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PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSAL : OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF THREE DETACHED DWELLINGS WITH MEANS OF ACCESS AND ALL OTHER MATTERS RESERVED

ADDRESS : LAND ADJCAENT TO BIG SOUTHLOWE FARM, LEEK ROAD, CELLARHEAD, ST9 0AR

APPLICANT : JCM GROUP HOLDINGS (UK) LTD

DATE : APRIL 2019 JOB No. : 2019-2404

CONTENTS:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.0 PROPOSAL

4.0 HISTORY

5.0 POLICY

6.0 ASSESSMENT

7.0 CONCLUSION

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

- **USE**
- **AMOUNT**
- **LAYOUT**
- **SCALE**
- **LANDSCAPING**
- **APPEARANCE**
- **ACCESS**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sammons Architectural Ltd have been appointed by JCM Group Holdings (UK) Ltd to prepare and submit an outline planning application for the erection of three detached dwellings on land adjacent to Big Southlowe Farm, Leek Road, Cellarhead. The application is in outline with means of access sought. All other matters such as scale, layout, appearance and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval. The application is accompanied by a location plan, existing site plan and illustrative site plan which should be read in conjunction with this statement.

1.2 This statement analyses the site, the proposal and the policy context within which it is made. Thereafter it provides justification for approval of the proposed development primarily on the basis that the scheme would constitute infill development and the shortage of a five year supply of deliverable housing land in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

1.3 This statement concludes that the proposed development would be in accordance with adopted Development Plan policies as it represents an appropriate form of infill development within a sustainable edge of village location without harm or detriment to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposed development would be prejudicial to residential amenity, detrimental to highway safety or harm any established ecological interests.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site comprises of a broadly rectangular plot of land which extends to approximately 0.294ha and forms part of a larger agricultural field. It lies within a loose ribbon of residential development at the northern end of Leek Road, Cellarhead. Immediately to the south of the site lie 2 houses recently constructed by our client approved in 2012 and to the north a recently constructed new build property approved in 2008. Open agricultural land lies to the west. A well tended mixed native species hedgerow forms the roadside boundary to the east.

2.2 For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the Green Belt but in a location that is considered sustainable in terms of its proximity to services and public transport.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 This is an outline application which seeks consent for the erection of three detached dwellings. Means of access is sought as part of the application with all other matters reserved for subsequent approval. The submitted layout plan shows the erection of three detached dwellings which would be served by individual access points along the road frontage into each plot. The proposed dwellings would have a rectangular plan form with their axis running in a north to south direction and a small projecting gable to the front. Off road parking would be provided by way of integral garages and to the front of each dwelling with a small turning area allowing vehicles to enter and exit in a forward gear. The dwellings would also benefit from small front and side gardens with larger private amenity space at the rear. A new 1.2m high post and rail timber fence would form the boundary to the western boundary of the site and separate this from the wider agricultural land.

4.0 HISTORY

4.1 There is no history relating to the application site.

5.0 POLICY

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

5.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan, which in this area comprises of the adopted Core Strategy (2014).

5.3 Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS3 (Distribution of Development); SS4 (Managing the Release of Housing Land); SS6 (Development in Rural Areas); SS6a (Larger Villages Area Strategy); H1 (New Housing); R2 (Rural Housing); DC1 (Design Considerations) and DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

5.5 Also of particular relevance to this application is the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018) which sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery.

6.0 ASSESSMENT

6.1 As set out above this is an application for the erection of three detached dwellings. The key issues are considered to be:

- The Principle of development in particular whether the proposed development constitutes an appropriate form of infill development;
- The effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
- Sustainability of Development;
- Means of Access;
- Layout;
- Biodiversity; and
- Any other material considerations.

Principle of development

6.2 For the purposes of development the site is within the Green Belt as indicated on the Proposals Map of the former Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. As such there are tighter controls on what form of development can be permitted and new build residential development is considered to represent inappropriate development unless very special circumstances apply or it is one of a number of exceptions. The Local Plan has now been replaced by the Moorlands Core Strategy which does not contain a specific Green Belt policy and the national Green Belt policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework apply. These policies state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is "inappropriate" and that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt unless it is one of the exceptions listed in the NPPF or unless very special circumstances apply.

