

Lisa Howard
Planning applications team,
Moorlands House,
Stockwell Street, Leek,
Staffordshire,
ST13 6HQ

Your ref SMD/2017/0028

9th January 2018

Dear Lisa

Proposed residential development at the Moorings, Birchall, Leek.

Please find attached a further planning statement to support the present application for 3 houses.

Yours Sincerely

Gerald Willard
Chartered Town and Country Planner.
MRTPI

Planning statement

Introduction

The application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of 3 houses on the site. The application is a resubmission of an application which sought outline approval for 4 dwellings (SMD/2017/0028) which was refused by planning committee.

This revised application is submitted in outline with the intention of appealing to those wishing to build their own houses to their own style and taste. Should outline planning permission be granted then a later reserved matters application would have to provide full details of design, scale, materials and landscaping to comply with planning standards and requirements. The council would be wholly entitled at reserved matters or detailed stage to refuse any application it considered was poorly designed, un-neighbourly or unacceptable for any sound planning reason. Granting approval at outline stage gives no certainty or indication that a later reserved matter or detailed application will be granted as such an application would be judged on its own merits. Outline planning permission clearly affirms that development is acceptable in principle only.

This statement seeks to clarify and expand upon a few key points as follows:

Principle of development

The council has already confirmed in the officers report in respect of the last application and in the sole reason for refusal (design and townscape grounds). The officers report confirmed:

7.4 The site is within a residential area within the development boundary of Leek. The site is also about a mile from the town centre and close to public transport links and therefore the application site can be described as being in a sustainable location. The principle of new houses in this location is therefore acceptable under the Council's Core Strategy and NPPF which seek to provide new housing within the largest settlements (i.e. towns and large villages) and in sustainable locations. However, the acceptance of the proposal is also dependant on its compliance with other policies in the Core Strategy and other parts of the NPPF (as outlined above in this report), which is to be addressed below.

This still being the case and with no policy changes meantime there is no reasonable reasons to resist development in principle.

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Need for Housing

Paragraph 14 'framework' (National Planning Policy Framework) that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that where a plan is out of date granting planning permission unless such permission conflicts with the framework or where the harm the development would cause would outweigh the benefits.

Paragraph 47 of the requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing. Paragraph 49 clarifies that planning authorities that cannot show a 5 year housing supply should have their relevant policies in plans judged to be out of date and therefore set aside.

The clear and certain aim of the 'Framework' is to deliver enough housing to meet needs and there is a presumption in favour of housing in sustainable locations where there is insufficient housing supply.

In the case of Staffordshire Moorlands their most recent 5 year land supply assessment (dated March 2017) indicates they have only a 1.99 year housing supply which is a very significant under-supply of housing. This places a strong presumption in support of the application.

Delivery of housing

As if the current failure to supply sufficient housing land to meet needs was not enough this merely is a continuation of a persistent failure to meet housing needs over the past 10 years. The Council's own records on housing completions from 2006 to 2017 shows that the annual requirement for 300 homes was only exceeded once in the past 10 years and even then by only 7 houses. Over the past 10 years there have only been 1789 net homes delivered against a target of 3,000 homes. It is clear and evident that the council is consistently failing to deliver sufficient housing to meet needs.

Impact upon amenity

An indicative layout scheme has been submitted to support the application. The main purpose of this indicative scheme is to show that the development accords with the prevailing density of development. The same plan does also serve to show that there is plenty of space on site to provide separation and a layout configuration which would protect the reasonable amenities of neighbours. In considering the amenity aspects of the previous 4 house scheme the officers report stated:

Impact on residential amenity

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7.8 In accordance with policy DC1 new development should protect residential amenity in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. The application is in outline form and therefore no details have been provided in respect of scale, design and definitive layout.

7.9 The application site rises from the south-west to the north and north-east. The land then falls away beyond the site boundary to the north-west, north and north-east and consequently the neighbouring properties fronting Rivendell Lane and Sandybrook Lane sit on a lower ground level to the application site. The indicative site plan has demonstrated that acceptable separation distances can be met and there would be a provision of adequate outdoor amenity space for future occupiers of the scheme. Although a poorly considered scale of dwelling form would be likely to result in an intrusive and overbearing form of development given the outline nature of the application with all matters reserved such issues of scale, design and massing would require careful consideration at a reserved matters stage.

7.10 Notwithstanding the above highlighted character and appearance concerns and given that this is an outline application with detailed matters reserved to follow, it is considered that on balance that the application site could accommodate up to 4 dwellings without resulting in detrimental harm to residential amenity to accord with policy DC1 and the Council's "Space About Dwellings" guidance note.

This being the case it should be clear and self evident that a scheme for 3 houses which would inevitably have greater space around and between each house could also be delivered in way that would be compliant with space about dwellings standards and acceptable in amenity terms.

Support for self-build housing

It is national planning and indeed central Government broad policy to to significantly boost housing supply. The Prime Minister no less is assuming leadership of this key policy target. As part of this the Government is keenly promoting self build housing. It requires Council's to maintain a self build register and the 'framework' says this:

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50. To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, local planning authorities should:

- *plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families **and people wishing to build their own homes**);*
- *identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand; and*
- *where they have identified that affordable housing is needed, set policies for meeting this need on site, unless off-site provision or a financial contribution of broadly equivalent value can be robustly justified (for example to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock) and the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities. Such policies should be sufficiently flexible to take account of changing market conditions over time.*

Note: my emphasis in bold

This development site is aimed at the self-build market place and to support and promote the building of high quality bespoke housing in an attractive part of the District. The provision of flexible self-build plots accords wholly with national and local planning policy.

Response to request for details and nature of outline planning applications

The planning committee when they refused the last application for 4 houses suggested that I return with a fresh application that contained more detail. Understanding and respecting this I visited each and every neighbour with a request for a written undertaking to access their land to undertake a survey so as to prepare a fuller submission. Despite supportive words and understanding on the doorsteps not a single written agreement to access was received. It is not possible to survey land without the consent of the owner and therefore despite open and honest efforts it has not been possible to show off site levels and accordingly not to show accurate development sections.

The hand delivered written request to gain access to neighbours land is attached.

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Planning history

On 18th May 2017 the case officer emailed to say that in their opinion 4 dwellings could be accommodated on this site. 3 weeks later on 6th June 2017 the same officer write with a change of mind and said that they now felt 4 dwellings would not be acceptable. They went further and sought a revised application showing 3 dwellings only with no dwelling South East of White Lodge. They sought a revised plan to this end:

"I recommend that a revised indicative layout plan is submitted to omit the plot shown to be located to the south-east of White Lodge. I have discussed this option with senior colleagues and consider that this would enable us to present a report to members with a positive recommendation."

This fresh application seeks only 3 dwellings and accordingly complies wholly with the officer's; no the planning department's opinion, that 3 dwellings would be acceptable on the site.

The officer's relevant emails are attached.

Conclusion

It is respectfully requested that officers support this application for the following main reasons:

- It will help to improve very poor local housing supply.
- It will help to increase the delivery of housing.
- It will help to meet a key national planning requirement to support self build housing.
- There are no reasonable amenity, technical or highway objections to the development.
- It has not been possible to submit more details because the scheme is for self-build housing where flexible plots are needed and because neighbours have not given written support for access to their land to allow for off site levels to be taken.
- The scheme complies with the requests and advice of the council's own professional planning officers.

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Attached

Request for access letter to neighbours

Officer letter setting out support for a 3 unit scheme

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