PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING DESIGN & ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- Date Issued: May 2018

SITE ADDRESS:

- Little Ash Farm, Ash Bank Road, Werrington, Stoke on Trent ST2 9EB

APPLICANT:

- Mr S Friesener

PROPOSAL:

- Outline planning application for residential development

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of an outline planning application for the residential development on part of the garden of Little Ash Farm, Ash Bank Road, Werrington. The application is submitted in outline and seeks approval of means of access with all other matters reserved for subsequent approval. The purpose of this application is to seek approval in principle for residential development of the site. The application has been submitted by Ken Wainman Associates Ltd on behalf of Mr S Friesener and is accompanied by a location plan numbered 682/1 and indicative site layout plan numbered 1544-01. Whilst the indicative plan shows that it is possible to site six houses comfortably within the site no specific number of dwellings is proposed in the application description; leaving this matter to be agreed at the reserved matters stage.

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 Werrington village is a target for significant housing growth up to 2026 with Policy SS6a recognising that development may be required to be accommodated on land outside the built-up area. The application site constitutes brownfield land and the proposed development will relate well to the existing area 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, potential homes for local people, 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.

2 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 The application site is part of the garden of Little Ash Farm; the existing house and ancillary buildings will remain and do not form part of this application. The application site measures 0.3452ha and comprises the western and south-eastern parts of the garden of a Little Ash Farm. It is located in the North Staffordshire Green Belt on the southern side of Ash Bank Road on the southern fringe of Werrington village. The site benefits from an existing vehicular access point off Ash Bank Road and a public footpath runs in close proximity to the western side of the site. Established housing comprising of a mix of detached and semi-detached properties borders the site to the north, east and west with open countryside to the south. There are a mix of hedgerow and mature trees to the sites periphery and site levels fall gradually in a north east to south west direction.

2.2 The Council's 2016 Green Belt Review concluded that the land at Little Ash Farm had limited impact on the Green Belt policies and could be considered for release from the Green Belt.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 This is an outline application which seeks consent for the principle of residential development on the site. Approval of Means of Access is sought at this stage with all other matters reserved for subsequent consideration. An indicative block plan shows that the tennis courts will be demolished and the site re-developed to provide possibly up to 6 family sized detached dwellings. The proposed dwellings will be provided with front and rear gardens set around a short cul-de-sac arrangement with main access to the site via the existing access off Ash Bank Road. It is proposed that one or two of the houses would be affordable three-bedroom houses subject to discussion with the Council. If agreement can be reached with the Council then the applicant would be prepared to submit a unilateral agreement or sign a Section 106 agreement.

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 or where policies are out-of-date.

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) saved policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998), saved policies of the Minerals Local Plan (1999) and the Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Joint Waste Core Strategy (March 2013).

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 (Larger Villages Area Strategy); SS6c (Rural Areas Strategy); SD1 (Sustainable Use of Resources); H1 (New Housing); H2 (Affordable and Local Needs Housing) R2 (Rural Housing); DC1 (Design Considerations); DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting); C1 (Creating Sustainable Communities) NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources; 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 In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance the Developer/Landowner Contributions SPG (2004); Housing for Local People and Affordable Housing SPG (2005) and Space About Dwellings (September 1998 - Appendix 3 of the Local Plan [1998]) are also important in the consideration of this application.

4.6 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.

4.7 The Submission Version of the Local Plan was published in February 2018 and the six-week statutory period for representations finished in April this year. It is therefore anticipated that it will be submitted to the Government for examination next month with hearing sessions scheduled for September 2018.

4.8 There is no specific Green Belt policy in the Core Strategy and the Council therefore lies on the Green Belt policies in Section 9 of the NPPF.

5. KEY PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are considered to be: -

- the principle of development and whether the site constitutes a brownfield site;
- the need for housing especially affordable housing in the District and in Werrington;
- whether, having regard to the requirements of local and national planning policy for the delivery of housing the application site is an appropriate location for the development proposed;

- The need for housing including affordable housing
- sustainability.
- the effect of the proposed development on the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt;
- the suitability of the site for houses;
- whether the proposed development would be prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the surrounding residential dwellings or neighbouring land uses;
- the effect of the proposal on highway safety with specific reference to the access.

