Heritage statement

Residential Development at Cotton Dell, Oakamoor.

1 & 2 Cemetery Road, Shelton, Stoke on Trent. ST4 2DL.

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— ASSOCIATES —

Construction of residential dwelling

Date

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Introduction

1.1 This heritage statement has been prepared by Byatt Oliver Associates on behalf of Mr and Mrs D Hewins, in order to assess the historic and architectural significance of the land off Cotton Dell, Oakamoor, Staffordshire ('the Site").

1.2 The site lies within the village of Oakamoor which is a settlement within the Churnet Valley and forms part of the Oakamoor conservation area.

1.3 The document should be read in conjunction with the Oakamoor Conservation area character appraisal dated July 2016. Prepared by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Mel Morris Conservation. Whilst this document is not intended to repeat that report it will identify some of the fundamental points.

1.4 The proposal is for the construction of a single dwelling on an existing garden plot within the settlement boundary of Oakamoor.

History & Statement of Significance

The Conservation area

The Conservation Area encompasses the valley bottom, the buildings and the former industrial sites associated with the development of the early iron-foundries and later brass and copper milling and wire-working processes within the valley. It also incorporates detached houses, built by the industrialists, overlooking the valley and contained within a managed landscape of gardens, parks and woodland with borrowed aspects of the wider picturesque setting of the valley.

The key characteristics of the conservation area include the following:

• a scenic wooded environment, dominated by a dense tree canopy of mixed planting (native deciduous and conifers), sheltered and deep-cut within a broad valley bottom.

• dominated by the River Churnet, which is the focus of most of the historic industrial activity and has influenced the linear form of development.

• 'humps and bumps' within the landscape provide evidence of historic industrial activity, ephemeral

but highly significant reminders of bygone industries and transportation structures and corridors.

• dramatic, memorable views and relationships between the River Churnet and engineered

structures, such as the bridge / causeway and weir and the Churnet Valley Railway bridges and tunnel.

• a loud environment along sections of the River, particularly at key times of spate, but a contrasting

tranquil and quiet environment within the woodland walks.

• an acute awareness of the natural beauty of the environment has influenced the design,

orientation and location of buildings – picturesque groups of cottages and detached villas are

scattered along the narrow lanes and occasionally placed carefully on levelled platforms to enjoy the dramatic views.

• an estate identity which has evolved over several generations, built by different entrepreneurs; by adopting much earlier building styles during the second half of the 19th century and 20th century, Thomas Bolton and Sons ensured that they were both preserving the historic character of the

village and reinforcing awareness of their ownership and influence.

• large areas of recreational public open space, and a good public footpath network provide a

high quality environment with generous access for walkers, cyclists and horse riding, and sporting

leisure interest, such as cricket.

"The Site", is a garden plot which is enclosed on all 3 boundaries. Its an irregular shape, with a sloping topography and is currently part of the garden to Brambley Dell.

The history of the site.

The site is briefly mentioned in the Conservation report on page 33 under the subheading "Character 1". Whilst it is not clear what the former use of the site was, the report suggests that the steep sided field on each side of the brook contains evidence of mineral workings and industrial activity, however, maps from 1881 suggest that this land was used as allotment plots for the terrace buildings of Starwood Terrace and The Square or may have even been linked to the School/Village Hall.

It should be noted that the applicant constructed their current residential dwelling Brambley Dell and noted the ground to be loose fill and 20th century waste. As identified within the appraisal, the demolition and construction of the industrial building may have made changes to the watercourse. The terracing of the levels in and around Oakamoor would have had a significant impact on the topography and the "humps and bumps" of Oakamoor.

The Context of the surrounding buildings.

The site is surrounded by 3 building types, each of which have an important part to play in the conservation area. What is evident however is that the evolution in development styles and the changes in architectural design are relevant to this area. The limited but contrasting material pallet and clashing styles are borne from an estate which has evolved over several generations and by different entrepreneurs, each with an overriding awareness for the areas natural beauty. Buildings were designed, oriented and located to make best use of the picturesque views as well as being appropriate for their given use. Developments are also hap hazard with no linear or formal forms. Development simply follows the topography and geology of the area whilst always considering the views and the historic industrial use of the area. Buildings scattered along narrow lanes and on level platforms maximizing views and outlook are key to conservation the area.

1. Starwood Terrace:

A row opposite The Square, known as Starwood Terrace, is a smaller row of terrace properties dated circa 1840 which would have been occupied by the skilled trades who worked at the mills.

Whilst the buildings were built to be simple, economical and fit for purpose, they do show some architectural features, such as dental brickwork, stone lintels and cills, brick wood hooded moulds and a raised band.

The traditional material pallet of dark red brickwork, under a plain clay roof tile is common place for buildings of the style and era.

2. Oakamoor Village Hall:

Formally the village school developed circa 1876, built adjacent to the earlier Methodist Chapel which is the likely reason for the simple elevation treatment to the north. It does however retain most of its original character; with larger windows set higher and buttressing divides in the external walls. Constructed in a more luxurious grit stone with contrasting dressing under a plain clay tile roof, the village hall/school was designed and constructed as a landmark building, however, carries very few similarity with the adjoining building and particularly contrasts with Starwood terrace.

3. Cotton Dell and Star Bank:

Dwellings on the east site of the cotton brook, are later 20th Century developments, accessed off a narrow lane which may have been an original foot path to the charcoal burners in Star Wood.

The developments are all typical modern bungalows, with more modern details and materials.

Within the conservation appraisal, the new buildings are referred to as "well integrated into the surrounding" In our opinion they do not compliment any other form of developments adjoining the site or within the wider context

of Oakamoor and we would suggest set a present for contrasting development in this location.

The appraisal also refers positively to the "quirky nature of the outbuildings", stating "There is an ephemeral village charm to the back lane leading alongside the Cotton Brook, along which there are an assortment of garden sheds and individual timber garden buildings, some slightly ramshackle and some lovingly constructed, all contributing a quirky character to the lane".

Again, this suggests that new development could or should differ from the typical forms of development within the conservation area and that the quirky character is one that is widely supported.

Summary

The proposal is for the construction of a new dwelling within the village settlement boundary. In accordance with the NPPF the principle of residential development within a sustainable location should be supported even if demonstrable harm is caused. Consideration in this instance must also be given to the Oakamoor Conservation area, in reading the appraised dated July 2016 we conclude the following items are key to this development:

- The village layout is and has been dictated by the local landscape
- The existing development does not follow any formal or ridged layout.
- Topography and views dictate the levels and location of buildings.
- A mixture of architectural style and material pallets are evident.
- It is common place for development to be served by small narrow access roads.
- A "quirky" character is welcomed.

It is accepted that the design and style of this application contrasts against some of the village dwellings, however, the size, scale and mass of the development is the same as the neighboring buildings. And whilst matching architectural styles and materials is always preferred, it is in our opinion that if a perfect match cannot be achieved then a clear contract should be considered.

Consideration was given to a design that would complement the village hall, however, it was felt that the two buildings would never be viewed in context and designing a building that replicated an iconic building would be detrimental to the village. Similarly, a scheme that replicated the style and aesthetics of Starwood terrace would not fit well within the site, the two sites would never be viewed together and the proportions of the building would be distorted.

Use	The application is for a new dwelling on domestic land within the settlement boundary.
Amount	The site is suitable to accommodate 1 single dwelling.
Layout & Scale	The layout and scale of the development match the surrounding domestic buildings.
Appearance	The overall appearance of the building will generally enhance and improve the area.
Access	Access to the site is gained at the rear of the applicant's property; the property will be serviced by a single track road, similar to a number of layouts surrounding this development.