Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

LAND AT BRIDGE END, LEEK

OCTOBER 2018

Site Address:
Land at Bridge End, Macclesfield Road, Leek, Staffordshire

Applicant:
Urban Nu Ltd.

Proposal:
Erection of 5no. Bungalows

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 18th October 2017
Job Reference: RDP/2018/094

Report Prepared By:
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Urban Nu Ltd. to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany a full planning application for the erection of five bungalows on land at Bridge End, Leek.

1.2 Planning permission has previously been granted to erect 11no. bungalows on this site, and this consent remains extant (SMD/2013/1099 and SMD/2017/0696 refer). The submitted proposal represents an alternative form of development for the site, and encompasses a larger site area, and the provision of larger individual bungalows, creating a more spacious, lower density layout.

1.3 Each dwelling will occupy a footprint of 189.2m^2 (excluding porch) and stand to a ridge height of 6.01 metres. The accommodation will comprise of an open plan kitchen/diner, separate living area, utility room, hallway, master bedroom with walk-in wardrobe and ensuite, plus four additional bedrooms. Each dwelling will also benefit from a detached triple garage.

1.4 As with the extant permission, the proposed means of vehicular access to the site is to be taken via the existing track that leads up from Bridge End from the Macclesfield Road. To the east of the proposed dwellings will be an area of landscaping, encompassing tree planting and provision of nature pond. The extent and position of the proposed planting has been informed by pre-application discussions with the Local Authority's Trees and Woodlands Officer.

1.5 The applicant has sought to engage with local residents in Bridge End about this proposal, as it is considered that it goes some way to alleviating the concerns they have previously raised about the amount of vehicular traffic

that will use the existing access. An offer was also made to provide a dedicated parking area for their future use. However, it was made clear by residents during those discussions that *any* use of the existing access along Bridge End was unacceptable to them.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of previously developed land that lies within the defined settlement boundary of Leek (as set out within the 1998 Local Plan) and is proposed for retention within the development boundary for Leek within the emerging Local Plan Submission Version (2016-2031).

2.2 The surrounding area to the south is characterised by residential development, which sits at a lower level to the application site. To the east and north, the site is bounded by open countryside, with planning consent having recently been granted for the erection of two dwellings on land to the northwest of the site, adjacent to the cricket pitch, and four dwellings beyond that at Highfield House. To the west of the site lies an existing access track that runs down from Leek Cricket Club to the Macclesfield Road, and this track is separated from the developable area of the site by mature vegetation, which also wraps around the southern boundary of the site.

2.3 The surrounding area exhibits a widely varying character, incorporating residential uses with differing house types and architectural styles, along with employment development in the form of the Tenants Chemical Works and the Sainsbury's / Churnet Works site. The site does not benefit from Conservation Area status, nor are there any nearby Listed Buildings.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase 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. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance:

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 the Core Strategy 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 SS1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.4 Policy SS3 of the Core Strategy states that housing will be located in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and will be distributed between the towns and rural areas. It identifies that some 30% of new housing over the plan period will be delivered within the three market towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph. This equates to some 1,800 dwellings.

3.5 Policy SS5a of the Core Strategy states that the Council will continue to meet the housing and community needs of Leek and its rural hinterland by increasing the range of available and affordable house types, especially for first time buyers and older people and allocating a range of deliverable housing sites both within the urban area and on land adjacent to the urban area. Sites within the urban area shall be in locations across the town which have good accessibility to services and facilities with encouragement being given to previously developed (brownfield) sites.

3.6 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 of Core Strategy. Policy H1 goes on to state that 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. It adds that residential development on unidentified 'windfall' sites will be permitted up to a maximum size of 9 dwellings within the Development Boundaries of the towns and larger villages. The policy also states that new dwellings should be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers, whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of existing occupiers.

3.7 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should 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. It goes on to state that 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; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available.*

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018)

4.1 The recently revised National Planning Policy Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of new housing throughout the country, and sets out requirements for Local Authorities to maintain a five year deliverable supply of housing at all times. It also sets out guidance, *inter-alia*, in respect of making effective use of previously developed land, securing high quality design, and assessing impacts on highway safety. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018)

4.2 This document sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.8 years. The content of this document is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Appeal Decision 2223254 – Land at Bridge End, Leek

4.3 This appeal decision relates to the original outline application on the application site (SMD/2013/1099) and granted consent for the erection of 11.no dwellings thereon. The conclusions of the Planning Inspector in allowing the appeal are discussed within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The principle of residential development on this site has been previously established through the grant of planning permission under applications SMD/2013/1099 and SMD/2017/0696. The proposal entailed the erection of 11no. dwellings on the site, with access taken via Bridge End / Macclesfield Road. Those permissions remain extant and constitute an established fall back position against which this alternative proposal must be assessed.

