

## **Heritage Statement**

Bramlea, Malthouse Road, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4AG

SMD/2017/0723

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Smytheman Architectural in support of an application for householder planning consent submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. This is commissioned on behalf of the property owner; Mr Harris. This appraisal has been carried out to assess the impact of a proposal at Bramlea, a modern dwelling within a Conservation Area. The appraisal is concerned with the process of conserving the special architectural and historic character of the area.

1.2 This appraisal has been conducted in accordance with the general guidelines set out in British Standard 7913:2013 'Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings' and Historic England publications 'Informed Conservation' and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' and in particular responds to policies outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In respect of information requirements, it sets out that:

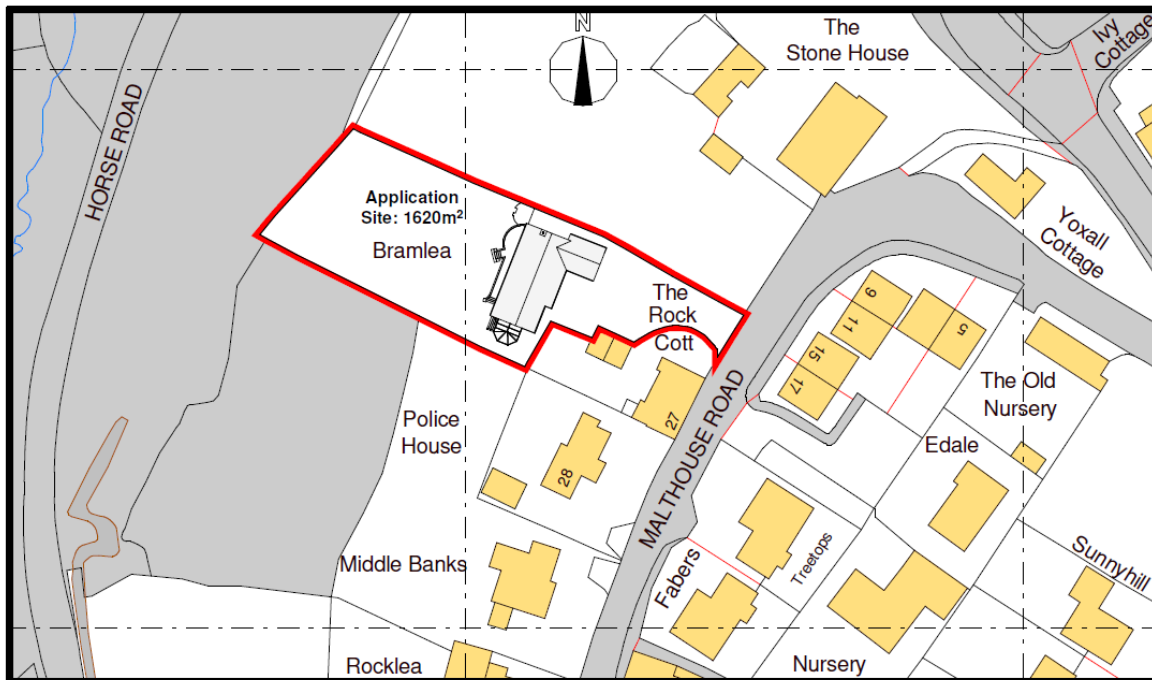
*"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance."*

1.3 Local level planning policy for Alton comes from Staffordshire Moorland District Council, hereafter abbreviated to 'SMDC'. Planning policy comprises the 'Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy'.

1.4 The author Bruce Johnson is an Architectural Designer with over 10 years' experience working with historic buildings. He has studied an MSc Degree in Building Conservation & Regeneration at the University of Central Lancashire and a BSc in Architectural Technology accredited by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists.

1.6 A site survey and visual inspection of the property was carried out in September 2017. Background research was conducted with reference to the interactive planning service, historic mapping databases, archived material, and through discussions held with the applicant. The assessment of the proposals will be conducted with reference to a range of texts, particularly the Historic England good practise guides and local authority's appraisal of conservation area.

