall, I consider the extension undertaken to the building helps to address a need for additional storage associated with the hotel operations, and is modest in relation to the building to which it is attached. As a consequence it helps to enhance the existing community facility to the benefit of the rural economy. The extension undertaken to the existing outbuilding is therefore acceptable in the context of policies SS6a, SS6c, C1, R1 and DC1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

#### Lamp Standards

- 5.4 The applicant has erected two lamp standards on the site. These adopt a fairly traditional style of design, and are constructed from cast iron with a white painted finish which relates well to the white external finish of the hotel. The lamp standards serve to enhance the existing beer garden, providing light for customers who wish to sit outdoors and have a drink or eat some food. They furthermore help to enhance the overall security of the site by providing illumination in an area that would otherwise be unlit.
- 5.5 The lamp standards are clearly visible within the surrounding area, including from Alton Bridge and along Station Road, but are not considered to be unduly harmful to the character of the area as they adopt a style of design that is in-keeping with the historic character of the area. They are furthermore viewed in the context of the existing beer garden tables and
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umbrellas. This leads me to conclude that the lamp standards are consistent with the provisions of policies SS6c, C1 and DC1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

#### Overflow Car Park

- 5.6 The existing hotel is served by a very modest area of parking, encompassing 3 parking spaces immediately adjacent to the hotel, and 5 spaces within an area of hardstanding within the existing beer garden portion of the site. The applicant does not consider this level of parking provision to be sufficient to meet the needs of the hotel and during busier periods, particularly the summer months, the hotel is frequented by a larger number of visitors. A number of these either randomly within the site or on the adjacent highway. Whilst it is recognised that there are no on-street parking restrictions in the vicinity, it is considered that the narrow nature of the highway does not lend itself well to such on-road parking, and thus to help alleviate these issues, the applicant has laid an area of hardstanding to create an overflow car park on the parcel of land to the west/northwest of the adjacent beer garden.
- 5.7 The overall flow car park is able to accommodate approximately 8 additional car parking spaces which will be made available to customers of the hotel during busy periods. It is reasonably well contained by the existing boundary vegetation that surrounds it, with the existing outbuilding to the south providing further screening of parked cars. Some glimpses through to this area are afforded from the Alton Bridge, but it is considered that such views would see the cars in the context of the existing beer garden and its associated paraphernalia that lies in the foreground, thereby limiting its impact. The enclosure of the site by existing vegetation means that the development will not, in my opinion, have a significantly harmful impact on the character of the local landscape. I would furthermore submit that the benefits of this component of the application in providing additional off-street parking provision to the benefit of highway safety in the locality, serves

to outweigh its visual impact. This leads me to conclude that the overflow car park is consistent with the provisions of policies SS6a, SS6c, C1 and DC1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

#### Impact on Heritage Assets

5.8 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. The NPPF goes on to state in paragraph 131 that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

5.9 Similar provisions are set out within policy DC2 of the adopted Core Strategy which seeks to safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient

monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains.

5.10 The application proposals themselves do not directly relate to a Listed Building, but the site is acknowledged to lie adjacent to the Grade II Listed Alton Bridge. This structure dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and comprises a single segmental arch that spans the River Churnet. A further Grade II Listed Building, the Talbot Public House, is located to the southeast of the main hotel building. Both structures appear to be in good condition and given their listed status and the prominence of Alton Bridge in particular, are considered to have relatively high significance as heritage assets. The site furthermore lies within the Alton Conservation Area, which itself is considered to constitute a heritage asset of moderate significance.

5.11 The extension to the existing outbuilding is not considered to have any harmful impact on the setting of the Grade II Listed Bridge, as it is located a fair distance away and does not appear dominant in views from or towards the bridge. It is furthermore segregated from the beer garden by an existing leylandii hedgerow. It is furthermore not visible from the Talbot Public House owing to the presence of the existing hotel. Similarly, whilst some glimpses of the overflow car park are afforded from Alton Bridge, it is not considered that such parking would be unduly harmful to the setting of the listed building given that the area of land immediately adjacent to the bridge is already well established as a beer garden and contains an existing parking area and associated beer garden paraphernalia. Parking also occurs on the highway close to the bridge during busy periods as well. The proposed lamp standards are clearly visible from Alton Bridge, but are not considered to

detract from its setting given their complementary design and proximity to the nearby tables and umbrellas.

