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Planning Statement

Erection of five dwellings (outline)
Land at Lane End Cottage, Town End Road, Foxt
For Mrs. M. Cooke

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an application for residential development on a parcel of land located to the southwest of Lane End Cottage, Town Head Road, Foxt.

1.2. The application is submitted in outline and proposes the erection of five dwellings, encompassing two pairs of semi-detached cottages, and one detached cottage. The application seeks approval of matters of scale and means of access at this stage, with matters of appearance, layout and landscaping reserved for subsequent approval.

1.3. The plans accompanying the application show the provision of a detached two storey cottage located at the northeastern-most end of the site. Adjacent to that, and extending to the southwest, will be two pairs of semi-detached cottages, each comprising of two bedrooms. These properties are to be brought forward as starter homes, i.e. offered for sale with a discount of at least 20% below open market value to first time buyers under the age of 40. Vehicular access to serve the proposed dwellings is to be taken from Town Head Road with each dwelling benefitting from its own driveway alongside the dwellings, and off-street parking provision for at least two vehicles.

1.4. Whilst matters of layout and appearance are reserved for subsequent approval the indicative plans accompanying the application shows the provision of two storey cottage style dwellings on the site in order to reflect the character of the surrounding area, and these will be set forward within their respective plots to reflect the prevailing development pattern of the area.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site encompasses a parcel of grazing land extending to 0.17 hectares which lies within the rural area a short distance from the centre of Foxt. The site lies to south west of Lane End Cottage, with agricultural fields extending to the southeast, south and west of the site. Town End Road forms the northwestern boundary of the site. Lane End Cottage, along with a cluster of other properties, lie to the northeast of the site, clustered around the junction of Town End Road with Shaw Wall Lane.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (March 2014) and the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application.

3.2. Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Core Strategy (and, where relevant, with polices in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or

- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted

3.3. Policy SS2 of the Core Strategy states that provision will be made for 6000 additional dwellings (net of demolitions) to be completed in Staffordshire Moorlands (excluding the Peak District National Park) during the period 2006 to 2026. This will be phased at the average development rates to achieve the net additional dwelling completions set out below. Sufficient deliverable land will be identified to provide at least 5 years of development at all times.

3.4. Policy SS3 of the Core Strategy confirms that 28% of the total housing delivery within the District will be targeted on the rural areas.

3.5. Policy SS6 of the Core Strategy confirms that the rural areas, encompassing the larger villages, smaller villages and other rural area will provide for around 1680 new dwellings between 2006 and 2026 in accordance with the Area Strategies set out in policies SS6a – SS6c. The Site Allocations DPD will define the urban areas of larger villages by a Development Boundary and will allocate sites for development sufficient to ensure that the requirements set out above can be met. In the smaller villages an Infill Boundary will be defined within which limited infill development will be permitted.

3.6. Policy SS6b of the Core Strategy relates to the smaller villages, of which Foxt is one, and states that these settlements shall provide only for appropriate development which enhances community vitality or meets a local social or economic need of the settlement and its hinterland. The policy goes on to state that the Council enable new housing development which meets a local need, including affordable housing. The explanatory text confirms that a major issue for smaller villages is the loss of local population through lack of housing opportunities. The proposed strategy for the smaller villages therefore seeks to

allow an appropriate level of sensitive development which enhances community vitality or meets a local social or economic need of the settlement and its hinterland. Housing in particular will be required to meet a local need in terms of their size, type and tenure. This may include both open market housing and affordable housing.

3.7. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, and promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy goes on to state that the Council will meet essential local needs by (amongst others), restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which is essential to local needs.

3.8. Policy H1 of the Core Strategy states that new housing development should provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenure including a proportion of affordable housing as set out in policy H2, and where appropriate housing for special groups, to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future population having regard to the Area Strategies in SS5 and SS6. All development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified local housing market needs and the strategy for the area having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision. The policy goes on to state that housing for special groups, particularly for older people, should meet a genuine and proven local need and demand and be of a scale and in a location which is appropriate to its needs. All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of existing occupiers.

