Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT

LAND AT HURSTONS LANE, ALTON

SEPTEMBER 2017

Site Address:
Land at Hurstons Lane, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 1AP

Applicant:
Mr. C. Barks

Proposal:
Erection of a Detached Dwelling

Planning & Heritage Statement:
Date Issued: 8th September 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2017/098

Report Prepared By:
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Barks to prepare a Planning & Heritage Statement to accompany a full application for the erection of a detached dwelling on land at Hurstons Lane, Alton.

1.2 The application site already benefits from an extant permission for the erection of a detached dwelling, granted under application SMD/2016/0036. That application was submitted in outline, with matters of appearance, layout, scale and means of access approved at that initial stage. This previous permission has therefore established the principle of a detached two storey dwelling on the site.

1.3 The submitted proposal involves a modestly different layout to that previously proposed, and encompasses a differing design, and hence requires the submission of a new application. The application proposes a detached two storey dwelling encompassing an open plan kitchen / diner, utility, family room, hall way, cloakroom, shower room, study and lounge at ground floor, with four bedrooms (one ensuite) and family bathroom at first floor. The dwelling will occupy a footprint of 115 square metres and stand to a maximum ridge height of 6.65 metres. Access to the site will be taken via Hurstons Lane as per the arrangements approved under application SMD/2016/0036, with two parking spaces provided to the front of the dwelling.

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a broadly triangular shaped parcel of land that lies on the fringe of the village of Alton. The site lies outside the development boundary of the village as defined by the since superseded

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 1998 and is thus located within the open countryside. The site is also located within the Alton & Farley Conservation Area. The eastern boundary of the site comprises a mature hedgerow, interspersed with mature trees, beyond which runs Hurstons Lane. This hedgerow continues to wrap around the eastern and northeastern boundaries of the site, providing a pleasant sense of enclosure to the land. To the northwest of the lie a row of semi-detached, two storey dwellings (Nos. 3 – 6 The Hurstons). Further residential development has been approved beyond the southern boundary of the site.

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 DPD (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be relevant:

3.2 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the

time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.3 Policy SS3 of the Core Strategy states that development will be located in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and will be distributed between the towns and rural areas. In identifying land for new development or in considering planning applications, development shall also be compatible with the settlement hierarchy identified in policies SS5-SS6 which seek to distribute new residential development between the thee market towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph (72% in total), with the remaining 28% distributed within the rural areas, focused on the 'larger villages'.

3.4 Policy SS6A of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Larger Villages Area Strategy' and states that these settlements (of which Alton is one) shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the local housing needs of the rural areas. The policy goes on to state that their role as rural service centres will be enhanced by protecting services and facilities which are essential to sustain rural living, and that local housing needs will be met by increasing the range of available and affordable housing types and allocating a range of deliverable housing types primarily within the urban area in location across the village with good accessibility to local services and facilities.

3.5 Policy SS6c of the adopted Core Strategy relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Area 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. The policy goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs by (amongst others):

- *Restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which is essential to local needs, including affordable housing;*

3.6 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Rural Housing' and states that only the following forms of housing development will be permitted in the rural areas outside the settlement and infill boundaries of the towns and villages:

- *Affordable Housing;*

- *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 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.*

3.7 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

- *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;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

- *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available.*

3.8 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 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.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sets out policies aimed at significantly boosting the supply of new housing, securing high quality design, and safeguarding heritage assets (amongst others). The content of this document is explored in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2017)

4.2 This document sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.99 years. The content of this document is explored in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Planning Application SMD/2016/0036

4.3 This planning application relates to the same application site as the current proposal, and established the principle of erecting a dwelling on the site. The permission remains extant and is therefore a material fall back position against which this latest proposal must be assessed. This previous application is referred to in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The principle of erecting a dwelling on this site has already been established through the grant of outline application SMD/2016/0036, despite that proposal having some inherent conflict with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy. In determining the previous application it was concluded that the principle of development was acceptable having regard to a previous appeal decision on the site which confirmed the site as suitable for housing given its sustainable location and the lack of a demonstrable five year supply of housing.

