Hewitt&CarrArchitects

Design & Access Statement
Heritage Statement

Proposed Addition of New Detached Outbuilding
2 Castle Barn, Castle Hill Road, Alton ST10 4AJ
Mr J Spooner

Document Version: One
Date: June 2017
Completed By: Kate Walker

Design and Access Statement in support of the

Proposed Addition of One New Outbuilding at Grade II Listed No.2 Castle Barn, Alton for Mr J Spooner

"Good design can help to create lively spaces with distinctive character, streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale; and places that inspire because of imagination and sensitivity of their designers."

- By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System; Towards Better Practice (DETR & CABE, 2000).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Design & Access statement has been prepared in response to the Government's changes to the planning application process outlined in circular: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, which came into effect on the 10th August 2006.

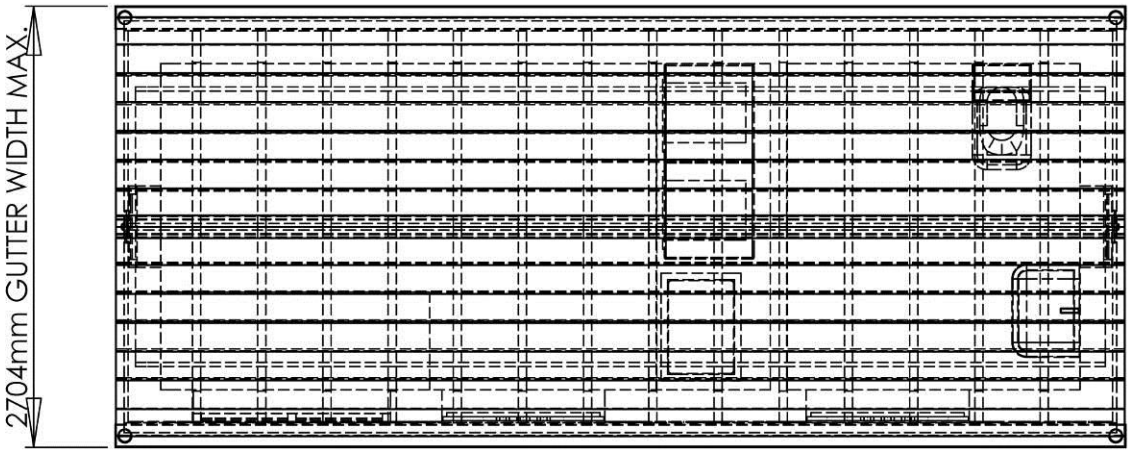
1.2. The statement provides an analysis and narrative of the proposals and is in line with guidance produced by CABE entitled Design and Access Statements: how to write, read and use them.

1.3. This proposal consists of the removal of a dilapidated shed from the rear garden of No. 2 Castle Barn, and its replacement with a new outbuilding in stone.

2.0 USE

2.1. The site previously formed part of Town Head farm, but the building, formerly a cattle barn, was converted into 3 residential units in the mid-1990s.

2.2. The application proposes the construction of a new outbuilding to replace the current timber shed, and will house a small laundry/utility area, together with an accessible WC for use by the applicant's disabled father.



3.0 THE SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1. The application site is located towards the northern end of Alton, in the Staffordshire Moorlands district.

3.2. The barns are situated adjacent to Castle Hill Road, just before the road merges with Town Head and Back Lane to become Wheel Lane. Grade II listed Town Head farmhouse is located to the east.

3.3. The site is well contained, with the boundaries formed primarily by dry stone walling to the rear.

3.4. The context of the site is semi-rural, being on the outskirts of Alton, with open fields to the east and Alton Towers theme park to the north. To the south, a small area of Town Head field has been given protected "visual open space" status and allows clear views to the rear of the properties.

