

**Planning, Design & Access and Heritage  
Statement in relation to the erection of a  
dwelling**

**Horse Road, Alton**

June 2017

Proposed Dwelling – Horse Road, Alton

Project	Horse Road, Alton
Client	Mr Prince
Reference	234
Project Team	Jon Imber
Version	1

Document Produced by:

JMI Planning Limited  
62 Carter Street  
Uttoxeter  
Staffs  
ST14 8EU

Phone: 01889 566107  
Email: [enquiries@jmiplanning.com](mailto:enquiries@jmiplanning.com)

[www.jmiplanning.com](http://www.jmiplanning.com)

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	3
2	Site and Planning History.....	3
3	The Proposed Development .....	6
4	Planning Policy Context .....	6
	National Planning Policy Framework.....	6
	Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014) .....	8
5	Planning Considerations .....	10
	Principle of Development .....	10
	Impact of the Proposals upon the Highway Network .....	15
	Impact upon Residential Amenity .....	15
	Impact of the Proposals upon Protected Species and their Habitat .....	15
6	Heritage Statement .....	16
7	Conclusions.....	20

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.
- 1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jon Imber, has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.
- 1.3 This statement accompanies a detailed planning application. The application also includes:-
  - Existing and proposed plans and drawings
  - A preliminary ecological assessment
  - An arboricultural survey

## 2 Site and Planning History

- 2.1 The application site comprises a vacant plot at Horse Road, Alton, which originally contained a dwelling and its garden. The site is located on the edge of the settlement, approximately 300 metres north-east of the village centre.
- 2.2 Alton is a relatively large village with a population of over 1,200. It contains a wide range of services relative to its size, including a primary school, a general store, a post office, numerous public houses and a village hall. The village lies within close proximity to employment opportunities at nearby Alton Towers and the JCB factory in Rocester.

- 2.3 The site lies within a steep sided valley with wooded banks to the east and west. There are existing residential properties on the opposite side of Horse Road to the north and east. The site and its surroundings lie within the Alton Conservation Area.
- 2.4 The site is currently accessed via a pedestrian gateway which emerges onto Horse Road. There is currently no vehicular access.
- 2.5 Planning Application SMD/2009/01172, which proposed the erection of a holiday cottage on the site, was refused in February 2010 on the following grounds:-

*“The proposed development by reason of its siting and design will not maintain the present balance between the natural and built environment, lying in a prominent position beyond the existing cluster of built development that will adversely impact on the important vista that currently contributes positively to the character and setting of the Alton Conservation Area and harm the setting of the Listed Building opposite. The proposed development is therefore considered to conflict with the requirements of policies D2, NC18 and NC19 of the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan, policy B13 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and national planning guidance contained in PPS.1 and PPG15”.*

- 2.6 The site has no other recent planning history of direct relevance to this proposal.
- 2.7 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following photographs.

Proposed Dwelling – Horse Road, Alton



Figure 1 - Aerial photograph of site



Figure 2- Site frontage



## 3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 It is proposed to develop the site by erecting a modest cottage.
- 3.2 The proposed dwelling is a two-bedroomed cottage featuring an open plan kitchen, living and dining room and a shower room on the ground floor, and two bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor.
- 3.3 The proposed dwelling has been designed to have a simple, vernacular character and appearance reflecting its semi-rural setting. It is to be constructed from traditional materials including coursed sandstone, lime render and Staffordshire Blue plain clay tiles.
- 3.4 A crushed stone parking and turning area accessed off Horse Road is to be provided to the south of the proposed dwelling. The remainder of the plot would be used as domestic garden.

## 4 Planning Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Paragraph 14 advises that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Local Plan; and also in circumstances where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date 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.

4.3 One of the core principles of the NPPF is that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes that the country needs.

4.4 Paragraph 9 of the NPPF states that “*pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):*

- *making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;*
- *moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;*
- *replacing poor design with better design;*
- *improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure;*  
*and*
- *widening the choice of high quality homes.”*

4.5 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states that “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”.

