Hewitt&CarrArchitects

Planning & Heritage Statement

Change of use from Public House (A4) to Dwelling (C3)
The Royal Oak, Cheadle Road, Alton
For CFM Holdings Ltd

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Hewitt & Carr Architects Ltd. has been instructed by CFM Holdings Ltd to seek planning permission to change the use of The Royal Oak, Cheadle Road, Alton, from its current use as a public house (Use Class A4) to a single dwellinghouse (Use Class C3).

1.2. The application proposes no alterations to the external fabric of the building, with only internal alterations proposed. The resultant accommodation will comprise of a kitchen, dining room, utility, study, utility, cloakroom, WC and boot room at ground floor, with three bedrooms (two ensuite), dressing room and family bathroom at first floor.

1.3. Externally it is proposed to retain the existing frontage parking area to provide parking for the proposed dwelling, and this area is capable of accommodating up to four vehicles. To the rear it is proposed to retain the existing patio area, outbuilding and planting area immediately adjacent to the building, with the raised car parking area removed and laid to lawn.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Alton village, as set out in both the 1998 Local Plan, and the emerging Local Plan. The site also lies within the Alton Conservation Area. The existing public house forms part of a terrace of five properties that extend in a southerly direction from the site, fronting towards the Cheadle Road to the east. To the west of the site lies a small copse of mature trees, within which is located a Grade II Listed well. To the immediate north of the existing public house lies the existing vehicular access which provides access to the rear parking area, and properties beyond. Beyond the northern boundary lie a cluster of Grade II Listed buildings (Corner Cottage and nos.28-29 Horse Road). To the front (east) of the building lies an established parking area, which is segregated from a pedestrian access by low level fence.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1. 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 to the determination of this application:

3.2. Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, and 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 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 relates to 'Development Principles' and 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:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers;
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community;
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce;
- a healthy, safe, attractive and well-maintained environment;
- development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas both now and for future generations.
- development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

3.4. Policy SS6 of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Rural Areas' and states that such areas comprise of the following development categories:

- Larger villages
- Smaller villages
- Other rural areas

3.5. In total these will provide for around 1680 new dwellings and 7.2 hectares of employment land between 2006 and 2026 in accordance with the Area

Strategies set out in policies SS6a – SS6c below. 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 Area Strategy' and confirms Alton as one of the larger villages. The policy states that these settlements shall 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 states that the Council will retain and enhance the role of the larger villages as rural service centres by, *inter-alia*, protecting services and facilities which are essential to sustain rural living. It also states that local housing needs will be met by increasing the range of available and affordable house types, especially for first time buyers and families, and 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.

3.7. Policy C1 of the Core Strategy states that the District Council will resist proposals involving the loss of community facilities unless:

i) an alternative facility of the same type is available or can be provided in an accessible location in the same locality; or

ii) a viability appraisal including a marketing exercise by a qualified professional demonstrates that there are no options for continued use Staffordshire Moorlands as a community facility which are financially viable, and it can be demonstrated that loss of the facility would not disadvantage local residents.

3.8. Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and 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. The policy goes on to state that new development should:

- 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 public spaces, green infrastructure including making provision for networks of multi-functional new and existing green space (both public and private) in accordance with policy C3, landscaping, public art, 'designing out crime' initiatives and the principles of active design;

- incorporate sustainable construction techniques and design concepts for buildings and their layouts to reduce the local and global impact of the development, and to adapt to climate change, in accordance with policy SD1;
- 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;
- ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community.

3.9. Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'The Historic Environment' and 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.

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 significantly boosting the supply of housing, safeguarding heritage assets,

securing high quality design, and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Statement of Case below.

SMDC Housing Land Supply Schedule (March 2018)

4.2. This document sets out the Local Authority's performance against the housing delivery requirements set out in the NPPF. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing equivalent to 1.8 years. The content of this document is discussed in more detail within the Statement of Case below.

Alton & Farley Conservation Area Appraisal

4.3. This document evaluates and records the historical significance of the Conservation Area, identifies feature of townscape and landscape importance, and identifies features should be protected. The content of the Conservation Area Appraisal has been taken into account in the preparation of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Submission Version)

4.4. The emerging Local Plan has recently concluded its examination in public and is due to be adopted in mid-late 2019. Policy H1 of the emerging plan states that residential development on sites not allocated for housing will be supported within the development boundaries of towns and larger villages. Policies C1, DC1, and DC2 of the emerging plan reflect the provisions of the corresponding policies of the current Core Strategy. The content of the emerging Local Plan has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application and is referenced within the Statement of Case below.

5.0 STATEMENT OF CASE

Principle of Development

5.1. The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Alton, as set out within the 1998 Local Plan and the emerging Local Plan and is designated as a 'larger village'. Policy SS6A of the Core Strategy and policy H1 of the emerging Local Plan make provision for new residential development within the defined settlement boundaries of the market towns and larger villages, and consequently the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

Loss of Public House

5.2. Policy C1 of the Core Strategy states that the District Council will resist proposals involving the loss of community facilities unless an alternative facility of the same type is available or can be provided in an accessible location in the same locality, *or* a viability appraisal including evidence of marketing has been undertaken to demonstrate that the use is not financially viable.

