Hewitt&CarrArchitects

Planning Statement

Full planning application for erection of a replacement dwelling at Fairview, Caverswall Common
For Mr. & Mrs. M. Taylor

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Contents **Page No**

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Site Description	4
3.0	Planning Policy	4
4.0	Other Material Considerations	6
5.0	Assessment of Planning Issues	6
6.0	Conclusion	12

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the erection of a replacement dwelling at Fairview, Caverswall Common Lane, Caverswall Common.

1.2. The existing dwelling on the site has a two storey, T-shaped form, with a broadly symmetrical front elevation. Attached to the western elevation of the rear outrigger is a poor quality, single storey lean-to projection with part corrugated roof. A small yard area, enclosed by brickwork, is located in front. The dwelling occupies a floor area of 95.13m^2 and encompasses a volume of 314.5m^3. It is in need of total refurbishment and modernisation and has an energy efficiency rating of just 3 (Category G).

1.3. The applicants propose to demolish the existing dwelling and erect a replacement dwelling in its place. The proposed dwelling will occupy a footprint of 84m^2 a floor area of 146.6m^2 and a total volume of 504.6m^3. The accommodation will comprise of a lounge, kitchen, family room, dining room and shower room at ground floor, with four bedrooms, utility and bathroom at first floor. The dwelling will adopt a symmetrical style of design and be constructed from facing brickwork with stone quoins and solar tiled roof.

1.4. The applicants have aspirations of making the replacement dwelling highly energy efficient, with an overall aim of achieving a zero-carbon development. Encompassed within the design are proposals to utilise, amongst others, solar roof tiles, a mechanical heat ventilation recovery unit, and grey water harvesting. The applicants also wish to future proof the house, encompassing rooms that provide a flexible space to accommodate home working, as well as the provision of ground floor accommodation for downstairs living should the need arise in the future.

1.5. The application has been subject to pre-application discussions with the Local Authority where it was advised that the size of the proposed replacement dwelling would be materially larger than the one being replaced and therefore would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In terms of very special circumstances, it was acknowledged by the Local Authority that permitted development rights remain intact, but that they would need to be convinced that permitted development allowances offer a realistic fall-back option, including the preparation of elevations and floor plans for this to be afforded material weight. This application has duly sought to address the comments raised by the Local Authority and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and comprises a detached two-storey dwelling with single storey lean-to extension. It is set within

a substantial curtilage, set well back from Caverswall Common, which runs to the north of the site beyond established a former gravel pit which is now disused and overgrown with semi-mature/mature vegetation. Residential development is located to the southwest, and to the northeast, with agricultural land extending southwards and eastwards beyond the southern boundary. Vehicular access is taken from Caverswall Common to the north.

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 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, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. It goes on to state that essential local needs will be met by allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2 of the Core Strategy. Policy SS6c also states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.4. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy states that other than sites allocated for housing development in the Site Allocations DPD, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted in the rural areas outside the settlement and infill boundaries of the town and the villages:

- Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H2.
- A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.
- Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.
- Extensions to existing dwellings provided they are appropriate in scale and design and do not have a detrimental impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area.
- The conversion of non-residential rural buildings

3.5. 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;
- create, where appropriate, attractive, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate, amongst others, landscaping and designing out crime initiatives;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;
- promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate, in accordance with policy NE1;
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;
- ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;

3.6. Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development. The

Council will achieve these by resisting development that could have an adverse effect on European, National, regional and locally designated site, and by ensuring that development produces a net gain in biodiversity with any unavoidable impacts appropriately mitigated for.

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of safeguarding the Green Belt, securing high quality design, encouraging sustainable development and renewable technologies, and ensuring a net gain in biodiversity. 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.

Town & Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015

4.2. This document sets out provisions for dwellings to be extended without the need to seek planning permission from the Local Authority. The content of this document is of direct relevance to this submission and is referred to in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

5.0 PLANNING ISSUES

Green Belt

5.1. The application proposes the demolition of the existing dwelling on the site, and the erection of a replacement dwelling. Policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy confirm that within the rural areas the replacement of an existing rural building will be allowed in the interests of meeting local needs, provided that they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.