5.2 The Local Authority continues to have a significant shortfall in housing land supply, as confirmed by the latest Housing Land Supply Statement (1.99 years) and as such the tilted balance in favour of approval as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework continues to be relevant.

5.3 The existing outline permission remains extant and therefore amounts to a genuine fall back position against which this latest application must be assessed. Having regard to these considerations it is submitted that the principle of development is acceptable.

Impact on Heritage Assets

5.4 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.

5.5 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.*

5.6 These provisions which are reflected within policy DC2 of the Core Strategy. The application site itself does not contain a statutory listed building, but does lie within the Alton & Farley Conservation Area. As a heritage asset the Conservation Area is considered to have moderate to important significance, albeit it is noted that this particular part of the Conservation Area contains a mixture of styles and scales of housing with no overriding vernacular.

5.7 The principle of erecting a dwelling on this site has already been established under application SMD/2016/0036, and this latest proposal seeks to broadly replicate the siting which was found to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the Conservation Area. The approved scheme is shown outlined in yellow on the submitted plans for ease of comparison. The proposed siting serves to continue the linear pattern of development that extends along Hurstons Lane from the southwest and will not have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

5.8 The design of the proposed dwelling differs from that which was previously approved, but retains a number of the key design principles which are common place within the surrounding area including the use of gables, the provision of traditionally proportioned dormer windows, stone headers and cills to windows, exposed rafter ends, and a complimentary palette of materials comprising of Ibstock Ivanhoe Cottage brickwork with a Staffordshire Blue plain clay tile roof. The width of the main gable is furthermore commensurate with that which was previously approved on the site, and the ridge height of the proposed dwelling will be 500mm lower than the ridge height of the dwelling approved to the immediate south of the site (LPA References: SMD/2014/0467 and SMD/2016/0308).

5.9 Having regard to the extant permission on the site, the varying character of surrounding built development, and the complimentary design of the proposed development, it is concluded that the proposed development will derive neglible harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy, and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Residential Amenity

5.10 Historic applications on this site have previously raised concerns about impact of development on the amenity of neighbouring properties to the northwest of the site (3 – 6 The Hurstons). The recently approved scheme however was sited much further forward within the plot, and achieved a much more appropriate relationship to the residential properties beyond.

5.11 This latest submission is based on the siting of the approved scheme and continues to site the dwelling forward within the plot. Owing to its revised design it will project marginally closer to the neighbouring properties to the northwest than that which has been previously approved, but will nevertheless still be located some 13.6 metres from the neighbouring properties at its nearest point. The majority of the two storey part of the dwelling will be sited some 15+ metres away from these properties. The proposal avoids the provision of any principal windows in the rear (NW) elevation at first floor level in the interests of avoiding any overlooking or loss of privacy to those properties, and is considered to accord with the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards.

5.12 The proposal incorporates the provision of a single principal window at ground floor, but this is orientated such that it will not look towards the properties to the northwest, and with appropriate boundary landscaping / treatments (which can be secured via condition), this arrangement will not give rise to any adverse impact to neighbouring residential amenity.

5.13 In terms of other amenity considerations, the proposed dwelling will benefit from a good sized area of amenity space to its immediate northwest, with a much larger area of amenity space located to the north. Future occupiers of the dwelling will therefore benefit from an appropriate level of residential amenity. Such considerations lead me to conclude overall that the proposed

development will not give rise to any significant adverse impacts to residential amenity and that the proposal accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Trees

5.14 As with the previous proposal, the application is accompanied by a tree survey prepared by Tree Heritage. This has assessed the quality of the existing trees on the site, and has identified their respective Root Protection Areas. The submitted proposal will not result in any significant or detrimental encroachment into the Root Protection Area of the main Sycamore tree (Category B) adjacent to the proposed vehicular access, and subject to the provision of appropriate tree protection measures and means of construction of the access (which can be secured via condition) the development will ensure that this existing important tree is safeguarded.