Background

5.2 Public consultation on site options and development boundaries was carried out by the Local Planning Authority during July 2015. The entire site at Little Ash Farm site was included as a potential suitable site for dwellings owing to its 'B' classification (Site Ref WE013). It was considered to be suitable as a small allocation due to its proximity to services and facilities although it may need to be developed alongside the adjacent site ref (WE027) in order to provide suitable access. Its Green Belt designation and location of a stream outside of the site running in a north to west direction were listed as potential weaknesses or constraints to the development. In the 2015 Local Plan consultation 98 out of 99 public comments relating to this site supported the development of the land.

5.3 In the 2016 Local Plan consultation the entire Little Ash Farm site, including the house and ancillary buildings was shown as being removed from the Green Belt together with the adjoining land to the west. It was also proposed to remove several other sites from the Green Belt for development for housing.

5.4 However, in a subsequent consultation in summer 2017 on Preferred Options Sites and Boundaries the Little Ash Farm site was not included as a preferred housing allocation and was excluded from the proposed settlement boundary. Only two sites (WE003) and (WE052) were allocated for future development in the village. Both of the proposed allocated sites are still in the Green Belt and currently lie outside the settlement boundary as defined by the 1998 Local Plan within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. WE003 amounts to 2.9ha and is allocated for approximately 50 dwellings whilst WE052 amounts to 0.9ha and is allocated for approximately 25 dwellings. The sites are adjacent to the HM Young Offenders Institute and there is potential for noise disturbance. No applications have been received to date on either of the 2017 preferred option sites.

Principle of Development

5.5 In terms of the principle of housing on this Green Belt site policy SS6C sets out the rural strategy for the District and confirms that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by government policy. Government policy is contained within the NPPF. New dwellings do not fall under the criteria for appropriate development in the Green Belt, as listed in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, new housing could be provided in the Green Belt if this is part of a scheme for "limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land) whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development".

5.6 This application proposes the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt but is considered to constitute previously developed land. This conclusion is based on the judgment in Dartford Borough v Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government [2016] which found that unless a dwelling was in a built-up area, its garden should be regarded as previously developed land. This conclusion was derived having regard to the definition of previously developed land within the glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF lists exceptions to the general restriction of new build in the Green Belt; one of which is the development of previously developed sites subject to certain caveats (see later).

5.7 Whilst the site lies adjacent to a built-up area, it does not lie within it. Rather it is characterised by sporadic development on either side interspersed with fields and open land. It does not have the characteristics of a built-up area, and it is these factors which lead to the conclusion that the site constitutes previously developed land.

5.8 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. Ash Bank Road in this location is characterised by a mix of housing types and sizes. The application site makes a very limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt at this point due to its topography and screening. This is confirmed in the Council's 2015 Green Belt Review (see paragraph 2.2).

5.9 The erection of up to 6 dwellings on the site would ensure that the proposed development would be in keeping with the scale and density of the locality and would continue the ribbon of development along Ash Bank Road. Whilst technically outside the village settlement boundary the site is part of the existing village fabric and the character of the area would therefore not be harmed. Whilst the provision of six dwellings would result in some loss of openness due to the increase in built development over and above the existing dwelling and associated outbuildings it is considered that any loss of openness would be minimal as it would be mitigated to a large degree by the presence of nearby 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 (including land to the east which is in the control of the applicant) 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. The Council commissioned "Landscape, Local Green Space and Heritage Impact Study, 2016) concluded that whilst the site is of medium sensitive development impact could be mitigated against with tree planting. The existing trees on the south side of the site would screen development and a tree belt could be provided on land to the east which is within the applicant's ownership.

5.10 It is also important to note that development of this site would have much less of an impact on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt than the development of one of the preferred option sites (WE003) which has a long frontage along Ash Bank Road and provides extensive views of the Green Belt. Development within this allocated location would significantly block views and harm the openness of the Green Belt significantly more than what development of Little Ash Farm would do.

5.11 In terms of impact on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt which is the second strand of the para 89 test, it is not considered that these would be compromised because the development proposed would be confined to previously development land with a neutral impact in terms of built form. As such the scheme would not represent sprawl. It would not result in, or contribute to a merging of neighbouring towns, and it would not encroach into the open countryside, impact on the setting of a historic town and there is nothing to suggest that the scheme would discourage development of previously developed land elsewhere.