## 2.0 Building Location & Site Information



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**Figure 1: Extract from Ordnance Survey presented on drawing by Smytheman Architectural**

- 2.1 Bramlea, also referred to in this document as ‘the building’, is located at national grid reference - SK071422.
- 2.2 The building has a footprint of approximately 200m<sup>2</sup> (2,153ft<sup>2</sup>) set slightly back from the highway; Malthouse Road by circa 28-30m. In the foreground “The Rock Cottage” fronts the main highway within the conservation area.
- 2.3 There are currently 14 Conservation Areas within the area covered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Planning Authority. These are designated at Alton and Farley, Bagnall, Biddulph Grange, Caldon Canal, Caverswall, Cheadle, Checkley, Cheddleton, Endon, Horton, Ipstones, Leek, Stanley and Upper Tean. The building lies within the Alton and Farley boundary. See Section 4.0.

### 3.0 Building Description

3.1 The building is not Listed by Historic England.

3.2 The applicant Mr Harris constructed the main house circa 1980. It is a modern building set back from the highway in the Alton and Farley conservation area.



Figure 2: Historic Ordnance Map from 1976 (left) and 1985 (right) indicating the rough construction date.

### 3.3 Description

3.3.1 Bramlea (edged Red) is a modern single storey dwelling constructed using a cavity wall with a uniformly coursed stone in stretcher bond. The roof is weathered with grey clay plain tiles. Windows are generally Mahogany style UPVC. The property is clearly modern.

3.3.2 Rock Cottage (edged Green) to the foreground of the site is a Grade II listed building, now split into two dwellings immediately fronting the street in the conservation area. The oldest parts of this building date from the C17 hence its listed status.



Figure 3: Bramlea and the Rock Cottage in aerial view.

#### 4.0 Conservation Area Appraisal

4.1 A Conservation Area is defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Conservation Areas usually comprise groups of historic buildings and/or areas of attractive landscape closely associated with the built environment. They can be large enough to include historic cores of town centres such as Leek and Cheadle, or small in scale to contain attractive village scenery or special features such as a canal or historic parkland.

4.2 There are currently 14 Conservation Areas within the area covered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Planning Authority. The application building is located in Alton.