5.2. The existing dwelling is in a poor condition, and in need of complete modernisation and refurbishment. It is not intrinsic to the character of the locality and the proposed replacement dwelling will not derive any significantly greater detrimental impact to the character of the rural area, and thus is in accordance with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy.

5.3. Policy SS6c nevertheless goes on to confirm that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. It nevertheless goes on to list a number of exceptions, which includes:

"the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces"

5.4. The existing dwelling occupies a footprint of 64.32m^2, a floor area of 95.13m^2 and has a total volume of 315.54m^3. The proposed replacement dwelling by contrast will have a footprint of footprint of 84m^2, a floor area of 146.6m^2 and a total volume of 504.6m^3. During pre-application discussions the Local Authority concluded that the dimensions of the proposed replaced dwelling would be materially larger than the existing dwelling, and that as a consequence the proposal would constitute an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. Whilst the proposed dwelling has subsequently been reduced in size, it remains larger than that which is being replaced, and as a consequence the onus falls on the applicant to demonstrate very special circumstances.

Very Special Circumstances

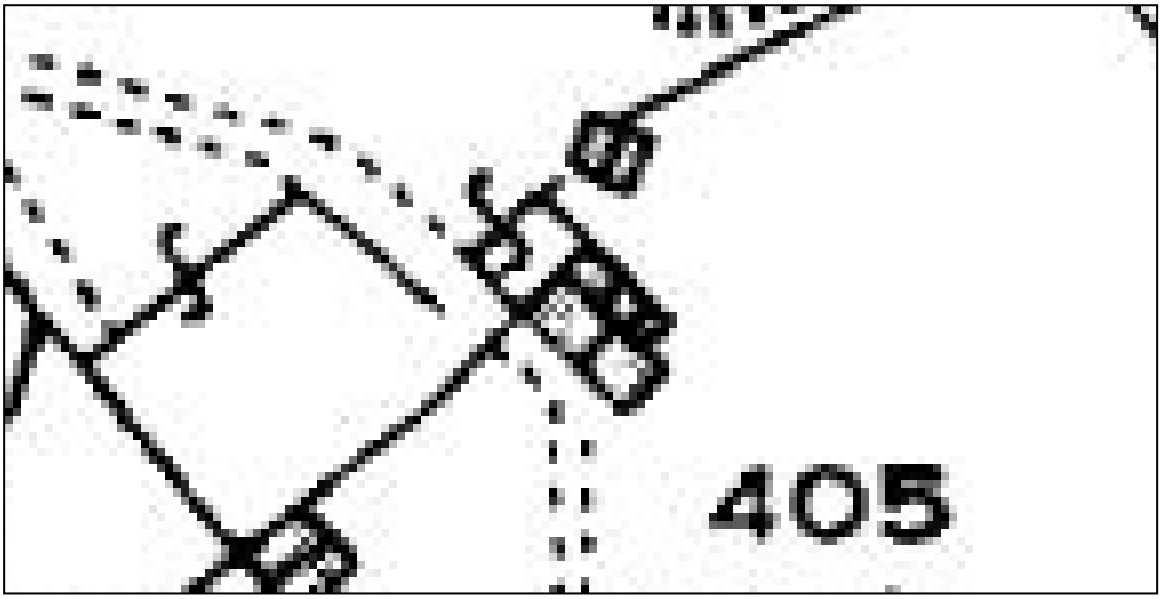
5.5. Paragraph 143 of the revised NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 144 goes on to confirm that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In this case the 'additional harm' over and above the harm by inappropriateness, would be limited, given that the resultant footprint of development would not be substantially greater than the existing building, and would furthermore have no wider material impact owing to the presence of surrounding vegetation.

5.6. The applicant's case of very special circumstances centres around the established fall-back position which exists under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Under these provisions, the applicants would be entitled to extend the dwelling that exists on site today in a number of ways, without requiring the need for planning permission.