5.12 It is also noteworthy that in an update to the Green Belt Review (Nov 2016) commissioned by the Council along with other potential sites the site and the adjoining site were assessed to have potential for release from the Green Belt under exceptional circumstances reflecting its contained character, previously developed use and relationship with the built extent of Werrington village.

5.13 Furthermore it should be noted that as part of the Local Plan process housing sites will need to be identified in Werrington. In the Submission Version Local Plan all of the preferred housing sites are in fact greenfield Green Belt sites.

5.14 To conclude therefore the development proposed would involve the redevelopment of previously developed land, the openness of the Green Belt (one of its essential characteristics) would be maintained and there would be no conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt As such the proposal represents appropriate development in the Green Belt and there is no conflict with part 6 of policy SS6c of the Core Strategy or with the NPPF. The principle of development is therefore acceptable.

The need for housing including affordable housing

5.15 The development plan identifies a net housing requirement in the District of 6,000 additional dwellings during the period 2006 to 2026. Currently, there is a significant shortage of deliverable housing land in the District. The latest housing land supply figures for Staffordshire Moorlands, as set out in the Local Authority's Housing Land Supply Statement, demonstrates that the Local Planning Authority is only able to demonstrate 1.99 years of deliverable housing supply (with a 20% buffer). This falls significantly short of the 5-year supply required by paragraph 49 of the NPPF and represents a continued decline in the Council's housing supply position over the last few years. As a consequence, the provisions of paragraph 14 of the NPPF become relevant.

5.16 There are no published open market and affordable housing targets for Werrington. This is clearly contrary to paragraph 50 of the NPPF which requires "that local planning authorities identify the type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand." Housing targets are set out for the District but not the individual large villages or the rural area generally. There is a definition of "local needs housing" in the Plan's glossary as "housing whose occupation is restricted by a condition or legal obligation to persons (and their dependants) currently resident or working in the local area ". In decision-making the Council currently define “local” when assessing applications for affordable housing in rural areas as the parish and not the District. If this is the case the Plan should identify targets for affordable houses or the rural villages – large and small. The Council’s current approach for applications for affordable housing in the rural areas is to require the applicant to carry out a housing needs survey as part of the application. For windfall and infill sites, which tend to be small this is unreasonable and not in accordance with the NPPF. In the past the Council carried out such surveys.

5.17 Policy SS8(2) (bullet point 1) in the Plan states that the Council will meet housing requirements by "*Increasing the range of available and affordable house types, including for first time buyers and families".* The most recent specific information as to affordable housing needs in Werrington is a housing needs survey carried out in 2013. Given that the latest survey for affordable housing is less than 5 years old it is considered that thus is a reasonable basis for assessing housing need within the village. It is recognised that a new housing development including affordable houses has been built at the Cellarhead crossroads but this lies outside the Werrington Parish. Therefore, there is still a clear need for more affordable housing in Werrington.

5.18 The two proposed allocated housing sites in the Plan would provide approximately 75 houses including approximately 25 affordable houses based on the proposed Submission Plan Policy H3(Affordable Housing) still leaving a number of affordable houses to be found. The proposed reliance on windfall and infill sites is unlikely to provide many (if any) affordable sites because there are few sites available within the built-up area and the village is tightly constrained by the Green Belt where infill sites are likely to be scarce. In addition, windfall and infill sites are likely to be small – less than five houses – and hence there would be no requirement for affordable housing. Furthermore, reliance on the recent Written Ministerial Statement regarding affordable housing contribution is also likely to reduce any affordable housing provision even on the larger sites.

5.19 As a result of the increased reliance in the Plan on windfall and infill sites, and the small number (two) of allocated sites for the Village, the Plan would not be effective and would not provide sufficient affordable houses in the larger villages particularly those, such as Werrington, which are surrounded by Green Belt. Given that the Green Belt is outside the proposed settlement boundary it is unclear whether the "limited infilling in villages* (para. 89, NPPF) would apply. Reliance on infill in the Green Belt, if allowed, would increase ribbon development particularly on Ash Bank Road.