6.3 One of the exceptions listed in the NPPF is "limited infilling in villages. The presumption for limited infilling in identified settlements is reiterated in Policy SS6a of the adopted Core Strategy the preamble to which states that some limited infilling and redevelopment is considered acceptable subject to Green Belt or countryside policies.

6.4 Cellarhead is identified as a larger village under policy SS6a of the adopted Core Strategy Document. In accordance with Policy SS6a the housing needs of the "Larger Villages" will be achieved through, amongst others, allowing for small scale development on land outside of the built up area, applicable only to sites which relate well to the built up area, can be assimilated into the landscape and have good access.

6.5 The key question is whether the proposed development constitutes limited infilling and therefore appropriate development in the Green Belt. It is contended that the lack of an infill Development Boundary should not prevent development which is in accordance with the National Policy Planning Framework. It should also be noted that there is no mention in the NPPF of village boundaries. The site lies adjacent to the logical limits of the village as evidenced by the 30mph road signs and would be surrounded by development on two sides (north and south). The application site is comparable in size to the adjacent plots and is clearly capable of providing small scale in fill development. The proposal comprises the erection of 3 dwellings which is considered to be "limited in scale and will infill an obvious gap in the built up frontage between 45 Leek Road and Kelangie. In this respect the proposed development would clearly represent infill development and as such is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the principle of residential development on the site is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

The effect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt

6.6 The NPPF confirms that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and confirms that their essential characteristics is their openness and permanence. Leek Road in this location is characterised by a mix of housing types and sizes. The application site makes a very limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt at this point and whilst the provision of three dwellings would result in some loss of openness to what is effectively a green and undeveloped site it is considered that any loss of openness would be minimal as it would be mitigated to a large degree by the presence of houses and field boundaries in the wider area. Although layout, appearance and landscaping, are details reserved for later consideration it is considered that the nature of the site is such that a sensitive detailed design and appropriate landscaping of the proposed dwellings could overcome any possible unacceptable affect on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt.

6.8 The accompanying site plan, whilst indicative, shows that the application site is clearly capable of supporting three modest detached dwellings which would sit equidistant within the plot and follow the grain of the surrounding development in terms of size, scale, and positioning. In addition, the site plan shows that the dwellings, which would be served by individual access points would also be capable of providing off road parking and turning provision and adequate amenity space. These features are considered to reflect the general pattern of development on Leek Road at this point. The erection of three dwellings on the site would ensure that the proposed development would be in keeping with the scale and density of the locality and would continue the ribbon of development along Leek Road at this point. There would therefore be no material harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt and the proposed development would in this respect be compliant with adopted Development Plan policies.

Sustainability

6.9 The National Planning Policy Framework incorporates a presumption in favour of sustainable development and is a material consideration of the highest weight in the determination of this application. As a whole the NPPF seeks to expedite the achievement of housing targets and paragraph 14 is clear that harm would have to "*significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits"* of a housing application to justify refusal. Furthermore, in order to significantly boost the supply of housing para 47 of the NPPF asks LPA's to have a 5 year continuous supply (including an additional 5% buffer) of deliverable land at all times. It also goes on to state that housing applications should be considered in the context of presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 49). It further advises that where an LPA cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, the relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date.

6.10 The Council are currently reviewing the future housing and employment land requirement for the District for the period 2006 to 2026. The Council calculates its 5 year land supply on a district basis. As at March 2018 it was 1.99 years (with a 20% buffer). The Local Planning Authority cannot therefore demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing site and consequently the authority's policy for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. The NPPF guidance is that limited infilling is appropriate development therefore takes precedence. The proposed development qualifies as limited infill given the number of units possible and the site's sustainable location in an established area of ribbon development. This application should therefore be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development as confirmed by paragraph 11of the National Planning Policy Framework. This is a significant material consideration that weighs heavily in favour of the proposed development.