4.3 The Alton and Farley Conservation Area is defined by the following boundary line:

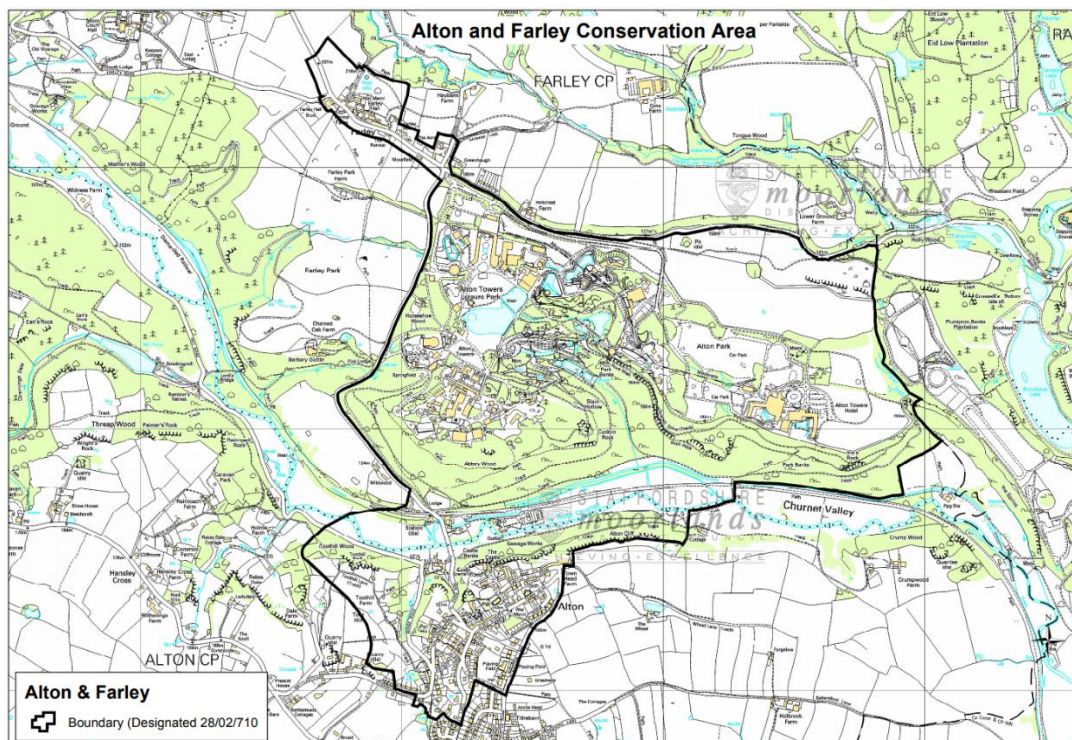
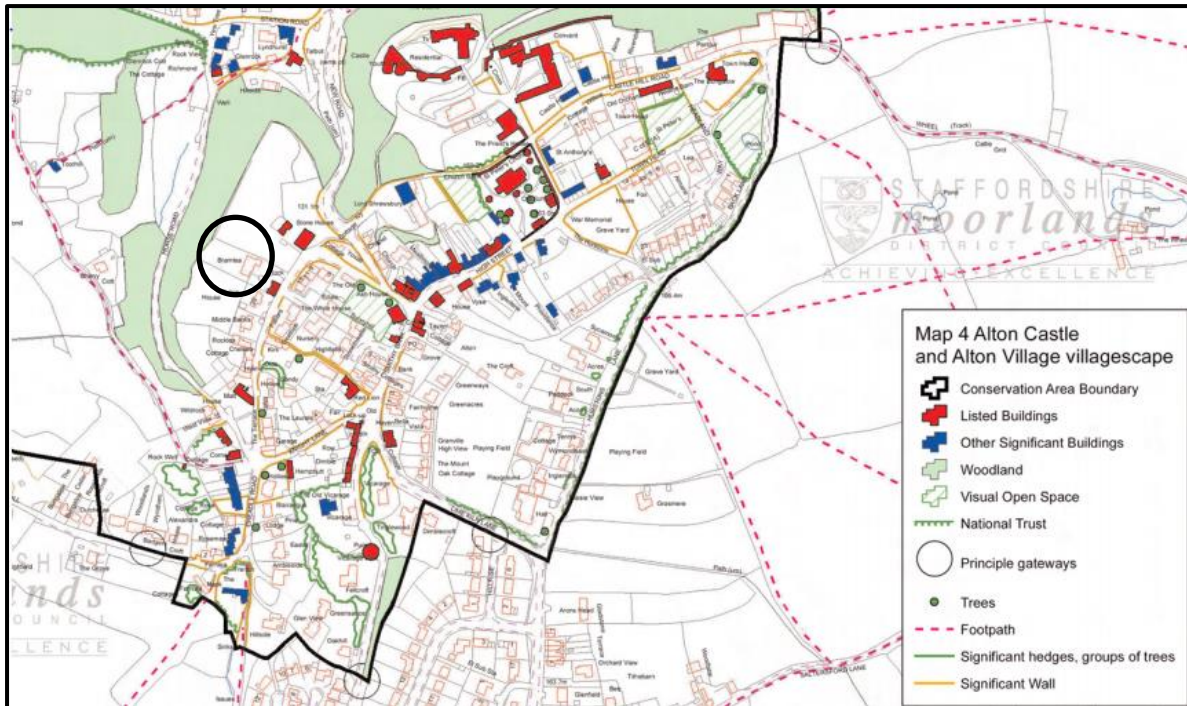


Figure 4: Conservation Area boundary by SMDC

4.4 The Alton and Farley Conservation Area boundary was designated or revised on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1971. SMDC have produced a Character Appraisal for the area and the following observations summarise the character of the area:

