PLANNING STATEMENT
including Design and Access Issues

- Date Issued: November 2017

SITE ADDRESS:

- Ridgeway House, Longsdon, Stoke on Trent, ST9 9QF

APPLICANT:

- Mr A & Mrs G Laverick

PROPOSAL:

Submission of amended outline planning application with some matters reserved (except for access, layout and scale) for the erection of a single dwelling with integral garage (amendment of planning permission SMD/2016/0647).

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an outline planning for the erection of a single dwelling on land adjacent to Ridgeway House, Longsdon. The application is in outline with means of access, layout and scale sought. Matters of appearance and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval. The application is accompanied by a site layout plan, arboricultural report and topographical survey.

1.2 Outline planning permission (SMD/2016/0647) for a single dwelling was granted, with conditions, om 19 July 2017. Scale, appearance and landscaping were reserved for future approval. The applicant wishes to make some changes to the approved scheme. The main changes are the widening of the access onto Leek Road to 6 metres wide and repositioning the proposed house sighly away from the western boundary and slightly further north into the site.

2 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 The application site lies in the Green Belt within a loose ribbon of residential development on the northern side of Leek Road, Longsdon. The application site, which forms part of the existing curtilage to Ridgeway House, comprises of a broadly rectangular parcel of land which extends to approximately 1050 square metres. It falls into two distinct parts with the front area, which equates to approximately one third of the site, adjacent to and level with the carriageway. The remaining lawned area to the rear lies at a slighty elevated position. The north western and north eastern boundaries of the site are formed by native hedgerow supplemented with mature trees. The south eastern roadside boundary is formed by a drystone wall with a hedgerow behind. To the south west lies Ridgeway House, a detached two storey brick dwelling and associated rendered outbuilding. Beyond the boundaries of the application site open countryside lies to the north and south and residential development lies to the west. The surrounding area exhibits a clear linear pattern of which the application site forms a part.

2.2 For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the Green Belt but in a location that is considered sustainable in terms of its proximity to services and public transport. The following Google Earth image shows the location of the site and its context:-



2.3 Photographs of the site and its surroundings are shown below:-



Lower part of the site looking north east



Lower part of the site looking north/north west



Upper part of the site looking north



Upper part of the site looking east



Upper part of the site looking south west



Ridgeway House



Existing access arrangement



Approach from south west

2.4 The following list provides a brief overview of the history of the site:-

SMD/2005/0808 - Side conservatory. Refused.

SMD/1990/0939 - Extension for bedroom, swimming pool & conservatory. Refused.

SMD/2016/0647 - Outline planning application with some matters reserved (except for access, layout and scale) for the erection of a single dwelling with garage. Approved with conditions.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The essential differences between this proposal and the approved scheme are that the proposed house is in a amended location, and it is proposed to increase the width of the access opening onto Leek Road.

3.2 The proposed dwelling, would be three or four bedroomed; 2 storey in height; and would be located on the raised area of garden towards the rear of the plot. The proposed dwelling and integral garage would have a broadly rectangular floorplan with a combined footprint of approximately 88 square metres and would be located further north-westwards and eastwards on the site.

3.3 The rear of the proposed house would be about 5 metres closer to the north-western site boundary than the house on the approved scheme. However, the distance to the north-western boundary from the rear of the proposed house in this application would still be reasonably substantial; between about 13 to 20 metres. The proposed building would also be located further to the east – please see the submitted plans.

3.4 It is proposed to widen the existing access to 6 metres The existing access onto Leek Road would be widened to 6 metres to improve access and egress from the site.

3.5 Private amenity space would be provided to the rear and side of the building whilst a paved parking area would be provided to the front (south-east) and a paved area to the south-west of the building. A new paved parking area for the occupiers of Ridgeway House would be provided to the south west of the proposed access.

3.6 The scheme is shown on the submitted drawings numbered 3583-01 Rev. A (Site & Location Plan); 3583-02 Rev F (Site Plan Detail), and 3583-03 Rev. C (Plans Elevations & Sections).

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1. The key document when assessing planning applications is the Development Plan for the area. In the Staffordshire Moorlands the Development Plan consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy approved in March 2014 supported by a number of Strategic Planning Documents and Design Guidance. Also, a material consideration is national planning policy as set ou in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF can be particularly important where the Development Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date.

4.2. Relevant policies in the Core Strategy include:

- **SS1 - Development Principles.**
- **SS1 (a) – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.**
- **SS2 - Future Provision of Development.**
- **SS3** - **Distribution of Development.**
- **SS4 – Managing the Release of Housing Land.**
- **SS6b – Smaller Villages.**
- **H1 - New Housing Development.**
- **DC1 – Design Considerations.**
- **DC3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting**

4.3. For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full here but they are referred in more detail where appropriate in the following section.

4.4. The application lies in the Green Belt. However, there is no specific Green Belt policy in the Core Strategy. Instead the Council relies on national policy as set out in Chapter 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4.5. In the previous Local Plan before the Core Strategy was adopted the Green Belt washed over the entire village of Longsdon which consists of several areas of housing in ribbons along the roads in the village.

4.6. The key Development Plan policy with regard to the application site is Policy SS6b (Smaller Villages). This sets out the policy, amongst other things, for new housing development in the Smaller Villages of which Longsdon is one. A key element of this policy is tightly drawn Infill Development Boundaries. However, the Infill Development Boundaries for the Smaller Villages have not yet been drawn up and it is possible that they may not be drawn up at all; see later in this section of the Statement as the current Local Plan proposals do not propose infill boundaries in Small Villages. Therefore, the position with regard to the Green Belt is that it still washes over the village and the policies in the NPPF apply.