5.2 The above notwithstanding, the site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Leek, and the proposal entails the re-development of land that has been previously developed. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF confirms that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes, something that this proposal entails. The previous appeal decision on the site furthermore confirmed that this site constitutes a sustainable location for new housing, close to jobs, services and facilities (paragraph 14 of the appeal decision refers) and a number of recent planning approvals nearby have confirmed the same (e.g. SMD/2016/0376 and SMD/2017/0707). The principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable, and in accordance with policies SS3 and SS5A of the Core Strategy.

Layout

5.3 The proposed layout of the development differs from that previously approved on the site, and encompasses a much more spacious and low-density form of development. The means of access into the site will remain in the same position as previously approved, but will have three dwellings located on the northeastern side of the access road and two on its southwestern side. The development will continue to adopt a meandering,

informal layout, thereby avoiding an overly engineered and regimented appearance. Frontage landscaping and planting is to be accommodated throughout in order to further soften the impact of the development, and enhance its appearance.

5.4 The proposed bungalows occupy much larger footprints that those previously approved on the site, but likewise sit within much larger individual plots. Each of the dwellings will benefit from an appropriate area of private amenity space that far exceeds the recommended minimum standard as set out in the Council's informal space about dwellings standards, and the general arrangement of the dwellings ensures that the Local Authority's minimum interface distances will be met.

5.5 As with the previous permission on the site, a substantial area of structural landscaping / planting is proposed at the easternmost end of the site in the interests of softening the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area. This is discussed in more detail within the landscaping section below.

5.6 On approach to the site along the access track, the existing vegetation along the western boundary of the site will screen the development until at the point of access into the site itself. In wider views from the east, the development will be seen against the backdrop of the existing Cricket Club complex, and will be filtered / softened by the proposed structural landscaping.

5.7 In determining the previous appeal on the site, the Planning Inspector commented that:

> *"Notwithstanding the proposals for screening, which may take some time to mature, it is clear that housing on the site will be visible from some vantage points around the town. It would also adjoin a Landscape Character Area, albeit it lies outside this area and it is not clear how many of the viewpoints from which the site can be seen identified by either the appellants or objectors are within this area.* ***However, once the trees and shrubs have matured, the visual impact of development on the site will be mitigated. Indeed, development on the top of hills is a feature of the town of Leek****, whose town centre itself occupies such a location. As such it would be neither unusual nor detrimental for further development to occur in such a location". (my emphasis)*

5.8 The Inspector in that case was considered a proposal with dwellings standing between 6.5 metres and 8 metres in height, and found the visual impact to be acceptable. The submitted proposal encompasses bungalows some 6 metres in ridge height.

5.9 Having regard to the commentary above, and the conclusions of the Planning Inspector in respect of visual impact of development on this site, it is submitted that the proposed layout of the development will not give rise to significant and demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and thus accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Scale

5.10 The application proposes the erection of single storey bungalows, reflecting the scale of those properties that were approved under the recent Reserved Matters consent. The bungalows will stand to a maximum ridge height of 6.01 metres, which is broadly commensurate with the scale of the previously

approved development (5.9 metres), and as such will not derive any significant and demonstrable adverse impact to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.11 It is noted in this respect that the previous outline application for this site was accompanied by a Design & Access Statement which set out the intended scale parameters for the proposed development. This document indicated that the proposed dwellings would likely stand between 6.5 metres and 8 metres high and in recommending approval of the application, the Senior Planning Officer commented that:

> *"Any detailed application would address matters of scale and appearance and* ***the parameters given are acceptable in these respects****"* (my emphasis)

5.12 The proposed dwellings do not exceed the scale parameters indicated in the previously approved outline application (which remains extant), and furthermore are of a commensurate scale to the scheme subsequently approved at the Reserved Matters stage. The proposed scale of development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Appearance

5.13 The surrounding area exhibits a wide variety of architectural styles and types of development, including developments of a single storey, 1½ storey, two storeys and split-level nature. There is no strong prevailing vernacular to respond to.

5.14 The submitted proposal encompasses the erection of five bungalows of uniform appearance. They encompass a gabled roof style of design, with

central ridge running front to back. Towards the rear the ridge line drops to form a subservient element, which helps to break up the massing of the building. Window proportions are consistent with the character and appearance of the surrounding area, as are the proposed headers and cills. The provision of corbelled eaves and dentil verges is also considered to be appropriate for this site, and will not derive any significant and demonstrable adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the area.

5.15 The dwellings will also be constructed from a palette of materials that is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area, including red facing brickwork and plain grey roof tiles. The designs are accentuated by the provision of chimneys and timber framed porches and collectively these design features will ensure an appropriate form of development that will not give rise to significant and demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Means of Access

5.16 Vehicular access to this site, as with the extant planning permission, is to be taken off the Macclesfield Road, following the existing road along Bridge End up towards the Cricket Club. The access benefits from an appropriate level of visibility on egress onto the Macclesfield Road, and is of sufficient width at varying points along its length to enable two vehicles to pass.