4.6 Chapter 7 of the Framework relates to design. Paragraph 58 advises that decision makers should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Paragraph 61 of makes it clear that good design goes beyond purely aesthetic considerations and



also relates to how development is integrated into the natural and built environment. Paragraph 63 encourages design which raises the quality of the built environment in its setting.

- 4.7 Section 12 of the NPPF relates to heritage assets. Relevant paragraphs are considered in further detail in the Heritage Statement which assesses the impact of the proposals upon the character and significance of the conservation area.

#### Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014)

- 4.10 The application site lies outside, but adjacent to the Alton settlement boundary. As such, it falls within the category ‘Other Rural Areas’ as defined by Policy SS6c. Policy SS6c states that Other Rural 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*”.

4.11 **“R1 - Rural Diversification**

*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.*

*Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.*

*Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.*

*Priority will be given to the re-use of rural buildings for commercial enterprise, including tourism uses, where the location is sustainable and the proposed use does not harm the building's character and/or the character of its surroundings."*

#### **4.12 "R2 - Rural Housing**

*Other than sites allocated for housing development in the Site Allocations DPD, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted in the rural areas outside the settlement and infill boundaries of the town and the villages:*

- *Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H2.*
- *A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.*
- *Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than*

*the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.*

- *Extensions to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area.*
- *The conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use where:*
  - *the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; and*
  - *it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable. In such cases there will be a requirement for a marketing exercise to be carried out by a suitably qualified professional or other evidence that the building would be unsuitable for a commercial use; or*
  - *conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.”*

## 5 Planning Considerations

### Principle of Development

- 5.1 The application site lies outside the Alton settlement boundary identified within the Adopted Local Plan. Policies SS6c and H2 of the Core Strategy restrict new market housing to sites within existing settlement boundaries.

- 5.2 However, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of housing. In accordance with Paragraphs 14 and 49 of the NPPF policies which restrict the supply of housing such as Policy SS6c and H2 are considered out of date. As such only very limited weight can be attached to Policy SS6c and H2 in the determination of this application. Instead, the proposals fall to be considered against policies in the NPPF in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF identify three components to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

## Environmental

- 5.3 The site lies on the edge of the settlement of Alton, which is identified by the Council as one of the district's 'Larger Villages' in its Settlement Hierarchy. These second-tier settlements are described as *"the most sustainable settlements in the rural areas which generally have a good local social infrastructure, some local employment opportunities and good accessibility to the towns and larger centres. These villages also have an important role in terms of serving and supporting their immediate surrounding rural areas and smaller villages"*. Alton is therefore one of the most sustainable locations for new residential development in Staffordshire Moorlands outside of its main towns.

- 5.4 Alton benefits from a range of services and facilities including:-

- A Primary School
- A Village Store and Post Office
- A Health Surgery
- Several Public Houses
- A Village Hall
- Several Churches

Alton also lies within close proximity to two major Staffordshire employers: Alton Towers and JCB in Rocester.

- 5.5 The application site lies on the edge of the settlement, within walking distance of services and facilities within the village centre. Its location is such that future occupants of the proposed dwelling could access the basic services and facilities required for day to day life without being dependent upon the private car.
- 5.6 There was previously a cottage on the site. Whilst all that remains of the cottage is part of its rear wall, the site nonetheless constitutes previously developed land. One of the core principles of the NPPF set out at Paragraph 17 is to encourage the effective use of land by re-using previously developed sites.
- 5.7 The site is viewed in the context of existing built development to the north and would not be viewed as an isolated encroachment into the countryside. Distant views of the site are limited by topography to the east and west and filtered by established trees to the south. The proposed dwelling would not therefore appear unduly prominent. As such, whilst developing the site would inevitably result in some change to its current open character, this impact would be very localised.
- 5.8 The impact of the proposed dwelling upon the character and appearance of the conservation area is considered in the Heritage Statement at Section 6 of this report. In summary, the scale, massing and design of the proposed dwelling are appropriate to its context, and the proposals would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.9 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which concludes that the proposals will not harm protected species or their habitat.