4.0 AMOUNT

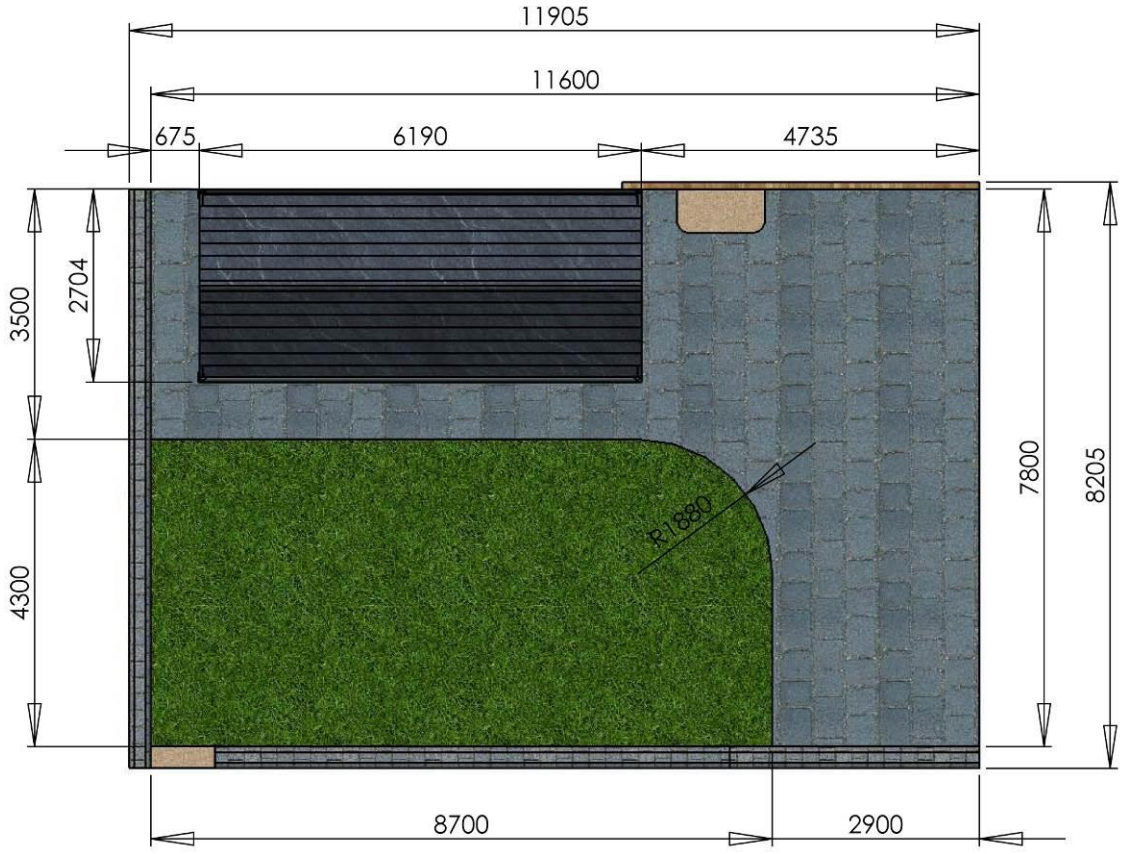
4.1. The proposed building is single storey, with a footprint of 2.4m x 6.04m. Eaves height is 2.4 m, with a ridge at 3.7m.

5.0 LANDSCAPING & ENVIRONMENT

5.1. The new outbuilding will be set within an established landscape setting, formed by the existing dwelling boundary.

5.2. As part of the proposals, the applicant wishes to provide an accessible walkway from the existing barn to the new outbuilding.

5.3. No further alterations to any landscaping or trees are proposed.



6.0 LAYOUT

6.1. The proposed outbuilding will be situated on the site of the current timber shed, in the south west corner of the rear garden.

6.2. Internally, the space is divided into two rooms. The first, an accessible bathroom, and the second, a small utility and storage area.