4.7. 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. As at March 2017 it was 1.99 years (with a 20% buffer).

4.8. Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states that *"relevant policies for housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing site".* As there is significantly less than five years supply of deliverable housing land in the District then the Core Strategy policies relating to housing supply are out-of-date. The relevant policies are Core Strategy policies SS6b (Smaller Vilages) and Policy R2 (Rural Housing). This does not mean that they are discounted but that less weight should be given to them. Given the fact that the District has had a shortage of deliverable housing land for eight years it is contended that even less weight should be given to these policies than if the shortage of supply was only recent.

4.9. Whilst new build development in the Green Belt is generally inappropriate there are certain exceptions which are allowed and one of these in Pargaraph 29 of the Framework is "limited infilling in villages". The proposed development qualifies as limited infill given the number of units possible and the site's sustainable location in an established area of ribbon 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. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.1. The pertinent 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;
- Design and Layout;
- Means of Access;
- Trees.

Principle of development & the effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt

5.2 The principle that the site is appropriate for infill development was accepted in the previous approval. The key question with regard to this application is whether the proposed development would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict the purposes of of including land in the Green Belt.

5.3 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. Leek Road in this location is characterised by a mix of housing types and sizes as is the village as a whole. The application site makes a very limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt at this point due to its topography and screening.

5.4 The erection of a single dwelling on the site would be in keeping with the scale and density of the locality and would form part of the existing ribbon of development along Leek Road. Because of this it is considered that the new dwelling would be perceived as part as part of the existing development and, whilst it would have some impact on the openness of the Green Belt, it is considered that this would be minimal as it would be mitigated to a large degree by the presence of houses and field boundaries in the wider area and the trees on the site. 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.

5.5 At the time the approved scheme was being considered by the Council Local Plan proposals showing an infill development boundary for Longsdon had been published as part of a Local Plan consultation. The proposed village boundary ran diagonally from the south-west to the north-east roughly across the middle of the site. Since then the Council has dropped the proposal for an infill boundary in the village in its latest Local Plan consultation this summer.

5.6 Although the now proposed house would be sited closer to the open fields to the north and the northwest the rear of the proposed house would, at the shortest point, still be 13 metres away from northern site boundary and, at its longest, 20 metres from the boundary where there is a line of mature deciduous trees. If the Council consider that further screening would be appropriate it would be possible to plant shade-loving, fast and large-growing, evergreen shrubs such as Portuguese Laurel (*Prunus lusitanica)* or holly which would provide an all-year round screen.

5.7 The neighbouring house to the west is much closer to the open fields than the proposed house would be and there is are no trees along the northern boundary to mitigate its impact, The house to the west at it's closest point is within a metre or so of the site boundary. Equally, St Chad's Church to the east is situated much deeper in the Green Belt than the proposed house would be.

Sustainability

5.8 The issue of whether the site constitutes a "limited infill site" in the Green Belt was addressed and resolved with the previous outline application which was approved. In the first Informative on the planning approval notice the Council indicated that the proposal was a sustainable form of development which complied with the provisions of paragraphs 186-187 of the NPPF. The proposal would also provide a new house at a time when the District has a significant shortage of housing land;

Design and Layout

5.9 It is considered that the current proposal is in accord with Core Strategy Policy H1 "New Housing Development" which seeks high quality, sustainable housing in keeping with the character of the locality. It would also meet the requirement in the NPPF for high quality design.

5.10 The approved scheme consisted of a house and garage with an approximate 88 square metre footprint; located on the higher part of the application site toward its rear boundary. The proposed new house and integral garage would have a similar total footprint and would be located on the same higher ground but set further north.

5.11 It is contended that the proposed infill boundary is not a valid concern as it has not been implemented and may never be. It is considered that the proposed layout is an improvement on the previous layout design in that this allows the proposed house to be located further north and east on the site reducing the visual impact on the occupants of Ridgeway House whilst still preserving the openness of the Green Belt. The new dwelling because it would be further away from Leek Road would be less visible from the road and there is space for a hedge or shrubbery to the south of the proposed parking and turning area for a hedge or shrubbery. The proposed layout would not harm the mature trees on the site as the proposed development would not imping on the Root Protection Areas.

5.12 The local area is not strongly defined by any notional building line. The Old Smithy to the south west sits hard up against the public highway whilst Ridgeway House, Holly Grange and Crown Cottage are all set back within their plots at differing distances. St Chad's Church is set well back from the highway as is Cross Trees on the opposite side of the highway. The proposed plot size would be comparable to that of The Old Smithy and Crown Cottage and the proposed dwelling would be provided with a small front garden with private gardens to the rear. These features are considered to reflect the general pattern of development on Leek Road at this point.

H*ighways & Access*

5.13 The application proposes to construct a new shared access arrangement as per the approved schem but with a wider access opening onto Leek Road. Drawing No. 3583-03 Rev C shows that adequate visibility sight-lines can be achieved. To

achieve the sight-lines lparts of the existing frontage wall would be reduced in height to 600mm. The proposed plan provides adequate off road turning and facilities within the site for both the new dwelling and the host building. 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. The proposed development represents appropriate infill development and no significant demonstrable harm would arise in respect of the proposal in relation to the openness of the Green Belt the character and appearance of the area, highway safety or residential amenity. Nor does the application conflict with Green Belt policies .The LPA is therefore respectfully requested to approve planning permission for the erection of a single detached dwelling on land adjacent to Ridgeway House, Longsdon, subject to any planning conditions it may feel are necessary.