Sustainability

5.20 Policy SS6a (Larger Villages) of the Core Strategy states that in addition to the three market towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph the bulk of local housing needs for the rural areas will be met within the larger villages of which Werrington is identified as one. This policy allows for local housing needs by allocating a range of deliverable housing sites primarily within the built-up area in locations across the village with good accessibility to services and facilities. It goes on to state that where development is required to be met on land outside the built-up area development it should relate well to the built-up area, be capable of being assimilated into the landscape and should have good access.

5.21 The policy thus appears to allow some flexibility for housing outside the built-up area. The proposal would be small-scale and whilst the application site is situated outside the existing settlement boundary of Werrington it is situated adjacent to existing residential development and has good access. The application therefore represents a logical extension to the village which relates well to the built-up area.

5.22 Policy R2 of the Core Strategy states that within such areas new housing development will be restricted to affordable housing, essential needs housing, replacement dwellings, extensions and the re-use of rural buildings.

5.23 Policy SS6c reinforces this policy position, stating that within the other rural areas housing development will be restricted to that which is essential to local needs. Policy SD1 adds that development on non-allocated greenfield land will only be considered acceptable where the proposal relates to the provision of needed development which cannot be accommodated on a deliverable previously developed site or other allocated site in the locality and is in a sustainable location.

5.24 Werrington is a sustainable location for small scale new residential development and the application site is located within easy walking and cycling distance of the numerous local services and facilities on offer within the village. Werrington is acknowledged within the adopted Core Strategy as a larger village and has a range of services and facilities including a High School and Primary School, Medical Centre, convenience store, village hall, library, post office/newsagents, churches, 3 public houses, a veterinary surgery, off license, as well as a number of other independent businesses and employment opportunities. Consequently, there are a range of services within walking distance of the site to meet the day-to-day needs of future residents. The village is also fortunate to have a regular bus service operating which connects the village with Leek, Cheadle and Stoke on Trent. This is a sustainable location for new housing as it lies close to the services and amenities that Werrington has to offer. As a consequence, the development of this site would not result in the creation of an isolated dwelling in the context of paragraph 55 of the NPPF which relates to the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas. A recent appeal decision (attached at appendix 4) confirms a similar approach stating that new development in the immediate context of the existing house on brownfield land and set firmly in the immediate environs of other built development would not comprise of an isolated site for the purposes of the Framework.

5.24 The application site is located outside but adjacent to the existing development boundary for Werrington within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Consequently, the application scheme would conflict with the requirements of the development plan whereby the above policies largely seek to confine rural housing development within the existing settlement boundaries.

5.25 Nevertheless, whilst the conflict of the proposal with these policies is recognised it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms having regard to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is a material consideration of the highest weight in the determination of this application. All of the land surrounding Werrington is Green Belt and there are no sites for residential development in the village fabric. Therefore, logically to meet the need for houses in Werrington some development will have to occur on land which is currently defined as being within the Green Belt. It is accepted that land in the Green Belt should only be removed from the Green Belt in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process.

5.26 It is contended that there is a combination of factors which, together with the shortage of deliverable housing land, comprise and amount to very special circumstances in the case of this proposal that justify approval in this case.

These are:

- The Council have a poor record both providing a supply of deliverable housing land and revising the Local Plan namely that:
    - The significant shortage of housing in the District which has existed for nine years since 2009.
    - The Council have been revising the Local Plan for almost 18 years, The first published revisions to the previous Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998) in the year 2000. The Council made two previous attempts to agree a new Local Plan in the last three years prior to this year's current attempt. Both have been withdrawn and the latest proposed policies are very much different to those proposed in the two previous attempts.
- At the moment there are no allocated sites in Werrington for new residential development and, based on the long period of time that the Council have been revising the Local Plan, it is possible that the present Local Plan proposals may not be agreed at Public Examination. In simple terms; at the moment there are no sites in Werrington for new and affordable housing.
- Core Strategy Policy R2 is out-of date.
- No weight can be given to the submission version Local Plan as the current proposals have yet to go to Public Examination.
- In the two previous public consultations on the Local Plan in 2015 and 2016 the application site was part of a proposed residential site which included the entire Little Ash Farm property and garden and it was proposed to remove it from the Green Belt. Whilst neither of these previous proposals carry any weight nor do the present Local Plan proposals there meanwhile remains a major shortage of housing land in the District and in Werrington.