- *Alton village lies on irregular ground near Castle Rock, where C12 fortifications were constructed. The Castle, parish church, and Town Head occupy a substantial plateau above the village centre and are amongst the significant buildings.*
- *By 1500 Alton was in decline, it had lost its market as the castle, though garrisoned for Parliament in the Civil War, was of little importance in peacetime. The scarcity of early buildings in Alton suggests limited prosperity, more buildings survive from the mid C18, suggesting an upturn in the local economy climaxing in the C19 when more affluent classes began to build more substantial dwellings.*
- *Stone came into general use by around 1600 and remained the main building material for farms and farm buildings well into the C19. Given the quality of the local stone, ashlar was widely used for all types of buildings, with matching stone used for mullions, quoins, eaves and copings. Consequently, coursed rubble (roughly dressed stone) is relatively rare, as is the use of contrasting materials for walling and detailing. The Talbot Inn and Townhead farmhouse provide examples of ashlar used in a vernacular context but examples can be found throughout the Conservation Area. In most areas ashlar (smoothly dressed stone) was the preserve of the gentry.*
- *No medieval houses survive in the Conservation Area, but the remains of a C16 Cruck frame building is concealed behind the decorative C18 façade of 28-29 Horse Road*
- *Several houses date to the C17 or early C18 and are identifiable through the survival of one or more stone mullioned windows.*
- *The larger buildings date to the C18 or early C19, and are mainly of brick, although stone quarrying continued in Alton throughout the C19.*
- *C19 saw the expansion of the Potteries coupled to new the mechanisation of transport during the industrial revolution. With this came the mass production and distribution of clay roofing tiles, now regarded as the typical local roofing material. Before this slate was most prevalent and before this; thatch.*



**Figure 5: Extract from conservation area appraisal with the site circled. Many of the buildings around the site are not listed or significant.**

4.5 The conservation area appraisal also identifies the negatives in the area. As expected modern development, everyday street lighting, road markings, signage and waste collection have a minor negative effect on the 'sense of place' and overall character of the area. Where possible development that causes this should be avoided.

*General issues*

- 9.8 The following have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area
- heavy traffic flow through the centre of Alton and Farley villages which is both hazardous and disruptive for the local residents and boundary walls.
  - traffic impacting on buildings and boundary walls is a serious problem, and both pollution and vibration are potentially damaging.
  - the congestion and visual impact of parked cars in the centre of Alton (2.2 and 9.3).
  - poles carrying electricity and telephone wires, particularly between Alton Castle and Alton Mill (2.3), and in the estate village at Farley.
  - the presence of wheely bins at the roadside
  - the bland repetitive nature of modern catalogue windows and doors
  - the use of UPVC and applied leading in windows and doors
  - the loss of chimney stacks and chimney pots
  - the loss of drystone walling and replacement by modern materials
  - areas of hard standing made of unattractive materials
  - the absence of traditional materials for kerbs and pavements
  - injudicious use of conifers, hedging and fencing
  - the design and placing of street lights
  - the presence of satellite dishes
  - the loss of front gardens and boundary walls to car parking
  - the empty premises, particularly Alton Mill which has a major impact on the setting of the Castle (2.3 and 9.4).

**Figure 6: Negative influences on the conservation area.**

## 5.0 Proposal Overview

- 5.1 The proposals are modest in scale, and mass. Ordinarily a homeowner would have 'permitted development rights' enabling them to construct a single storey rear extension with a projection of up to 4m the width of the original house.
- 5.2 Because of the falls on the site the overall height of the proposed extension is greater than would comply with permitted development slightly. For this reason, the proposal has been designed to project out slightly further than 4m. In terms of footprint it is a modest 19m<sup>2</sup> net internal floor area.
- 5.3 The proposals cannot be seen from Malthouse Road or any part of the conservation area. The application site; Bramlea is not visible behind the listed Rock Cottage building.
- 5.4 Given its close proximity to a listed building the proposals must be designed so as to not affect the character; this is confirmed by virtue of the proposals being to the rear of Bramlea.
- 5.5 The following images demonstrate the views of the proposed development:



**Figure 7: Proposed visuals demonstrating extension from the side.**

5.6 The proposals are modern and 'authentic' in style as Historic England would recommend. Policy guidance states that within the historic environment new work should be clearly distinguishable and is acceptable provided it is of a high quality of design.