5.7. A review of historic Ordnance Survey mapping dating from 1937 reveals that the 'original' dwelling can reasonably be concluded to constitute the existing two storey 'T' shaped part of the dwelling, along with part of the lean-to attached to the northwestern elevation of the rear outrigger. An extract of the 1937 Ordnance Survey mapping is shown in Figure 1.

5.8. Based on the original dwelling identified, the applicant would be entitled to carry out a number of extensions to the existing dwelling without the need for planning permission. Such extensions include single storey extensions on either side of the property (each extending in width to no more than half the width of the original dwellinghouse), along with a two-storey rear extension projecting up to 3 metres off the rear elevation of the property. These extensions are shown on the enclosed plan (reference 00765-AS(0)03).

Figure 1 – Extent of 'Original Dwelling' (Source: old-maps.co.uk)



5.9. The resultant accommodation that could be provided by utilising these permitted development rights would entail a lounge, snug, utility, kitchen and dining area at ground floor, with three double bedrooms and bathroom at first floor. The accommodation flows well and would achieve the applicant's minimum accommodation requirements. As a fall-back scenario, the applicant's entitlements under Permitted Development are therefore considered to be worthy of substantial weight.

5.10. The permitted development extensions shown on drawing 00765-AS(0)03 would equate result in a dwelling with a footprint of 101.4m^2, a floor area of 136.6m^2, and a total volume of 506.4m^3.

5.11. The proposed replacement dwelling by comparison would have a total footprint of 84m^2, a floorspace of 146.6m^2 and a total volume of 504.6m^3. This represents a lesser overall volume than that which could be achieved under permitted development without the need for planning permission, as well as a lesser overall footprint. A summary of these dimensions is set out in Figure 2 overleaf for convenience.

5.12. The dimensions in Figure 2 clearly demonstrate that the applicant's established fall-back position under permitted development would result in a form of development that would have a materially greater impact on the Green Belt than that which would be associated with the proposed replacement dwelling, in particular with regards to its footprint and volume.

Figure 2 – Comparison of Proposed Dwelling & Fallback Position

	Proposed Dwelling	**Permitted Dev. Fallback inc. Existing Dwelling**	**Difference +/- to Replacement Dwelling**
Footprint	84m^2	101.4m^2	+17.4m^2
Floorspace (GIA)	146.6m^2	136.6m^2	-10m^2
Volume	504.6m^3	506.4m^3	+2.2m^3

5.13. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF sets out the five purposes of Green Belts, which are as follows:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.14. The proposed replacement dwelling will derive a beneficial enhancement to the five purposes of the Green Belt when compared to the established fall-back position that exists, as its overall footprint, floorspace and volume will be less than that which the applicant could otherwise undertake without the need for planning permission. Such considerations should be afforded substantial weight.

5.15. In addition to the above, considerable weight also needs to be given to the environmental benefits of delivering a new dwelling on this site, in line with the environmental objectives of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

5.16. The existing dwelling is in a very poor condition and in need of complete modernisation. Its Energy Performance Certificate ranks it at level 3, which puts it in the very lowest levels of energy efficiency. The applicants have strong aspirations of achieving a zero-carbon development on this site and propose to utilise a combination of high levels of insulation, solar roof tiles, a mechanical

ventilation and heat recovery unit, grey water harvesting and a wood burner to achieve this. It is anticipated that the wood burner will be fuelled by either biomass or by wood grown on site by the applicants.

5.17. Paragraph 148 of the NPPF states that:

> *"The planning system should* ***support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate****, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places* ***in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions****, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and* ***support renewable and low carbon energy*** *and associated infrastructure". (our emphasis).*

5.18. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF goes on to confirm that local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that:

> *"even small scale projects provide a* ***valuable contribution*** *to cutting greenhouse gas emissions" (our emphasis)*

5.19. These provisions are reinforced by paragraph 131 of the NPPF which states that:

> *"In determining applications,* ***great weight*** *should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which* ***promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an areas,*** *so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings". (our emphasis)*

5.20. These provisions are also reflected within paragraph 118 of the NPPF which advises that planning decisions should take opportunities to achieve net environmental gains, with substantial weight given to schemes which support opportunities to remediate degraded land.