5.17 In determining the outline application, the Planning Inspector concluded that:

> *"Vehicular access to the site would be taken from Bridge End along what is at present a private track. While some local*

residents express concerns about the adequacy of this means of access, there is no objection from the highway authority, subject to the imposition of conditions"

5.18 Paragraph 108 of the NPPF dictates that development should provide a safe and suitable access for all users, with paragraph 109 stating that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.19 In this case, the submitted proposal entails a substantial *reduction* in the number of dwellings proposed for the site (less than half of that already approved), and as a consequence there will be significantly fewer vehicle movements along the track compared to that which has already been approved. The proposed development will therefore not give rise to any material harm to highway safety over and above that which has already been found to be acceptable by the Local Authority, Local Highway Authority and the previous Planning Inspector, and as a consequence there is no conflict with the provisions of paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF.

Landscaping

5.20 The submitted layout entails a larger site area than that which was subject of the outline application, but nevertheless maintains provision of structural landscaping at the easternmost end of the site in the in the interests of softening the impact of the development in this hill top location. The landscaping buffer has been subject to pre-application discussions with the Local Authority's Trees and Woodlands Officer and encompasses plentiful tree and shrub planting which will serve to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

5.21 The Planning Inspector who determined the outline application noted that once the trees and shrubs have matured, the visual impact of development on the site will be mitigated, going on to acknowledge that development on the top of hills is a feature of Leek, and as such development on this site would not be unusual or detrimental to the area. The final details of species mix, density of planting etc. can be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition, and in doing so the development will accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Other Considerations

5.22 The presumption in favour of sustainable development continues to be relevant to this proposal on account of the fact that the proposal accords with the adopted development strategy for the District, and because of the Local Authority's continued inability to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing. The recently revised NPPF maintains a requirement for Local Authorities to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites at all times, but SMDCs Housing Land Supply Statement (2018) confirms that the deliverable housing land supply equates to 1.8 years. This represents a worsening situation compared to that at the time of the appeal (2.3 years) and at the time of the Reserved Matters submission (1.99 years).

5.23 In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 11 of the NPPF, permission should therefore only be refused if any adverse impacts would arise to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development.

5.24 The Planning Inspector who determined the previous appeal on the site concluded that the adverse impacts of this development were of a:

"low order of magnitude"

5.25 This led him to conclude that:

> *"Set against these are the benefits from making productive use of redundant previously-developed land, contributing to the remediation of the significant shortfall in housing land supply in the district, the provision of homes in a sustainable location close to jobs, services and facilities in the main town of the district, and contributing towards the provision of affordable housing and education.* ***The limited adverse impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh these significant benefits,*** *and therefore the presumption in favour of granting planning permission for sustainable development set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF applies. Planning permission is therefore granted. (my emphasis)*

5.26 This revised proposal encompasses a lesser quantum of development to that considered by the Planning Inspector and will have a consequential lesser overall volume of built development on the site. Consequentially, the impacts of the development will continue to be of *"low order of magnitude".*

5.27 The proposal will furthermore continue to derive a number of material benefits, including the delivery of five dwellings to help meet the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing, and the delivery of new homes in a sustainable location that is close to jobs, services and facilities in Leek.

5.28 In addition, policy H1 of the Core Strategy seeks to secure high quality, sustainable housing which meets identified local housing market needs and the strategy for the area. The Local Authority's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016) confirms that the number of residents aged over 65 in the District is projected to rise by 39% between 2011 and 2030, with the age

group 75-85 predicted to increase by 69% and 134% respectively. The SHMA goes on to identify a requirement for suitable accommodation to be provided to meet the needs of this ageing population.

5.29 The conclusions of the SHMA reflect the provisions of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which confirms that there is a *critical* need to provide accommodation that is suitable for occupancy by older people. The NPPG goes on to state that:

> *"supporting independent living can help to reduce the costs to health and social services, and providing more options for older people to move could also free up houses that are under occupied"*

5.30 The proposed development will help to fulfil these objectives, by delivering five single storey dwellings in a sustainable location that are suitable for occupation by elderly people. This represents a significant social benefit of the development and one which should be afforded substantial weight in the determination of the application.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms having regard to the following conclusions:

- The principle of residential development on the site has already been established under applications SMD/2013/1099 and SMD/2017/0696;

- The previous approvals remain extant and constitute a material fall back position against which the application must be determined;

- The proposed layout is of a low density and will not derive any material adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the surrounding area;

- Structural landscaping is maintained at the eastern end of the site in order to soften the visual impact of the development on the surrounding area;

- The proposed scale of development is in keeping with that previously approved on the site;

- The design of the proposed dwellings is in keeping with the varied character of the surrounding area;

- The proposed development will not derive any adverse impacts in respect of residential amenity, and will ensure an appropriate level of residential amenity for future occupiers;

- The proposed means of access is unchanged from that which has been approved under the previous outline and reserved matters permissions, and the development will result in significantly fewer vehicle movements;

- The Local Authority continues to have a shortfall in housing land supply and therefore the tilted balance in favour of approval is engaged;

- The proposed development will not give rise to any adverse impacts to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the numerous benefits of the development.

6.2 For these reasons the proposed development is considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS3, SS5A, H1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, as well as the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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