3.9. Policy H2 of the Core Strategy states in or on the edge of villages, small schemes for 100% affordable housing will be allocated in the Site Allocations DPD or will be permitted on suitable rural exceptions sites which are well related to services and facilities and where a demonstrable need exists within the local area which cannot otherwise be met by means of provision in the plan.

3.10. Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;

- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;

3.11. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by, inter alia, resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, and supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sets out policies in respect of housing delivery, highway safety and securing high quality design (amongst others). The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

Planning for Landscape Change SPG (Staffordshire County Council)

4.2. The SPG defines the site as lying within the 'Dissected Sandstone Highland Fringe' character area. The characteristic landscape features include: a pronounced rounded landform dissected by small stream valleys, upland pasture farming, conifer plantations and small wooded valleys, field pattern of both stone walls and hedges, stone buildings and an open highland edge. Incongruous landscape features are noted as being extensive lines of fencing, busy road and the run-down appearance of farms. The critical factor which currently limits landscape quality is the condition of the landscape's characteristic features, such as its hedges, walls, farmsteads and buildings. The content of the Planning for Landscape Change SPG is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Schedule (March 2017)

4.3. This document sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply against the requirements of the NPPF. It confirms that the Local Authority has a housing land supply equivalent to 1.99 years against the target of 5 years plus 20% buffer. The content of this document is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

5.0 PLANNING ISSUES

Principle of Development

5.1. The application site lies within the rural area, a short distance to the northeast of the centre of Foxt. Policy SS2 of the Core Strategy confirms that the District Council will make provision for 6000 additional dwellings in the plan period 2006 – 2026, with policy SS3 confirming that 28% of those dwellings will be targeted on the rural areas, inclusive of the smaller and larger villages. Policy SS6b of the Core Strategy defines Foxt as a smaller village, wherein new open market housing and affordable housing is acceptable to meet the needs of the village. It also notes that rural exceptions sites will be acceptable on the edge of settlements. The policy goes on to state that an infill boundary will be defined within the Site Allocations DPD, but it is noted in this regard that the Council has recently signalled its intention to replace infill boundaries with a criteria based policy, and therefore no infill boundaries have been designated. A reasoned view therefore needs to be taken as to the suitability of sites for new housing. In addition to the above, policy SS6c states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, and promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy furthermore confirms that new build housing will be restricted to that which is essential to local needs, including affordable housing.

5.2. The development of this site is considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS2, SS3, SS6b and SS6c of the Core Strategy, in that the proposal will secure the delivery of four, two-bedroomed starter homes that are suitable for first time buyers, to assist in meeting the identified need for smaller dwellings and affordable housing set out within the Local Authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA identifies a significant demand for the delivery of affordable housing throughout the District, as well as a need to deliver more one and two bedroomed properties (60% of all new housing stock). The proposed development will deliver four starter homes on the site, along with a single detached dwelling, and a legal obligation is offered to ensure that the four starter homes are sold at a rate which is at least 20% below market value for first time buyers under the age of 40 years old. In doing so the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives of policies SS6b and SS6c of the Core Strategy which allow for limited new development and affordable housing to support local needs within the smaller villages and rural areas.

5.3. The general location of the site is considered to be acceptable from a sustainability perspective having regard to the aforementioned policy objectives and will furthermore not generate significant levels of traffic. The site is located in close proximity to existing residential development, and a short distance from the centre of Foxt, and therefore will not result in the creation of new isolated homes in the countryside. Any movements required by vehicles to access local services and facilities will furthermore be short in nature, with Ipstones (larger village) and Cheadle (market town) located a short drive away.