- Also, it is not clear that the two proposed housing sites (see paragraph 5.4 above) suggested in the 2017 Local Plan consultation would meet the projected housing need in the village. There are no other identified housing sites in Werrington and windfall opportunities are likely to be scarce. It is therefore contended that more Green Belt land needs to be released.
- The Council's 2015 Green Belt Review identified that development of this site would have only a limited impact on Green Belt policies and could be considered for release from the Green Belt.
- The site is "previously developed land" in line with an Appeal Court judgment (Dartford Borough Council V the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government - See Appendix 2) that the previous commonly held view that all gardens should be excluded from the definition of previously developed/brownfield land, and a presumption in favour of development, is incorrect. The judgment was that gardens outside built-up areas are previously developed land. As such the proposal is one of the exceptions to the restrictions on development in the Green Belt.

5.27 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 an 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.

5.28 Paragraph 59 of the recent Supreme Court Judgment (Suffolk Coastal District Council v Hopkins Homes Ltd and SSCLG, Richborough Estates Partnership LLP and SSSCLG v Cheshire East Borough Council) makes it clear that the primary purpose of paragraph 49 is to trigger the operation of the titled balance in paragraph 14 where the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, in light of the significant shortfall of housing in the District paragraph 14 is triggered.

Out-of date policies.

5.29 A recent Supreme Court ruling on Paragraph 49 of the NPPF and what constitutes "relevant policies for the supply of housing" was that the "straightforward interpretation is that these words refer to the policies by which acceptable housing sites are to be identified and the five-years supply target is to be achieved". It is contended that in this case, based on the Supreme Court ruling, that the Core Strategy Policy R2 is out of date and that little weight should be given to it. This contention is supported by a Planning Inspector's conclusion in a recent allowed appeal relating to the conversion of a bunk barn in Oakamoor to residential use

(Council ref: SMD/2016/0770 and Appeal Reference APP/B3438/W/17/3171736) that policy R2 was out of date (see Appendix 3)

5.30 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF confirms that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking. It goes on to state that for decision taking this means: -

"where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."

5.31 These provisions are reflected in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy. The absence of a five-year deliverable supply of housing means however that the adopted policies of the Core Strategy, insofar as they relate to the supply of housing have to be afforded less weight. By comparison the provisions of the NPPF and the clear lack of a 5-year housing supply are material considerations which should be afforded the highest weight. In the absence of any specific policies to indicate that permission should be refused it is concluded that permission for this proposal should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would substantially and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

5.32 In terms of compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 7 identifies three dimensions to sustainable development; social, economic and environmental which should be considered collectively.

5.33 The proposal will also derive a number of social benefits notably helping the Local Planning Authority to meet its housing delivery targets and the provision of 4 affordable dwellings.

5.34 In terms of the economic dimension of sustainable development the proposed development will meet this aim by generating additional household expenditure which will contribute to the local economy and help to support local services and facilities. Additional economic benefits will be achieved through the employment generated during the construction phase. Such benefits are considered to be worthy of significant weight, given the number of dwellings proposed.

5.35 With regards to the environmental dimension of sustainable development the site is considered to be well related to the surrounding residential development and its sustainable location will help generate sustainable travel patterns and reduce the need for reliance on the private car.

5.36 Having regard to the above considerations it is concluded that the principle of development is wholly acceptable on this site and that the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development.

Design & Layout

5.37 Core Strategy Policy H1 "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. Policy DC1 states that new development should protect residential amenity in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

5.38 Whilst the overall layout, appearance and landscaping of the site is reserved for subsequent approval the indicative plan accompanying the application demonstrates that that an appropriate design could be achieved which would respect the character and appearance of the surrounding development and help it assimilate with the rural area beyond. The plot size is comparable to those adjacent to the site and it would appear to be more than capable of accommodating the number of dwellings proposed whilst maintaining 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. Each dwelling will also benefit from a suitably sized area of private amenity space thus ensuring that future occupiers will benefit from an appropriate level of residential amenity. Furthermore, the retention of the existing boundary hedgerows and mature tree planting will assist in breaking up views of the development and provide effective mitigation. The main public views of the site will be from the adjacent public

footpath which runs in close proximity to the western boundary of the application site. In such views the development will be viewed against the backdrop of the existing residential development along Ash Bank Road and is not considered to have any adverse visual impact on the wider surrounding area due to the gentle sloping nature of the site.

