PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING DESIGN & ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Date Issued: September 2017

SITE ADDRESS:

- Land adjacent to Smithy Farm, Hilltop Close, Brown Edge, ST6 8SZ

APPLICANT:

- Mr G Cooper

PROPOSAL:

- Outline planning application for the erection of a single dwelling and garage

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an outline planning application for the erection of a single dwelling and garage on land adjacent to Smithy Farm, Hilltop Close, Brown Edge. The application is in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent approval. The application has been submitted by Ken Wainman Associates Ltd on behalf of Mr G Cooper and is accompanied by a location plan numbered 659-1 and indicative site layout plan numbered 659-2 Rev A.

1.2 This statement analyses the site, the proposal and the policy context within which it is made. Thereafter it provides justification for approval of the proposed development primarily on the basis that the scheme would constitute appropriate infill development within a sustainable village location without harm or detriment to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposed development would be prejudicial to residential amenity, detrimental to highway safety or adversely affect any protected trees or harm any established ecological interests.

2 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 The application site comprises of a 290 square metre rectangular plot which lies to the south western side of Smithy Farm, Hilltop Close, Brown Edge. The site historically formed part of the domestic curtilage to the adjacent farm but when this building was rebuilt it was excluded although there is no formal subdivision. The land currently appears as open and vacant scrub land with no boundary to the public highway at the front or the agricultural field to the rear.

2.2 The following Google Earth image shows the location of the site and its context:-



2.3 The following list provides a brief overview of the history of the site:-
SMD/2002/0799 Replacement dwelling and garage. Approved.
SMD/2001/1232 Replacement dwelling (revised submission) Approved.
SMD/2001/0195 Replacement dwelling. Refused.
SMD/1999/0057 Replacement dwelling. Approved.
SMD/1988/0589 Site for Residential Development. Approved
SMD/1987/0780 Site for 4 Dwellinghouses. Refused.
SMD/1978/0461 Site for dwellinhouse. Refused.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The application proposes the erection of a single dwelling. The applictaion which seeks to accept the principle of residential development on the site is in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent consideration. An indicative block plan shows that the proposed dwelling, which would sit in line with Smithy Farm to the east and the semi-detached properties to the west, would have a roughly square footprint. measuring 6.2m by 7.5m. It is anticipated that the proposed dwelling would be two storey in nature with an eaves and overall ridge height comparable to the adjacent properties.

3.2 The house is intended for the applicant's son who has written to the Council asking to go on the Self-Build Register which has yet to be established. It is anticipated that the son would build the house.

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory 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.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan, which in this area comprises of the adopted Core Strategy (2014).

4.3 Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications (para 12). The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 14) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014).

4.4 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS3 (Distribution of Development); SS4 (Managing the Release of Housing Land); SS6 (Development in Rural Areas); SS6c (Rural Areas Strategy); H1 (New Housing); R2 (Rural Housing); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); T1 Development and Sustainable Transport and T2 (Other Sustainable Transport Measures). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

4.5 Also of particular relevance to this application is the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2017) which sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery.

5. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 As set out above this is an application for the erection of a single detached dwelling. The key issues are considered to be:

- The Principle of development in particular whether the proposed development constitutes an appropriate form of infill development;
- The effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
- Sustainability of Development;
- Amenity;
- Means of Access;
- Precedent

Principle of development

5.2 For the purposes of development the site is within the Green Belt as indicated on the Proposals Map of the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. As such there are tighter controls on what form of development can be permitted and new build residential development is considered to represent inappropriate development unless very special circumstances apply or it is one of a number of exceptions.

5.3 The Local Plan has now been replaced by the Moorlands Core Strategy which does not contain a specific Green Belt policy and the national Green Belt policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework apply. These policies state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is "inappropriate" and that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt unless it is one of the exceptions listed in the NPPF or unless very special circumstances apply. One of the exceptions listed in the NPPF (para 89) is "limited infilling in villages i.e. in any village and not just those named in the Local Plan.

5.4 The key question therefore is whether the proposed development constitutes limited infilling and therefore appropriate development in the Green Belt. It is contended that the lack of an infill Development Boundary should not prevent development

which is in accordance with the National Policy Planning Framework. The first revisions to the Local Plan were published in the year 2000 and yet seventeen years later there is no specific guidance as to where new residential development can be located in Brown Edge. Furthermore, it is considered that it may be some time before this guidance is available.

5.5 The application site is considered to occupy a village location. and is bounded by residential development. The application site, which lies between Smithy Farm and 8 Hill Top Close, and the provision of a single dwelling would clearly represent "limited infilling" within an otherwise built up frontage. The application proposals relate to a former area of domestic curtilage within this landscape and the continuation of an established linear pattern of development. The application site is comparable in size to the adjacent plots and is clearly capable of providing small scale in-fill development. In this respect the proposed development would clearly represent infill development and as such is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would not result in an isolated home in the countryside.

5.6 In reaching this conclusion regard has been had to a recent application for residential development at Hillcrest House, Hill Top Brown Edge (reference number SMD/2016/0490). Whilst this site occupied a more divorced position from the nucleus of Brown Edge village than the application site it was still held to be within the village.

The effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt

5.7 The NPPF confirms that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and confirms that their essential characteristics is their openness and permanence. The application site makes a very limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt at this point and is readily read in conjunction with the neighbouring Farm and adjacent dwellings. The erection of a single dwelling on the plot would ensure that the proposed development would be in keeping with the scale and density of the locality and would continue the form and layout of development along Hill Top Close. The character of the area would therefore not be harmed. Whilst the provision of a single dwelling would result in some loss of openness to what is effectively a green and undeveloped site it is considered that any loss of openness would be minimal as it would be mitigated to a large degree by the presence of houses and field boundaries in the wider area. Although appearance and landscaping, are details reserved for later consideration it is considered that the nature of the site is such that a sensitive detailed design and appropriate landscaping of the proposed dwelling could overcome any possible unacceptable affect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. The proposed development would therefore be compliant with adopted Development Plan policies.

Sustainability

5.8 The National Planning Policy Framework incorporates a presumption in favour of sustainable development and is considered to be a material consideration of the

highest weight in the determination of this application particularly as the Council has an acknowledged 5 year under supply. As a whole the NPPF seeks to expedite the achievement of housing targets and paragraph 14 is clear that harm would have to "*significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits"* of a housing application to justify refusal. Furthermore, in order to significantly boost the supply of housing para 47 of the NPPF asks LPA's to have a 5 year continuous supply (including an additional 5% buffer) of deliverable land at all times. It also goes on to state that housing applications should be considered in the context of presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 49). It further advises that where a LPA cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date.

5.9 The Council are currently reviewing the future housing and employment land requirement for the District for the period 2006 to 2026. The Council calculates its 5 year land supply on a district basis. As at March 2017 it was 1.99 years (with a 20% buffer). The Local Planning Authority cannot therefore demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing site and as a consequence the authority's policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. The NPPF guidance in paragraph 89 that limited infilling is appropriate development therefore takes precedence. The proposed development qualifies as limited infill given the number of units possible and the site's sustainable location in an established area of residential development. This application should therefore be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development as confirmed by paragraphs 14 and 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This is a significant material consideration that weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development.

5.10 Whilst the Government's recently strengthened Green Belt guidance in the national Planning Practice Guidance especially with regard to planning appeals has not generally considered the lack of a five-year housing supply amounts to special circumstances justifying development this does not apply to limited infilling.

5.11 Brown Edge is acknowledged within the adopted Core Strategy (Policy SS6b) as a larger village where new housing development is acceptable. The village has its own School, Church, Village Hall, Post Office and several shops including a supermarket which are clearly capable of meeting the day to day needs of the community. It is located just off the main A53 Stoke on Trent Road and lies an equi-distance between the market town of Leek which lies to the north east and where a wide range of services can be found and Stoke which lies to the south west. The village is also fortunate to have a regular bus service operating with routes to the neighbouring towns including Leek, Endon and Stoke on Trent. The development would therefore be located on the edge of a sustainable settlement and there is more than a reasonable prospect that any future occupiers of the site will not be solely reliant on the car as their sole means of transportation to access services and facilities as they will be able to access them on foot, by cycle and public transport. Development loss of this site is therefore justified by the provision of additional housing through the development of an infill plot in a sustainable edge of village location.

Design& Layout

5.12 CS Policy H1 "New Housing Development" states "all development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing ...and the strategy for the area having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site...All housing should be the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, with the character of the surrounding area." The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

5.13 Whilst the submitted application is in outline with all matters considered it is considered that an appropriate design could be achieved which would respect the character and appearance of the surrounding development. The plot size is comparable to those adjacent to the site and it would appear to be more than capable of accommodating a dwelling which would have an acceptable relationship with the neighbouring dwellings. A detailed scheme which meets the Council's adopted Space About Dwellings Standards could be designed so that there would be no adverse impact on neighbouring properties or indeed future occupiers of the units. On balance it is considered that the proposed site plan adequately demonstrates that the application site can accommodate the density of development sought and that it can be assimilated into the area without any visual harm to the site or the wider surrounding area. In this respect the proposal accords with CS policies H1 and DC1 and the guidance contained in the NPPF more generally.

Highways

5.14 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

5.15 Whilst means of access is not considered at this stage it is anticipated that this would be provided directly off Hill Top Close which currently serves 8 dwellings. The provision of a further access point to serve a dwelling in this location would not be detrimental to highway safety and it is not considered that the application would raise any highway implications. There would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

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.

6.2 For the reasons given above it is considered that residential development on the application site would provide clear social and economic benefits in relation to housing within an accessible and sustainable location in a housing supply context of significant under provision. The concept of village boundaries was extinguished with the loss of the Local Plan and whilst the Core Strategy makes reference to limited infill boundaries these have not yet been confirmed and cannot therefore be considered effective. The LPA is therefore currently in a hiatus between the relinquished policies of the previous Local Plan and the recently adopted but currently undefined policies of the Core Strategy. This application should therefore be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development as confirmed by paragraphs 14 and 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 Notwithstanding the above the NPPF advises that limited infilling within villages is not inappropriate development and whilst the site could be considered to lie outside any designated settlement boundary it clearly lies within a village. The provision of a single dwelling constitutes appropriate infill development within a sustainable village location and no significant demonstrable harm would arise in respect of the proposal in relation to the character and appearance of the area, highway safety or residential amenity. In addition the economic and social benefits which the development would bring in terms of its contribution to housing land supply, new homes bonus, jobs in construction and the construction industry supply chain and spending in local shops would also attract considerable weight in favour of the proposal The LPA is therefore respectfully requested to approve outline planning permission for the erection of a single detached dwelling on land adjacent to Smithy Farm subject to any planning conditions it may feel are necessary.