Highway Safety

5.15 The application proposes to utilise the same vehicular access arrangements as those approved under application SMD/2016/0036 and is therefore considered to have an appropriate and safe means of vehicular access. The proposed development accords with the relevant provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Other Material Considerations

5.16 As set out in paragraph 5.2 above, the Local Authority is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing, and as a consequence the titled balance in favour of approval, as set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF, is engaged. Paragraph 14 confirms that in instances where a five year supply of housing cannot be demonstrated, planning permission should be granted unless:

> *"any adverse impacts of doing so* ***would significantly and demonstrably*** *outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole"* (my emphasis).

5.17 The benefits of this development have been assessed against the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 7 of the NPPF.

5.18 The proposed development will derive significant benefits in terms of the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development by delivering a new dwelling to contribute to the overall housing land supply within the District. I submit that such benefits should be afforded significant weight, and in this regard would draw the Local Authority's attention to the appeal decisions enclosed as Appendices A and B.

5.19 The appeal decision enclosed as Appendix A (Appeal Reference: 2217581) related to the erection of a single dwelling in the Green Belt at Gillow Heath in the Staffordshire Moorlands, and was determined at a time when the Local Authority had a housing land supply of 2.3 years. In allowing the appeal the Inspector concluded that:

> *"16. The Council have confirmed they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The proposal would add to the local housing stock and make a positive, albeit modest, contribution towards reducing the current deficit of housing in the area. This is a* ***clear economic and social benefit associated with the scheme to which I attach significant weight"*** *(my emphasis)*

5.20 The appeal decision enclosed as Appendix B (Appeal Reference: 2222484) related to the erection of a single dwelling in the Green Belt at Rookery, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and was also determined during a period when the Local Authority could not demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing. In allowing the appeal the Planning Inspector concluded that:

> *"11. The development would provide a new house, which would be capable of providing accommodation for a family. This is a **significant benefit** of the scheme. The Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing". (my emphasis)*

5.21 These appeal decisions serve to demonstrate the weight that should be attributed to the social and economic benefits of new development in terms of their contribution to housing supply, even when a low quantum of development is proposed, and lead me to conclude that the appeal proposal will derive significant benefits from a social and economic perspective.

5.22 The proposal will also derive further economic benefits during the construction phase and through the expenditure associated with the creation of one additional household. Such benefits can be afforded moderate weight in the determination of this application. Environmental benefits will also ensue as a consequence of providing a new dwelling in a sustainable location that is within easy walking and cycling distance of local services, facilities and employment opportunities.

5.23 The commentary above demonstrates the numerous benefits that will be derived from this development when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole, and it is considered that the submitted proposal will not give rise to any adverse impacts to significant and demonstrably outweigh these benefits.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is considered that the submitted proposal represents an appropriate form of sustainable development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The principle of residential development on the site has already been established under application SMD/2016/0036, and this permission constitutes a material fall back position of the highest weight;

- The proposed development will have a neglible impact on the significance of the Alton & Farley Conservation Area as a heritage asset;

- The scale, massing and design of the proposed dwelling will be in keeping with the varied character of the area;

- The proposed development will not give rise to any material adverse impacts to neighbouring residential amenity;

- The proposed development will safeguard the mature Sycamore tree on the site;

- The proposed development will utilise the same access as that approved under application SMD/2016/0036 and will therefore not give rise to harm to highway safety.

- The Local Authority is unable to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing and as such the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged;

- The proposed development will contribute positively to meeting the Local Authority's recognised shortfall in housing supply, will result in economic benefits associated with additional household expenditure, and will involve the erection of a dwelling in a sustainable location;

- No adverse impacts are considered to exist to significant and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.

6.2 As a consequence of the above considerations it is concluded that the proposed development meets the requirements of policies SS1, SS3, SS6A, DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, as well as policies set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. The conflict of the proposal with policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy is acknowledged, but is considered to be clearly outweighed by other considerations, in particular the extant planning permission on the site, and the continued shortfall in housing land supply within the District.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant full planning permission for the proposed development.