5.39 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

5.40 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.

5.41 The application seeks to utilise the existing vehicular access point directly off Ash Bank Road which currently serves Little Ash Farm. The submitted plans show that the access road provided would be 5m wide with an adjacent footpath of 1.8m. The submitted plans demonstrate that a means of access to the site can be achieved which will provide adequate visibility on access and egress and which will be of a suitable geometry to enable two vehicles to pass one another. The indicative layout plan submitted with the application demonstrates that adequate off-road parking provision for each dwelling can be achieved within the site. There would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

Affordable Housing Contribution

5.42 Policy H2 of the Core Strategy requires developments to deliver 33% affordable housing on site. Whilst it could be argued that this policy is no longer relevant given the current under supply of housing 2 affordable housing units could be accommodated within the site. The applicant is happy to enter into a Section 106 Agreement with the Authority to secure the provision of this element of the scheme. As such the proposal is considered to be complaint with Policy H2 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

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, economic and environmental benefits in relation to housing within an accessible and sustainable location and that it would not be premature to the emerging site allocations document. The application site is considered to constitute brownfield land and the proposal would also make a modest contribution to housing land supply and make provision for affordable housing in accordance with policy SS2 and SS3 of the Core Strategy and paragraphs 49 and 50 of the Framework. Werrington village is a target for significant housing growth up to 2026 with Policy SS6a recognised that development may be required to be accommodated on land outside the built-up area. Moreover, the proposal would support a local service centre in accordance with Policy SS6a of the Core Strategy and Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

6.3 The proposed development will relate well to the existing area 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 proposed development therefore accords with the provisions of policies SS1, SS1a, SS2, SS3, SS6a, DC1, DC3, H1 and H2 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the NPPF. There are also significant "very special circumstances" to justify development on the site.

6.4 Normally, the shortage of deliverable housing land supply is not considered sufficient reason to justify new development on Green Belt land. However, there are several extra factors which together with the shortage of housing land supply amount to very special circumstances that justify development on the site. The LPA is therefore respectfully requested to approve outline planning permission for the residential development at Little Ash Farm, Ash Bank Road, Werrington subject to any planning conditions it may feel are necessary in accordance with the presumption in

favour of sustainable development set out in Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Use

The application site is currently used as a dwelling house and its associated grounds. The application proposes the retention of the existing dwelling house and its ancillary outbuildings and the development of the garden area for residential purposes. The application is in outline with means of access for consideration. All other matters are reserved for subsequent consideration. This form of development is considered to reflect the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site. Identified in the SHLAA as WE013 this site has been shown as a viable possibility for much needed housing in a location within one of the Staffordshire Moorlands larger villages.

Amount

The application proposes the redevelopment of the site for up to 6 detached dwellings. A significant contribution towards affordable housing provision is also made with 2 of the units being allocated for this purpose. This amount of development is considered to comply with Green Belt policy and is in keeping with the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

Scale

It is proposed that the dwellings will all be two storeys in height which is in keeping with the surrounding built development. The proposed development will also offer a varied range of house types for the village as a whole.

Landscaping

The site is located within a rural setting and benefits from substantial existing mature landscaping and it is not considered that any additional landscaping will be required. Whilst landscaping is a matter which is reserved for later consideration the indicative site plan demonstrates that the dwellings can be accommodated on the site without harm to the existing trees or their root protection areas.

Appearance

Appearance is a reserved matter that would be appropriately dealt with in a detailed application.

Access

The proposed development would be served by the existing vehicular access point off Ash Bank Road. A new pedestrian access will also be made. The submitted illustrative plan shows that adequate off-road parking can be provided to each plot with either a garage and/or external parking. The site is located just 400m from the centre of the village and is therefore within easy walking and cycling distance to a wide range of services and facilities. Public transport links are easily accessible to Leek and other parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands as well as the neighbouring city of Stoke on Trent.