5.12 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF advises that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF goes on to state that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

5.13 There is no definition within the NPPF as to what constitutes substantial or less than substantial harm, but the Planning Practice Guidance provides some assistance in this regard, confirming that:

*“In general terms substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest”. (Paragraph 017 refers).*

5.14 It is submitted that for the aforementioned reasons the proposed retention of the extension to the outbuilding, the lamp standards and the overflow car park result in “less than substantial harm” to the significance of the heritage asset. Any impact arising needs to be balanced against the benefits of the proposal and in this regard it is noted that the proposal provides additional storage to serve the needs of the business, provides additional illumination to

enhance the quality and safety of the beer garden, and provides valuable additional car parking space to the benefit of highway safety within the locality. I submit that these benefits serve to outweigh the less than substantial harm that would arise to the significance of the identified heritage assets, and as such the proposal accords with the provisions of policy DC2 of the adopted Core Strategy and guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### Flood Risk

- 5.15 The application site lies partly within Flood Zone 2 and partly within Flood Zone 3. Policy SD4 of the Core Strategy states that development proposed within the floodplain will be guided to first make use of areas at no or low risk of flooding before areas at higher risk, where this is viable or possible and compatible with other policies aimed at achieving a sustainable pattern of development. Development deemed acceptable within areas at risk of flooding due to national or other policies or other material considerations, must be subject to a flood risk assessment.
- 5.16 It is considered that the land identified within the application for the extended storage building, overflow car park and siting of the lamp standards is the only feasible option available to the applicant, given the unavailability of any land outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 within their ownership to be utilised for such purposes. It is furthermore contended that all three components of the application are either less vulnerable or water compatible developments, thus limiting their susceptibility to flooding.
- 5.17 The extended storage building is located within Flood Zone 2, and is a low-risk use. It is an open fronted structure that will enable flood waters to flow through it and as a consequence will not give rise to any flood impacts elsewhere. The lamp standards will not derive any flood impacts as they
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occupy very modest footprints, and the overflow car park that has been created replaces a very cut up and disturbed parcel of land that was left by the previous owner. The hardstanding is permeable as a consequence the proposal will have no materially greater impact in terms of flood risk compared to its prior appearance. The open nature of the car park furthermore means that it is compatible with flood waters. No vulnerable buildings are proposed, and as such I reach the conclusion that the developments proposed in this application will not be at risk of harm from flooding, nor will they give rise to additional flood impacts. The development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy SD4 of the adopted Core Strategy.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Paragraph 186 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state in paragraph 187 that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF furthermore states that proposals which accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay.
- 6.2 It is considered that extension to the outbuilding is an appropriate form of development in the rural area in that it will enhance the operations of the business, and in turn the existing community facility, by providing additional storage space. The building is modest in size and adopts a form, design and palette of materials that is complementary to the existing building to which it is attached. It furthermore benefits from a reasonable degree of screening within the locality.
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- 6.3 The lamp standards erected are considered to be of an appropriate design, and provide an enhanced external environment of the beer garden of the hotel, to the benefit of local residents and tourists. They are therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of their impact on the character of the area.
- 6.4 The overflow car park is also considered to be an appropriate form of development within the rural, having regard to its benefits in providing additional off street parking provision to alleviate existing parking problems during busy periods. The land benefits from reasonably good screening from the public domain, in particular from boundary vegetation, as such will not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.5 The developments as a whole are furthermore considered likely to result in less than significant harm to the significance of nearby heritage assets, and that any harm arising is outweighed by the respective benefits of the development. The developments will furthermore not give rise to any flooding impacts, nor are they developments that are vulnerable to flooding.
- 6.6 The developments are therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS6a, SS6c, R1, C1, SD4, DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.7 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission to retain the extension to the outbuilding, the lamp standards, and the overflow car parking area.