PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING DESIGN & ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- **Date Issued: June 2018**

SITE ADDRESS:

- **Granary Cottage, Ringe Hay Farm, Basford, ST13 7ET.**

APPLICANT:

- **Mr. D. Pearson.**

PROPOSAL:

- **Removal of Condition No. 5 on planning application SMD/2011/0391 to create a single dwelling.**

Planning Portal reference - PP-07054893



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement is submitted in support of the planning application for removal of Condition No. 5 on the original permission which restricts the use of the cottage to holiday use only to enable the cottage to be used as an open-market dwelling.

1.2 The original planning permission for the conversion of what was a redundant workshop and store to form a holiday cottage was granted in June 2011 (old reference:11/00330/FUL; new reference: SMD/2011/0391). The cottage is known as "The Granary" and this name is used in the text below where appropriate.

2 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.1 The holiday cottage is part of a small complex of building around Ringe Haye Farm which includes two other holiday cottages in a converted former farm building; planning application reference SMD/2005/0864 (old reference: 05/00439/FUL). Applications for the removal of holiday occupancy conditions and the retention of garden land for the two cottages are currently being considered by the Council. These are applications Ref: SMD/2018/0374 and ref: SMD/2018/0375.

2.2 The application site is situated in open countryside in the Churnet Valley Master Plan area and access to the Farm and the cottages is via a track from Apesford Lane.

2.3 Granary Cottage contains two upstairs bedrooms (both with ensuite), a ground floor bedroom and disabled bathroom, a lounge, and a kitchen.

3. PLANNING POLICY

3.1 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.

3.2 The key documents when assessing planning applications are the Development Plan for the Moorlands and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF) which sets out national planning policy and is a material consideration. 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.

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3.3 Relevant policies in the Core Strategy include:

- **SS1 - Development Principles.**
- **SS1 (a) – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.**
- **SS3 - Distribution of Development.**
- **SS6c – Other Rural Areas.**
- **SS7 – Churnet Valley Area Strategy.**
- **E3 – Tourism and Cultural Development.**
- **DC1 – Design Considerations.**
- **R1 – Rural Diversification.**
- **R2 – Rural Housing.**

3.4 The key Development Plan policies in the above list with regard to the application site are considered to be Policies SS6c (Other Rural Areas); SS7 (the Churnet Valley Strategy); E2 (Existing Employment Areas); E3 (Tourism and Cultural Development); and R2 (Rural Housing).

3.5 The adopted Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document SPD) is also relevant as the application site is located in the Masterplan area. However, it is not located in the main Character Areas, Gateways and Hubs for which there are specific strategies.

3.6 Relevant to this application is the shortage of deliverable housing land supply in the Staffordshire Moorlands District. 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 sites".* On 31 March 2017 there was 1.99 years supply of deliverable housing land in the District. As there is significantly less than five years supply of deliverable housing land in the District then the Core Strategy policies relating to housing are out-of-date. 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 nine years it is contended that even less weight should be given to these policies than if the shortage of supply was only recent.

3.7 For the sake of brevity, the Development Plan and NPPF policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the section "Case for the Proposed Development".

4. RELEVANT PLANNING APPEAL DECISION

4.1 Please see the attached appeal decision in appendix 1. This appeal sought permission for the conversion of a bunk barn in Oakamoor to residential use. The decision is dated 11 September 2017. Relevant to this current application is the fact that the Inspector concluded that Core Strategy Policy R2 was out of date and carried little weight.

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5. THE CASE IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION

5.1 This section addresses the main planning issues that are likely to arise in the consideration of the planning application.

5.2 These are:

- Planning Policy and the shortage of deliverable housing land supply.
- Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development. as established by Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and in the NPPF.
- Viability of the business and occupancy rates.
- Suitability of the Cottage for unencumbered residential use.
- The proposed development would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity nor on the character of the buildings or landscape.
- Impact on the local holiday accommodation market in the District.

5.3 These issues are addressed in turn below:

Planning Policy and the shortage of deliverable housing land supply.

5.4 There is a need for new housing across the entire District because of the shortage of deliverable housing land in the District. Last March the housing land supply was only 1.99 years. Therefore, Paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy (NPPF) applies and the policies controlling housing supply are out of date. In this case the relevant policies are Core Strategy policies – the housing part of policy SS6c and policy R2. Whilst these policies are still relevant it is contended that they should be given less, or, in the case of policy R2 limited, or no, weight, given the significant shortfall in housing supply and the fact that the shortage has existed for nine years.

5.5 As will be shown later in this statement the benefits of the proposed removal of the condition considerably outweigh the disbenefits.

5.6 The site is located in open countryside and Core Strategy Policy SS6c applies. This policy restricts new housing development in the countryside to certain limited exceptions. However, it does allow the conversion of rural buildings for residential use in accordance with Core Strategy Policy R2 which allows the conversion of buildings to residential use subject to a marketing exercise or if the business is not viable.