7.0 SCALE

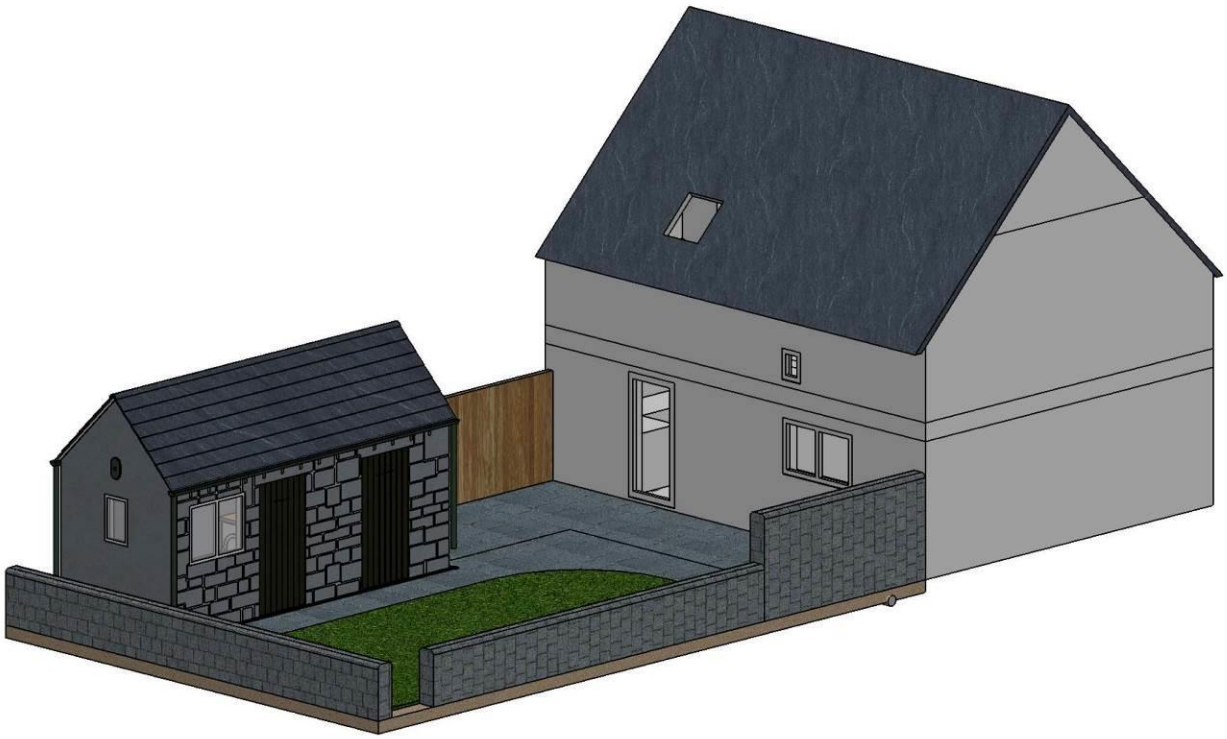
7.1. The scale of the outbuilding has been designed to reflect that of the existing barn and that of a neighbouring outbuilding, whilst providing the minimum accommodation required for its new purpose.

8.0 APPEARANCE

8.1. The proposals aim to respect both the materials palette and the character of the original buildings.

8.2. The outbuilding is to be constructed in stone, to match that of the existing barn. The roof is to be reclaimed Staffordshire blue tile.

8.3. Vertical timber boarded doors and gutters/downpipes will be painted green to match the shutters and rainwater goods on the properties. Likewise, white painted timber windows will reflect the existing.



9.0 ACCESS

9.1. The rear garden area is primarily lawn, with a small patio area adjacent to the barn. The proposals seek to create an accessible hardstanding area to meet the new outbuilding.

9.2. Level thresholds should provide easy access into the building itself, particularly given the proposed use as an accessible WC.

10.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

Description of the Asset

10.1. Castle Barns previously formed part of Town Head farm and date from the 17th century. The 1851 census shows Town Head farm as one of only two farmsteads in Alton, covering some 200 acres.

10.2. The farmstead lies at the northern end of the village, as the high street becomes Town Head – a standard name for one end of a planned settlement such as Alton. Much of the village's arable land covers the area to the east.

10.3. Both the barns and the farmstead are Grade II listed. The barns were listed in 1967 (with an amendment in 1986), with the following description:

ALTON C.P. TOWN HEAD (North-west side) SK 0624-0724 13/62 Cowhouse approximately 25 yards west of Town Head Farm- 3.1.67 house (Formerly listed as "Barn at Townsend Farm") GV II

Cowhouse. C17 with later addition. Ashlar with herringbone tooling; plain tile roof. 5-bay range aligned east-west with a single bay extension to the west. North side: one storey and attic, main range to left, extension to the right. Main range: buttresses at the bay divisions, door to right of centre; casement to left of centre, square window opening to left with boarded door, square loft openings to left and right. Extension: chamfered eaves band and coped verges. Left hand gable: central loft door with pigeon holes over. Right hand gable: 2 ground floor doors and central loft door. South side: main range to right, extension to left. Main range: buttresses at the bay divisions, doors to right, left and centre; 3 windows, one to the left of each door, square loft opening to the right. Extension: large inserted cart entrance to the right, rectangular loft opening to the left.