- 5.10 It is therefore considered that the site lies in a sustainable location appropriate to accommodate the proposed dwelling. The site constitutes previously developed land which is well related to adjoining built development. It is concluded that the environmental impact of the proposal would be minimal.

### **Economic**

- 5.11 One of the core principles of the NPPF is that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes that the country needs. Paragraph 19 of the NPPF prescribes significant weight to the economic benefits of proposals in the overall planning balance.
- 5.12 The proposals would deliver both short term and longer term economic benefits. In the short term the proposal would bring about the economic benefits associated with new development including supporting the construction industry both directly through construction jobs on site and indirectly through the supply chain. The local planning authority would also benefit through the New Homes Bonus.
- 5.13 In the medium to long term, future occupants of properties on the site are likely to support local services and facilities, helping to safeguard their retention and potentially encourage new services in the village. The proposals would also boost the local labour supply, broadening the choice of suitable candidates for local employers.

### **Social**

- 5.14 The proposals would contribute towards meeting the Council's housing requirement, providing a quality home to meet an identified need. The site is well related to the

existing settlement, encouraging community cohesion and ensuring that new residents do not feel isolated. The proposals would therefore contribute positively towards the vitality of the local community, increasing its population with new residents that can support and enhance local services and partake in social and community activities.

### **The Planning Balance**

- 5.15 The proposals involve the re-use of previously developed land sustainably located on the edge of a settlement containing a range of services and facilities. The proposals would deliver the benefit of contributing towards addressing the significant shortfall of housing supply in the district, together with the social and economic benefits associated with new housing development.
- 5.16 Whilst the development of this currently open site would change its character, this impact would be localised. The proposed dwelling would not be viewed as an encroachment into the countryside, and would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.17 On balance, the social and economic benefits of developing this sustainably located site to help in addressing the housing shortfall in Staffordshire Moorlands outweigh the very limited and localised harm associated with the development of the site.
- 5.18 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable development. In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the broad principle of the proposed dwelling is therefore considered acceptable.



### Impact of the Proposals upon the Highway Network

- 5.15 Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where its impact upon the network would be severe.
- 5.16 The site access emerges onto Horse Road, which is lightly trafficked and subject to a 30mph speed limit. The width and alignment of the carriageway are such that vehicle speeds appear to be relatively low.
- 5.17 The submitted site plan shows that adequate off-street parking provision can comfortably be accommodated within the site, and that adequate visibility can be provided at the site access.
- 5.18 The proposals would not therefore prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

### Impact upon Residential Amenity

- 5.19 The proposed dwelling is sufficiently distant from neighbouring residential properties to avoid causing them an unacceptable reduction in daylight or privacy.

### Impact of the Proposals upon Protected Species and their Habitat

- 5.20 Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that “the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined”.

- 5.21 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which concludes that the proposals will not harm protected species or their habitat.

## 6 Heritage Statement

- 6.1 The application site lies within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area, which was designated in 1971. The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record identifies that the nearest listed building is the Grade II dwelling The Cottage, which lies immediately north-east of the site.
- 6.2 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires 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 asset's 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. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- 6.3 The list entry for The Cottage reads as follows: -

*"ALTON C.P. HORSE ROAD (East side) SK 0642-0742 13/38 The Cottage II House. C18. Ashlar with herringbone tooling and smooth-faced ashlar dressings; plain tile roof; brick central stack. 2-cell house aligned east-west facing south. 2 storeys with*

*chamfered eaves band; 2 bays, 2-light chamfer mullioned windows containing casements; door to right of centre opening directly into the right hand room.”*