5.7 The housing completion target for 2016/2017 for rural areas was 62 houses and yet only 32 were completed. From these figures it can be seen that there is an urgent need for more housing in the rural areas of the District as a whole.

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5.8 As stated in paragraphs 3.6 and 5.4 it is contended that little, or no, weight should be given to Policy R2 and that as a result the requirement that a marketing exercise be carried out is not applicable and should be waived. No marketing exercise was carried out in the Oakamoor appeal proposal.

5.9 Even though it is contended that little, or no, weight be given to Policy R2 the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for use as dwellings. The building is a good-looking, well-maintained traditional, stone building and conversion would ensure its retention and would make little difference, if any, to its appearance. As such the proposal is in accord with the first bullet point in Policy R2.

5.10 The applicant wishes to continue to remain in the farmhouse and if the holiday cottages were to be sold separately it could create amenity issues for the applicant as he would have no control over the activities of guests in the cottages.

The presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

5.11 In view of the housing shortfall, it is contended that the proposal should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as established by Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy. Moreover, paragraph 14 of the Framework is triggered. This states that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless: (i) the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole; or (ii) specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

5.12 It is the applicant's contention that the benefits of the proposal would outweigh any disbenefits in particular the provision of housing in a District where there is an overall shortage of deliverable housing land and where last year for which there are records the number of houses built in rural areas was just over half that required. Whilst the application site is situated away from settlements Policy R2 allows the conversion to residential use of rural buildings which are in similar locations.

5.13 In the Oakamoor appeal in Appendix 1 the Council agreed with the appellant that the appeal should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that paragraph 14 of the NPPF was triggered in such circumstances. It is contended that this should also be the case with this application.

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Viability and Occupancy

5.14 The holiday business at Ringe Hay Farm has made a small profit over the last three years but, compared to the scale of the investment in the cottages, the return is minimal and no longer a worthwhile commercial operation. Details of the accounts are submitted in a separate confidential document.

5.15 The table below shows the occupancy rate for the two cottages for the years from 2015 to 2017.

	2015	2016	2017	3-year average
The Granary -	68%	52%	48%	56%

5.16 As can be seen from the above table there is a steady general decline from 2015 to 2017; a drop of about 30% over the three years. The current bookings for 2018 are currently at 29%. Whilst this figure may rise as more bookings are made as the year progresses the earlier signs are that bookings this year will be down on last year.

5.17 Advice from local estate agents on other projects is that for a business to produce a reasonable profit occupancy rates need to be significantly higher than the current rates. Bookings nationally, so far this year, have been down on last year so much so that the booking agency have introduced special offers to the 30th June.

5.18 In the recent appeal decision at Oakamoor the Inspector concluded that policy R2 carried limited weight. No marketing details were submitted with the planning application and it is my understanding that the site was not marketed. The Inspector in her decision did not refer to marketing at all. It is, therefore, contended that whilst the business does produce a small profit viability is not presently a consideration to be taken into account.

The suitability of the cottages for unencumbered residential use.

5.19 Holiday cottages fall into the same Use Class – C3 (Dwellinghouses) as open-market housing; the only difference is that with holiday cottages the use is restricted by condition limiting the length anyone can occupy the building.

5.20 The Cottage contains all the facilities necessary for residential use and there are two existing adjacent car parking spaces in the yard. No internal external alterations are required for the properties. Removal of the condition would enable the Cottage to enter the District housing

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stock almost immediately. The Cottage is not overlooked nor does it overlook any other residential properties.

Gardens

5.21 The cottage has a grassed garden at its rear (north). This garden is on the site of what was yard, enclosed by the existing hedges, at the back of the farm building prior to conversion. However, as the garden land was not within the red line on the original permission a separate application will be submitted soon after this application.

Impact on residential amenity.

5.22 There would be no adverse impact on residential amenity as the Cottage is not overlooked and does not overlook any other dwellings.

Impact on the character of the nearby buildings and the surrounding countryside

5.23 There would be little change from the present. Residential permitted development rights could, if required, be removed by condition to manage potential impacts on the surroundings. The impact of the garden is assessed in the separate application which will be submitted soon after this application.

Impact on the local holiday accommodation market.

5.24 Advice from local chartered surveyors is that the local holiday market has changed in recent years and is still changing and that for a holiday cottage business to be viable it needs higher occupancy rates than those at Ring Hay Farm. The expansion of accommodation at Alton Towers and the shift to short-stays rather than week or fortnight-long stays has changed the market. The likely large development of Moneystone Quarry at Whiston will also further change the market and further affect the viability of traditional holiday cottages.

5.25 The removal of this cottage from the holiday let market is unlikely to have any adverse material impact on tourism.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 It is contended that the removal of the condition would have material benefits in the form of new housing and because of the shortage of deliverable housing land supply the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. Any adverse impacts would be minimal and significantly outweighed by the benefits.

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APPENDIX 1 – ALLOWED APPEAL AT OAKAMOOR

This is submitted separately on the Portal.

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