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Planning Statement

Proposed conversion and extension of Coach House to form detached dwelling and improvements to vehicular access
The Old Vicarage, Church Road, Brown Edge
For Mr. G. Williams

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an application for the conversion and extension of the existing Coach House at The Old Vicarage, Church Road, Brown Edge to create an independent dwelling.

1.2. Planning permission has previously been granted for the conversion of the Coach House and the erection of a two-storey extension to create ancillary living accommodation (SMD/2015/0312). The resultant accommodation comprised an open plan kitchen/living room, hallway and bathroom at ground floor, with two bedrooms (one ensuite) at first floor. That permission has recently expired.

1.3. The application proposes the same scheme for the conversion and extension of the Coach House, but rather than creating ancillary accommodation, it proposes the creation of an independent dwelling. The existing curtilage of the Coach House is to be subdivided to create a separate area of private amenity space to serve future occupiers, with parking for two vehicles also accommodated.

1.4. Associated with the proposal are proposed improvements to the existing vehicular access to the site, which currently suffers from a chronic lack of visibility. The proposal will see the existing access widened and the boundary wall re-aligned in order to improve visibility on egress from the site and to provide space for two vehicles to pass one another. An established tree to the north of the access is proposed for removal to accommodate the improvements to the existing access.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site encompasses an irregularly shaped parcel of land, which extends to some 0.28 hectares. The site lies within the settlement boundary of Brown Edge and is currently in residential use. The site is bordered along its western boundary by Church Road and is enclosed by a high stone wall with hedgerow above. Set behind that hedgerow is a row of mature trees. A detached dwelling known as Rose Cottage lies to the west of the site on the opposite side of Church Road. To the north of the site lies The Old Vicarage, and beyond that the Grade II Listed Church of St. Anne. Further residential development extends to the south of the site. A wooded area known as High Tor is located in an elevated position to the east of the site.

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, which includes the larger villages.

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 SS6a of the Core Strategy relates to the larger villages, of which Brown Edge is one, and confirms that these settlements will retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the local housing needs of

the rural areas and also for limited employment needs of a scale and type appropriate to each settlement having regard to local needs (including those of its local market), infrastructure capacity and character. The policy goes on to state that local housing needs will be met by increasing the range of available and affordable house types, especially for first time buyers and families; allocating a range of deliverable housing sites primarily within the built-up area in locations across the village with good accessibility to services and facilities. Where development is required to be met on land outside the built-up area this will be only of a small scale and on sites which relate well to the built-up area, can be assimilated into the landscape and have good access. allowing for rural exceptions housing in appropriate locations on the edge of settlements (in accordance with policy H2). This will be additional to the housing provision for the rural areas.

3.7. 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;

3.8. Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains by:

1. Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance.
2. Promoting development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of conservation area appraisals, design statements, archaeological assessments, characterisation studies and Masterplanning.
3. Preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless

their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss.

3.9. Policy T1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and helps deliver the priorities of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plans, where this is consistent with other policies. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
- Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
- Referring to appropriate parking standards as laid out in national guidance, or any parking standards that may be produced locally.
- Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes.

3.10. 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 by (amongst others):

- Resisting any proposed development that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site alone or in combination with other plans or projects unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.
- Ensuring development where appropriate produces a net gain in biodiversity and ensuring that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for.
- Ensuring development promotes the appropriate maintenance, enhancement, restoration and/or re-creation of biodiversity through its proposed nature, scale, location and design.
- Protecting and enhancing habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity as identified in legislation, and recognising and implementing appropriate measures, including landscape-scale conservation management, to take account of the fact that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change.

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, *inter alia*, in respect of housing delivery, highway safety and securing high quality design. 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.

5.0 PLANNING ISSUES

Principle of Development

5.1. The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Brown Edge, a designation which is proposed to remain within the emerging Moorlands Local Plan Submission Version. Within such areas the principle of converting and extending existing buildings and creating new dwellings is acceptable, as it accords with the adopted development strategy for the District as set out in policies SS2, SS3, SS6 and SS6a of the Core Strategy.

Design & Layout

5.2. The application proposes the sensitive conversion of the existing building, along with the provision of a two-storey extension. The design and appearance of the proposed development is identical to that which was approved under application SMD/2015/0312. In approving that application, it was concluded that the extension and alterations were acceptable as they are simple in their design, and modestly proportioned against the size of the building. Given that there is no change in the proposed design it is submitted that the same conclusion can be reached in respect of this current application. Similarly, the proposal will not have any adverse impact on the setting of the nearby Listed Building, as was also found to be the case in the determination of application SMD/2015/0312.