10.4. The barns are also situated within Alton Conservation Area, designated in 1971. A conservation area appraisal was completed in 2007, which makes reference to Town Head farm – *"Where High Street and Town Head meet, the planned settlement ends, historic buildings thin out, and the roads funnel together, entering the fields as a single lane. Here, key buildings include those of Town Head farm with its fine three storey 18th century farmhouse and detached barns (mostly converted)…..Clear views towards the farm and of building platforms that edge that space to the north are available across the surviving fields."*

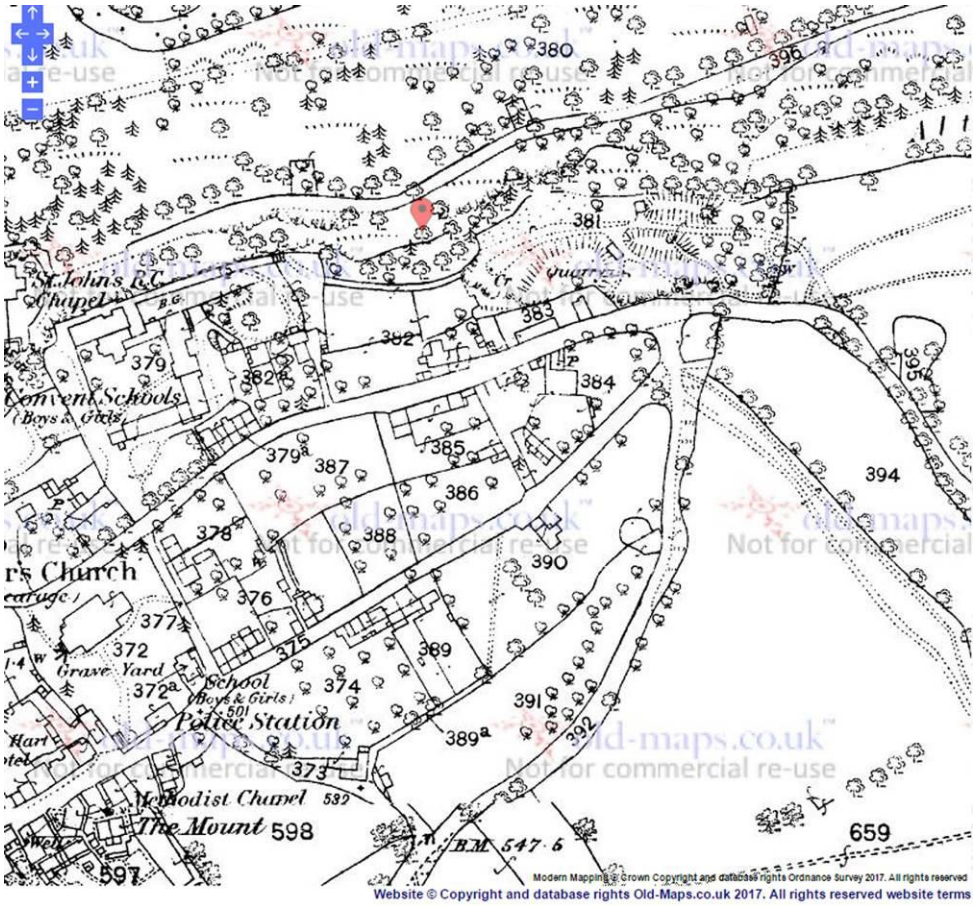
10.5. The remnants of a farmstead such as this are somewhat of a rarity within Alton, and this is unusual for a village within the Staffordshire Moorlands. As a rural community, you would expect agriculture to form a major part of any historic population. However, in 19th century Alton, only 16% of the labour force were involved in pastoral farming, with a much larger percentage being employed in the building trades for the Alton estate.