5.4. The proposal will therefore not generate significant vehicle movements or derive unsustainable travel patterns (taking into account also the aims of policies SS6b and SS6c in delivering new housing in such locations to meet the needs of the smaller villages and rural areas). It is noted in this context that the Local Authority has recently granted a number of planning consents for the erection of dwellings in Foxt where the sites have been found to be acceptable from a sustainable location perspective. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of paragraphs 34 and 55 of the NPPF in this regard.

5.5. In addition, the provisions of the NPPF in respect of housing delivery also weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development. Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires Local Authorities to identify and update annually a supply of deliverable housing sites to provide five years-worth of housing against their housing requirements, with an additional buffer of 20% in circumstances where there has been a record of persistent under-delivery (as is the case with the Staffordshire Moorlands). Where a Local Authority is unable to demonstrate sufficient housing land, paragraph 49 of the NPPF dictates that policies for the supply of housing should be considered out-of-date, with the tilted balance in favour of approval engaged (paragraph 14 of the NPPF refers).

5.6. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF confirms that development that accords with the Development Plan should be approved without delay, and that where the Development Plan is 'out-of-date' (as is the case here) planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would arise to *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole.

5.7. The proposed development will derive a number of significant material benefits, most notably making a positive contribution to the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing land supply. In addition, the Local Authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies that the need for smaller units within the District exceeds the need for larger family units, with a particular demand for one and two-bedroomed houses, as the existing stock of such units is very modest. The SHMA goes on to advise that around 60% of all new units in the Moorlands should comprise of one and two bedroomed units. In addition, the SHMA confirms that there is a significant need for affordable housing within the District (224 – 432 dwellings per annum), and 40% of that demand is for intermediate tenure and starter homes.

5.8. The proposed development responds positively to this identified need by providing four starter homes that are two-bedroomed in nature. I submit that such social and economic benefits should be afforded substantial weight in the determination of this application. Further economic benefits will also ensue as a consequence of the New Homes Bonus, the generation of additional household expenditure associated with the creation of five new households, and the benefits to local tradespeople during the construction phase. These collective benefits are furthermore not considered to be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any adverse impacts, as will now be discussed.

Design & Layout

5.9. The application is submitted in outline and seeks approval of matters of scale and means of access at this stage. The layout of the proposed development is therefore not for consideration at this stage. The application is nevertheless accompanied by an indicative layout plan which shows the dwellings aligned in a linear pattern and set forward within their respective plots. The frontages of the plots will be enclosed by 600mm high drystone walls, reinforcing the existing character of the area and surrounding landscape. The plot boundaries will otherwise encompass indigenous hedgerows, with further drystone wall subdividing some of the plots. Each dwelling will benefit from two parking spaces located alongside the dwellings, with a modest cottage garden to the front. Areas of private amenity space are to be provided to the rear of each property, and these will each exceed the minimum requirement set out in the Local Authority's informal amenity standards. The general pattern of development and proposed treatment of boundaries will therefore relate well to the character of the surrounding area and is in accordance with the requirements of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

5.10. In terms of matters of scale, it is noted that the predominant character of the surrounding area is one of traditionally proportioned two storey dwellings. There is evidence of mid-late 20th Century properties scattered amongst these, but in the main existing dwellings are two storey in nature. A mixed palette of materials is also observable, including stone and red/orange brickwork, with dwellings typically exhibiting gabled roofs, with traditionally proportioned windows, stone quoins, modest dormer windows, and stone headers. Dwellings are typically sited so that they either abut the adjacent highway or sit close to it.