5.3. The main difference between the current proposal and the previous permission is the creation of a separate parcel of domestic curtilage to serve the occupants of the new dwelling, along with the provision of two parking spaces (compared to one previously). The subdivision of the existing curtilage of The Old Vicarage will not derive any material adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the area or the setting of the nearby Listed Building and will furthermore be of sufficient size to meet the Local Authority's informal amenity standards. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in the context of policies DC1 and DC2 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.4. The application proposes alterations to the existing site access to improve visibility on egress. The existing access suffers from very poor visibility when looking north along Church Road (4.5 metres) and necessitates pulling out onto the highway before any oncoming traffic can be observed. This is owing to the presence of a high stone wall adjacent to the access which immediately abuts up to the carriageway. When looking south the visibility is better owing to the presence of a pedestrian footway. There are also existing gates sited adjacent to the footway which results in cars either waiting on the carriageway, or sticking out into the carriageway, when waiting to turn into the site. A photograph showing the existing access arrangement is shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1 – Photograph of Existing Access



Source: Google Streetview

5.5. Church Road is one of the principal routes through the village and is well frequented by traffic. The existing access is also located in close proximity to the existing junction of Church Road with Boardman's Bank which has an awkward angle when egressing onto Church Road. The poor visibility to the north of the site is currently just 4.5 metres and necessitates pulling out onto the carriageway before any oncoming traffic from the north can be observed.

5.6. Paragraph 108 of the NPPF states that in assessing applications, it should be ensured that any significant impacts from the development on highway safety can be mitigated to an acceptable degree. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF goes on to state that applications for development should create places that are safe, secure and attractive and which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

5.7. The proposed alterations to the site access will improve visibility to the north of the access by over 100% up to some 10.8 metres. The proposal also encompasses the provision of a wider access and provision of gates in a set back position, thereby enabling vehicles to pull clear of the carriageway. The proposal will therefore derive a clear and beneficial enhancement to highway safety by enabling users of the access the ability to observe oncoming traffic before pulling onto the carriageway. Such benefits to highway safety are considered to carry significant weight in favour of the proposed development and accord with the objectives of paragraphs 108 and 110 of the NPPF and policy T1 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Trees

5.8. Owing to the proposed improvements to the existing vehicular access it will be necessary to remove an existing mature tree to the north of the access (Horse Chestnut). This tree is protected a Tree Preservation Order. The accompanying tree survey prepared by Tree Heritage notes the presence of a cavity in the stem and decay being present in the stem. The presence of bleeding canker on the stem is also identified. This leads the tree surveyor to categorise the tree as C1 (Low Quality).

5.9. Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

5.10. There is no other way of securing the proposed improvements to visibility to deliver the significant enhancement to highway safety and the delivery of a new dwelling on the site other than removing this tree. There are therefore no alternative means of achieving a less harmful impact. The applicant nevertheless proposes to plant a number of new specimen trees elsewhere within the site in the interests of mitigating the loss of this particular tree. Such tree planting can be secured by way of an appropriately worded condition. In time these will serve to enhance the local area, outweigh the removal of this low quality tree, and provide a net gain to biodiversity in line with the objectives of paragraph 175 of the NPPF and policy NE1 of the Core Strategy.

Other Considerations

5.11. In determining this application, consideration also needs to be given to the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF and policy SS1a of the Core Strategy. The Local Authority's latest housing land supply statistics confirm that a housing land supply equivalent to 1.8 years exists. There therefore remains a very significant demand for new housing within the District to meet the requirements of the NPPF, in the order of some 3,803 dwellings.

5.12. The provisions of the NPPF require Local Authorities to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing at all times, and in circumstances where they are unable to do so, as is the case here, it dictates that 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.

5.13. The proposed development will derive a number of significant material benefits, most notably making a contribution towards the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing land supply, a situation which continues to worsen. Further benefits will be derived as a consequence of generating additional household expenditure within the local economy and generating work for tradespeople during the construction phase. The proposal will also derive significant benefits to highway safety as discussed above.

5.14. Environmental benefits will furthermore ensue as a consequence of delivering a new dwelling in a sustainable location, with local services and facilities readily accessible on foot or by bicycle. The loss of the existing mature tree weighs against the proposal to some degree, but it is categorised as a low-quality specimen, and mitigation is offered by the applicant's intention to undertake replacement tree planting throughout the site to off-set its loss. We therefore submit that the proposed development will not derive any adverse impacts to *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole.

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 and SS6a of the Core Strategy, and accords with the objectives of the NPPF in significantly boosting the supply of housing. The proposal is furthermore of a suitable design which will not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area or give rise to harm to the setting of the nearby Listed Building. The proposal will provide an appropriate level of residential amenity for future occupiers and will benefit from its own off-road parking. In addition, the proposal is not considered to derive any adverse impacts to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.

6.2. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with the requirements of policies SS2, SS3, SS6, SS6a, DC1, DC2, NE1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to support the application.