10.6. The location of the farmstead within the village envelope is indicative of a nucleated settlement, which survive from periods of common cultivation. The layout of farm buildings in relation to the farmhouse suggests a separated parallel arrangement (Brunskill, 2000), with barns running parallel and either side of the road.

10.7. The barn would have originally accommodated the more valuable oxen and cattle, and is typical of a cow byre, with hayloft above, from the 17th/18th centuries. It is constructed in ashlar stone, with a plain tile roof. A two-storey extension to the western end is a later addition.

10.8. It's likely that cattle were originally tethered tail on to a single central passage or, alternatively, nose on to a central feeding passage and tail-on to manure passages at either side. The addition of windows was common during the 19th century, for hygiene and ventilation purposes, and may account for the larger number of openings than would be traditionally be found within an historic cow byre.

10.9. The barns were converted into 3 residential units following planning and listed building consent in the mid-1990s. Alterations, such as the insertion of windows/rooflights, were carried out at the time.



1881 Historic Map

11.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
Assessment of its Significance

11.1. Most surviving agricultural buildings date from the late 18th century or early 19th century. Therefore, farm buildings dating from the 17th or early 18th century, such as this Grade II listed barn, carry far greater significance (Brunskill, 2000).

11.2. Castle barn, together with Town Head farmhouse and other associated farm buildings in the vicinity, provide evidence of a typical layout for North Staffordshire traditional farmsteads, with a detached farmhouse and one or more detached outbuildings, often with no particular pattern or arrangement (rather they were designed to fit the land). The relative scarcity of such examples in the area lends significant weight to the historical value of this group of buildings.

11.3. Alton Historic Character Appraisal (2013) described the context of the barns (HUCA 3), as irregular historic plots, possibly containing the earliest settlement. The report goes on to surmise that the area contains high evidential, historical and aesthetic values, whilst communal value is relatively low. There is high potential for below ground archaeological remains within HUCA 3.

11.4. The open space to the rear of Castle barns, designated as visual open space, retains the overall impression of a rural farmstead, although the division of part of the space to provide domestic gardens somewhat limits this.

12.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
The Design Concept

12.1. The proposals are discussed in detail within the Design & Access statement and the accompanying drawings, but are summarised as follows:

12.2. The demolition of the existing timber storage shed

12.3. The addition of a single storey detached outbuilding to house an accessible WC and utility/storage space

12.4. The building is to be constructed in materials to match those on the existing barn i.e. ashlar stone, reclaimed Staffordshire blue tiles, timber doors (green) and windows (white) and cast-iron rainwater goods (painted green).

12.5. A new area of hardstanding will provide level access to the proposed outbuilding.

13.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
The Impact

13.1. It is apparent that the combination of Townhead farmhouse and Castle barns demonstrate a high level of historic significance, both in terms of group value, but also due to their age and the relative scarcity of such buildings in this particular area.

13.2. The proposed outbuilding will not be visible from Castle Hill Road, and therefore there is no impact on the conservation area from this aspect.

13.3. As the building is to be sited to the south west corner of the garden at the rear, it will not be attached to the main barn, and therefore will not impact upon any historic fabric in this respect.

13.4. Therefore, the main areas of concern appear to be the possible impact on any views from Town Head road (to the rear), and the setting of the heritage assets themselves.



13.5. The proposed outbuilding is indeed larger and taller than the current timber shed, and is likely to have more of an impact within the historic setting. However, the proposals seek to construct the outbuilding in materials to match the existing barn and, once weathered, should appear as another small agricultural building. In this respect, the addition of the outbuilding would have a positive impact, by removing a domestic addition to the rear aspect (the shed), and replacing it with something more suited to its context.

13.6. The neighbouring barn has a similar outbuilding that is not original to the farmstead group (see historic map). This is also constructed in stone, but its use as a garage with room above means it is much larger than that proposed in this instance.

13.7. In conclusion, the addition of a small-scale outbuilding, in traditional materials, will have very limited impact upon the historic setting of the listed buildings and make a positive contribution to the conservation area, which is in line with current NPPF guidance.