5.7 The proposals do not result in any of the 'General Issues' identified in the conservation area appraisal negatives.

## **6.0 Relevant planning policies**

6.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) requires that planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

6.2 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council are currently working on 'The Local Plan 2016-2031', the Council intends to publish the Preferred Options Local Plan for public consultation during the Summer 2017. Currently the Core Strategy 'Key Documents' set out the Council's town planning policies for guiding development and protecting the environment in Staffordshire Moorlands for the purposes of the 2004 Act. Additionally, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) notes have been used during the design development stages of the proposals.

6.3 National planning policy guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin the general strategy for new development with which all development plans must be in broad conformity.

6.4 Finally, as the application building is listed, conservation policy should be used to assess the proposals. The document: 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' will be referenced as this provides up-to-date guidance on development within the historic environment.

6.5 The proposals have been assessed against these policies in the following sections:

## **6.6 Local Plan**

6.6.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy defines the strategy at the heart of the new plan making. This strategy sets out the overarching spatial planning framework for the long term regeneration. Relevant policies include:

6.6.2 Policy SO8, this states that the LA aim to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and

cultural assets throughout the District.

Assessment: The proposals are well designed in a contemporary manner. However, they have no negative effect at all on the conservation area as they are not part of a streetscene view or vista.

- 6.6.3 Policy SO9, this requires positive development to conserve and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, heritage, biodiversity and geological resources.

Assessment: The proposals have no negative effect on the principal high street façade, additionally the internal arrangements respect the former building floor plan and therefore there is an imperceptible effect on evidential heritage values.

## **6.7 National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)**

- 6.7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) key message is that the “presumption in favour of sustainable development” is considered to be “the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision making” which should be applied by local planning authorities when assessing and determining planning applications.

The relevant sections of the NPPF would be:

Section 7: Requiring good design

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

## **6.8 Section 7**

- 6.8.1 Policy 56 of the NPPF relates to ‘requiring good design’, policy states: ‘The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning’.

- 6.8.2 Policy 58 states design should: ‘respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.’ It also asks that designs are visually attractive as result of good architecture.

- 6.8.3 Assessment: The proposals can be interpreted as modern intervention to a modern property within the area. The host building is not a high significance building and there are no views of the proposal within the conservation area. This is not to say that the design is not high

quality, it is considered that a modern contrasting structure such as this could still be appropriate in the conservation area.

## **6.9 Section 12**

6.9.1 Policy 126 of the NPPF specifically notes that heritage assets are 'most at risk through neglect' or decay. It also notes 'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'. In the case of this application the heritage asset in question is the conservation area character. This is unaffected by the development proposed.

## **6.10 Historic England Guidance**

6.10.1 Historic England have adopted the guidance document 'Conservation Principles policies and Guidance'. When dealing with historic places, guidance seeks to 'conserve' 'significance'. Significance relates to special interest and is likely to be the reason for protection if there is any. It should be noted that policy relates to 'conservation' and not 'preservation'.

6.10.2 Conservation is 'The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations'. In other words, change is not something that should be avoided.

## 7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 To conclude, the proposal fully accords with planning policy, best practise design guidance and conservation philosophy.
- 7.2 The proposals cause no invasion to historic buildings and the effect on the conservation area is non-existent.
- 7.3 For the reasons rehearsed above the effect of the proposals on the host building within its conservation area setting is imperceptible, furthermore, there is no impact to the listed Rock Cottage. For this reason, the author of this report has **NO OBJECTIONS** to the proposals.

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