5.11. The submitted proposal responds positively to this context by proposing dwellings that are two-storey in nature, with modest, cottage style proportions. Whilst matters of appearance are reserved for subsequent approval, the indicative plans accompanying the application show the provision of cottage style dwellings that reflect the prevailing characteristics of the surrounding area. In doing so the development will be in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and will accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Landscape Character

5.12. The application site is not appraised within any of the Local Authority's Landscape and Settlement Character Assessments (as referred to within policy DC3 of the Core Strategy) and therefore consideration has been given to the Staffordshire County Council Planning for Landscape Change SPG. This defines the site as lying within the 'Dissected Sandstone Highland Fringe' character area. Such areas are characterised by a pronounced rounded landform dissected by small stream valleys, upland pasture farming, conifer plantations and small wooded valleys, field pattern of both stone walls and hedges, stone buildings and an open highland edge. The Planning for Landscape Change SPG goes on to note a number of incongruous landscape features, including extensive lines of fencing, busy roads and the run-down appearance of farms,

with the critical factor limiting landscape quality being the condition of the landscape's characteristic features, such as its hedges, walls, farmsteads and buildings.

5.13. The application site is currently used for grazing and is enclosed by a drystone wall and post and rail fence along its northwestern boundary, and post and rail fencing to its southwestern and southern boundaries. Extensive lines of fencing are identified as an incongruous feature within the landscape, and the submitted proposal offers an opportunity to remove these features in favour of indigenous hedgerows to the southwestern and southern boundaries of the site. Drystone walls, which are a traditional characteristic of the landscape will also be provided along with the site frontage with Town End Road, and in between some of the plots. In doing so the proposal will contribute to enhancing the key characteristics of the landscape.

5.14. On approach to the site along Town End Road from the southwest, the proposed development will read against the backdrop of the existing cluster of dwellings which occupy the junction with Shaw Wall Lane, and as a consequence will not appear isolated within its rural surroundings (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Photograph of Approach to Site from Southwest



5.15. On approach from the northeast, the dwellings will appear as a continuation of the existing residential development that is located adjacent, with further residential development observable in the background, providing a built backdrop to the proposed development (see Figure 2 overleaf).

Figure 2 – Photograph of Approach to Site from Northeast



5.16. In views from Park Lane to the north, the rolling landform beyond the site and its associated tree cover will ensure that there is no significant adverse impact on the skyline, and will serve to limit any wider impacts of the development on the landscape (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Photograph of Approach to Site from North



5.17. Having regard to the above considerations it is concluded that the proposed development will not derive any significant and demonstrable adverse impacts to the landscape and is in accordance with the provisions of policy DC3 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.18. The submitted plans show that the proposed dwellings will take their vehicular access direct of Town Head Road, with each dwelling benefitting from at least two parking spaces to meet the needs of future occupiers. The proposed drystone wall along the site frontage will furthermore be set at 600mm in height in order to ensure that drivers are able to see any approaching traffic on egress from the site. As a consequence, the proposed development will not derive any severe residual harm to highway safety, that being the test to be applied under paragraph 32 of the NPPF.

Developer Contributions

5.19. Policy H2 of the Core Strategy states that small schemes for 100% affordable housing will be permitted on suitable rural exceptions sites which are well related to services and facilities and where a demonstrable need exists within the local area which cannot otherwise be met by means of provision in the plan.

5.20. The locational considerations of this site are discussed above, with the site being well related to Foxt, Ipstones and Cheadle, and in accordance with the objectives of policies SS6b and SS6c of the Core Strategy. The proposed development will also secure the delivery of four starter homes on the site, and the applicant is agreeable to entering into a legal obligation to ensure that those four properties are sold for at least 20% below their open market value to first time buyers under the age of 40.

5.21. The scheme does not deliver 100% affordable housing, but when assessed in the context of paragraphs 47 and 14 of the NPPF, and the Local Authority's chronic shortage in housing provision, is considered to be an appropriate level of provision that will contribute positively to addressing the clear and demonstrable need for both two-bedroomed properties and starter homes, as identified within the Local Authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. It is considered that the proposed development accords with the development strategy for the District set out within policies SS2, SS3, SS6, SS6b, SS6c, DC1, DC3 and H1 of the Core Strategy, and will not derive any adverse impacts to landscape character, the character and appearance of the area, highway safety or neighbouring residential amenity to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the development. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant outline planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.