- 6.4 The application site lies within a small collection of properties at Alton Bridge, which lies on the valley floor beneath the village centre. The Conservation Area Appraisal contains the following specific assessment of the area around Alton Bridge:-

*“From the village, New Road winds down to Alton Bridge, whose fine stonework and balustrades forms a visual link between the two halves of the Shrewsbury estate. South of the bridge is the Talbot Inn, the only building to exist when Yates’ map of 1775 was surveyed, a three-storey house of ashlar set at the back of a courtyard whose western side has the former outbuildings (now the Alton Bridge Hotel).*

*Around 1800 a group of buildings were erected to the west of the Talbot. These include Glenrock, a fine double pile house with an interesting mixture of traditional sashes included some with ‘gothic’ glazing bars, a detail echoed in smaller buildings in the hamlet.*

*New buildings are generally of pleasant design and appropriate scale and materials, but great care needs to be exercised where buildings are prominently sited as the impact can be considerable”.*

- 6.5 Alton Bridge comprises a close-knit group of buildings viewed against the backdrop of steep wooded slopes. Buildings are predominantly brick or stone built, and are vernacular in character and appearance. A variety of building height, orientation, set-back from the highway and materials lends the area an informal and organic character.

- 6.6 The Conservation Area Appraisal does not identify the application site as ‘visual open space’.
- 6.7 The cottages to the north east of the site present an attractive feature in the streetscene. They terminate views along Horse Road to the north and present a strong edge to the public realm.
- 6.8 There was originally a similar cottage on the application site, as shown on the photograph below. It is understood that the cottage was demolished in the 1960s due to drainage issues, which have since been resolved.



*Figure 3- View North along Horse Road*

- 6.9 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF advises that in the determination of 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.

6.10 Paragraph 132 advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

6.11 The proposed cottage is modest in scale. It is to be of stone and render construction with a Staffordshire blue plain clay tile roof, and timber windows and doors. The cottage has been consciously designed to have a vernacular character and appearance. The design of the proposed cottage is inspired by nearby built form and is appropriate to its context.

6.12 The proposals seek to reinstate residential use of the site. The proposed dwelling appears similar in terms of scale and massing to that which previously occupied the site. The dwelling would positively address the streetscene providing a robust edge to the public realm and terminating vistas along Horse Road in a similar manner to the existing cottages to the north-east. Rather than a harmful effect, it is argued that the proposals would better reveal the significance of the conservation area by reinstating the original use of the site.

6.13 The Conservation Area Appraisal does not designate the site as 'visual open space'. It is therefore clear that this is not an important gap which is a key component of the character of the conservation area. On the contrary, Alton Bridge is characterised by

its close-knit built form and this open plot is somewhat anomalous in the context of its surroundings.

6.14 The proposals would not directly affect the Grade II listed dwelling at The Cottage. They would, however, be viewed as a component of its setting. The setting of The Cottage is currently influenced to a large extent by the adjoining dwellings to the north. The character, appearance and siting of the proposed dwelling is inspired by these properties and as such the proposals will not appear out of keeping with the setting of The Cottage.

6.15 As such, it is not considered that the proposals will harm the character of the conservation area or the setting of The Cottage.

6.16 In this instance, even if there were less than substantial harm arising from the proposals that would be outweighed by the public benefits of contributing towards addressing the severe housing shortfall in the district and broadening the housing mix in the area.

## 7 Conclusions

7.1 The application proposes the erection of a modest cottage sustainably located on the edge of Alton. Alton is one of the most sustainable villages in the district in terms of the services and facilities that it contains.

7.2 The proposals would bring about the social and economic benefits associated with new development. They would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area and would result in only very modest and localised impacts which would fail to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits associated with the development.

- 7.3 The development would not detrimentally affect the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby dwellings or the safe and efficient use of the highway network. The proposals would not harm protected species or their habitats.
- 7.4 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable development which accord with the National Planning Policy Framework.