5.3. The existing public house has been closed since November 2017 and remains vacant to this present day. Within the village of Alton there are a number of

alternative public houses, all located within easy walking distance of this site. They include:

- The Bulls Head, High Street (250 metres)
- The White Hart, High Street (325 metres)
- Alton Bridge Hotel, Station Road (585 metres)
- The Talbot, Station Road (605 metres)
- Blacksmiths Arms (615 metres)

5.4. Owing to the existence of these alternative facilities within the village, the proposed change of use of the existing public house to a dwelling will not disadvantage local residents, who will continue to have a choice of public houses available to them. The proposed development therefore derives no conflict with the provisions of policy C1 of the Core Strategy, or policy C1 of the emerging Local Plan.

Design & Layout

5.5. The application proposes no alterations to the external fabric of the existing building, and consequently the proposed change of use will not derive any material adverse impact to the character and appearance of the surrounding area over and above that which already exists. The alterations to the site layout are also limited in nature and relate to the removal of the existing car park at the rear of the site, and its replacement as a lawned garden. Such works are not considered to raise any material issues in terms of impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and indeed could be regarded as an enhancement to the area, by removing parked vehicles from views along Toothill Lane.

5.6. The conversion of the building to a residential dwelling is also considered to be acceptable from a residential amenity perspective. The lawned area to the rear of the site will extend to circa 150 square metres, with additional amenity space located immediately adjacent to the building. This is far in excess of the recommended minimum of 65 square meters as set out in the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards.

5.7. The internal alterations to the first floor accommodation will result in an existing side facing bathroom window being changed to a secondary window serving a bedroom, and to ensure no overlooking or loss of privacy to the neighbouring occupier, it is proposed that this window be maintained with obscure glazing. Such measures can be secured by way of an appropriately worded planning condition, and in doing so the amenity of the neighbouring occupier will be safeguarded. In all other respects the development accords with the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards, and consequently the development is considered to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy, policy DC1 of the emerging Local Plan and section 12 of the NPPF.

Heritage Impacts

5.8. The application site lies within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area, which is classified as a designated heritage asset. It also lies in close proximity to three existing Grade II Listed Buildings (Corner Cottage and nos.28-29 Horse Road to the north, and a rock well to the west). The public house itself however is not statutorily listed, nor is it identified as a building of importance within the Conservation Area Appraisal. As heritage assets, the Conservation Area and the Grade II Listed Buildings can be considered to have a high degree of significance.

5.9. As discussed in the Design and Layout section above, the proposed development encompasses no alterations to the external fabric of the existing building, and consequently will not derive any material harm to the character of the area, or to the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings. The removal of the car park to the rear of the public house, to be replaced by lawn, will derive some degree of enhancement to the setting of the adjacent Listed Building (Corner Cottage) by removing parked cars from views from its rear elevation and garden.

5.10. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In this case the development will not derive significant, or less than significant harm, to the significance of the Conservation Area or the adjacent Listed Buildings as heritage assets; rather it will derive no material harm. The development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy, policy DC2 of the emerging Local Plan, and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Highway Safety

5.11. The application site benefits from two area of hardstanding that provide parking for the public house. The existing parking area to the front of the building, which is capable of accommodating up to four vehicles, is to be retained unaltered, and will provide parking for the proposed dwelling. The area of parking to the rear of the site is to be removed and replaced with lawn and enclosed by a new boundary treatment to segregate it from Toothill Lane. The proposed development as a whole will derive a reduction in the number of vehicle movements associated with the site, and owing to the absence of any changes to the means of vehicular access onto the public highway, will not derive any material harm to highway safety. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF which seek to ensure that development provides a safe and suitable access and avoids severe residual impacts to highway safety.

Other Material Considerations

5.12. The tilted balance in favour of approval, as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF and policy SS1 of the Core Strategy, is engaged by this proposal, owing to the

Local Authority's inability to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing. The Local Authority's Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018) confirms that only a 1.8 year deliverable supply of housing exists, and this represents a chronic shortfall in housing land against the requirements set out within the NPPF. In such circumstances the titled balance dictates that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.13. The proposed development will derive a number of benefits, including social and economic benefits derived from the creation of a new dwelling to help meet the local authority's chronic shortfall in housing land supply. Further economic benefits will ensue as a consequence of generating additional household expenditure in the village. Such benefits are tempered by the loss of the existing public house but given the number of alternative facilities available within the village, such disbenefits are considered to command limited weight. Environmental benefits will ensue as a consequence of making beneficial use of an otherwise vacant building, and creating a new dwelling in a sustainable location, within easy reach of local services and facilities.

5.14. Overall, the proposed development accords with the development strategy for the District, and owing to the absence of any changes to the external fabric of the building or to its frontage, and the availability of numerous similar facilities within the village, will not derive any adverse impacts to *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF as a whole. Planning permission should therefore be granted in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. The proposed development accords with the adopted (and emerging) development strategy for the District and is therefore acceptable in principle. The loss of the existing public house will not disadvantage local residents, as there are a number of alternative facilities of the same type available within the village, and all are accessible on foot. The proposed development will not derive any material adverse harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or to the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings, and is therefore acceptable from a heritage perspective. The layout of the development furthermore ensures that no adverse harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers will arise, and that future occupiers will be afforded an appropriate level of residential amenity. In addition, the proposal raises no concerns in respect of impact on highway safety within the locality.

6.2. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6, SS6A, C1, DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, as well as the provisions of the emerging Local Plan (policies C1, H1, DC1 and DC2) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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