5.21. The proposed replacement dwelling will derive a substantial enhancement in energy efficiency terms compared to the existing dwelling on the site, which in turn will help to support the transition to a low carbon future, will promote high levels of sustainability, and will help to raise the standard of design more generally in the area. The proposed dwelling is furthermore of a scale, massing and design which is generally reflective of traditional Moorlands vernacular, and as such will serve to reinforce local distinctiveness. The provisions of paragraphs 118, 127, 148 and 154 of the NPPF are therefore considered to lend significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.22. The applicants also wish to future proof the proposed dwelling, encompassing rooms that provide a flexible space to accommodate home working, as well as the provision of ground floor accommodation for downstairs living should the need arise in the future. The facilitation of home working will assist in reducing

the number of vehicle movements associated with the development, as the applicants will not need to travel to their place of work. The applicants also intend to provide a plug-in charging point on the site in order to facilitate the use of a hybrid or fully electric car. The also propose an external charging point to provide convenient charging for ebikes, thereby increasing the likelihood of more sustainable modes of transport being utilised. Such measures accord with the objectives of paragraphs 84 and 102 of the NPPF which seek to support local business and community needs in rural areas, with encouragement given to proposals which do not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and which secure sustainable modes of transport.

5.23. The applicants also intend to grow their own food within the garden of the property in order to become more self-sufficient in terms of their consumption, and specifically identified this location as it offers opportunities for walking and cycling in the countryside. This accords with the objectives of paragraph 91 of the NPPF which seeks to encourage and support healthy lifestyles.

5.24. The above considerations coupled with the benefits of the proposal compared to the established fall-back position are collectively considered to amount to very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable from a Green Belt perspective and accords with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Design

5.25. The proposed replacement dwelling adopts a sympathetic design approach that takes its cues from traditional Moorlands vernacular, with a narrow gable ends, steeply pitching gabled roofs, stone quoins and a symmetrical front elevation. Whilst the design is modestly different to that considered at the pre-application stage, the fundamental design approach is not materially different, and it is noted that no objections were raised by the Local Authority in this regard. The proposal will add to the overall quality of the area, will be visually attractive and is in keeping with the characteristics of the wider Moorlands area.

5.26. Whilst this proposal adopts a pastiche style of design that is reflective of the character and appearance of the wider surrounding area, the development promotes the highest levels of sustainability by virtue of the renewable energy measures / high energy efficiency that is proposed. It therefore accords with the objectives of paragraph 131 of the NPPF in promoting high levels of sustainability and helping to raise the standard of design more generally in the area.

5.27. In addition to the above it is noted that the proposed development will not give rise to any adverse impacts to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, owing to the distance to these properties and presence of intervening vegetation. Such considerations lead us to conclude overall that the scale, massing, design and layout of the proposed replacement dwelling is in accordance with the

provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Ecology

5.28. Owing to the proposed demolition of the existing building, the applicant has commissioned a bat and bird survey to accompany the application. The survey concludes that the existing dwelling has moderate roosting potential for bats, but that there was no evidence of bat activity evident. Two bat activity surveys were subsequently conducted, and these also revealed no evidence of bats emerging or re-entering the building. No nesting birds were identified either.

5.29. The survey nevertheless sets out some recommended mitigation measures, encompassing the provision of a bat boxes within the construction of the new dwelling, along with a bird box. Such measures can be secured via a suitably worded planning condition, and in doing so the proposed development will accord with the provisions of policy NE1 of the Core Strategy.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. The Local Authority has confirmed that the proposed replacement dwelling amounts to an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt, on account of it being materially larger than the dwelling being replaced. It is nevertheless submitted that the applicant's fall-back position under permitted development, coupled with the very high energy efficiency and renewable energy measures proposed, collectively amount to very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposal is furthermore considered to constitute a high quality design that will reinforce local distinctiveness, and will avoid any adverse impact to local biodiversity interests.

6.2. The proposed development is accordingly considered to constitute a sustainable form of development that accords with the provisions of policies SS6c, R2, DC1 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3. The Local Authority is therefore requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development.