6.11 Werrington and Cellarhead is acknowledged within the adopted Core Strategy as a larger village where new housing development is acceptable. The application site constitutes a sustainable location for new development which is located within easy walking distance of the numerous local services and facilities on offer within the village which include pre-school, primary and high schools, library, 2 public houses, a dental surgery, off licence, village shop, takeaway, two churches as well as other retail offerings. In addition, the village is fortunate enough to have a regular bus service operating with the 16 Leek-Cellarhead-Stoke bus passing through the village every 30/45 minutes from early in the morning until early evening. The proposed development would therefore be located on the edge of a sustainable settlement and as such there is more than a reasonable prospect that any future occupiers of the site will not be solely reliant on the car as their sole means of transportation to access services and facilities as they will be able to access them on foot, by cycle and public transport.

Layout

6.12 CS Policy H1 "New Housing Development" states "all development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing ...and the strategy for the area having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site...All housing should be the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, with the character of the surrounding area." The specific design policies of the CS also seek to promote local distinctiveness and positively contribute to the area as is similarly reflected in the NPPF which confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It furthermore states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; is indivisible from good planning; and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Developments should function well and establish a strong sense of place creating attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Proposals should also optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and respond to local character and history including local materials and the use of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Developments should also create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

6.14 Although the detailed design of the scheme is not for consideration at this stage it is considered that the plot is more than capable of accommodating three dwellings which would have an acceptable relationship with the neighbouring dwellings. The proposed dwellings would form a logical continuation of the village. Overall therefore it is considered that the proposed site plan adequately demonstrates that the application site can accommodate the density of development sought and that it can be assimilated into the area without any visual harm to the site or the wider surrounding area. In this respect the proposal accords with CS policies H1 and DC1 and the guidance contained in the NPPF more generally.

Highways

6.15 The NPPF states: Plans and decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

6.16 This application seeks approval for matters of access at this stage. The application proposes to construct individual access points to serve the dwellings. The existing roadside boundary hedge would be trimmed back in order to improve visibility sight lines to 2.0m x 43.0m to each access. Adequate off road parking and turning facilities can be provided within the site and the access would be capable of providing sufficient visibility to drivers entering or existing the site. There would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

Biodiversity

6.17 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core principal of the NPPF where planning policies should promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and ecological networks. In determining planning applications permission should

be refused if significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for. The ethos of this is provided for in CS Policy NE1.

6.18 The application site constitutes agricultural grazing land which has been semi improved and as such is not therefore ecologically significant. The proposed development would not therefore have any adverse impacts on biodiversity and therefore accords with Policy NE1 of the adopted Core Strategy and guidance contained within the NPPF (paragraph 109).

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The proposed development represents appropriate infill development and no significant demonstrable harm would arise in respect of the proposal in relation to the character and appearance of the area, highway safety or residential amenity. Furthermore, it is considered that residential development on the application site would provide clear social and economic benefits in relation to housing within an accessible and sustainable location in a housing supply context of significant under provision. This application should therefore be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the LPA is therefore respectfully requested to approve outline planning permission with means of access for the erection of three detached dwellings on land adjacent to Big Southlowe Farm, Leek Road, Cellarhead subject to any planning conditions it may feel are necessary.

8.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

USE

The application proposes the use of the application site for residential purposes. The application is in outline within means of access and layout considered. All other matters are reserved for subsequent consideration. This form of development is considered to reflect the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

AMOUNT

The application proposes the erection of three detached dwellings. This amount of development is considered to comply with Green Belt policy and is in keeping with the nature and character of existing development which surrounds the site.

LAYOUT

Approval for siting and layout is not sought at this stage however the indicative site plan shows that the proposed detached dwellings would be set centrally within their plots with their ridge running parallel with the adjacent highway thereby continuing the linear form of ribbon development along this part of Leek Road. The new individual vehicular access points will service off road parking and turning.

SCALE

Whilst scale is a matter which is reserved for later consideration the application proposes the erection of three detached dwellings.

LANDSCAPING

The site is located within a rural setting and any additional landscaping will be provided by future occupiers. The rear site boundary will be denoted with a timber post and rail fence in front of a native mixed species hedgerow. The existing northern hedgerow boundary is to remain. The road frontage is to maintain its existing hedgerow except for the new vehicle access points and any trimming required for visibility sight lines.

APPEARANCE

Appearance is a reserved matter that would be appropriately dealt with in a detailed application.

ACCESS

The proposed development would be served by new individual vehicular access's which would be provided directly off Leek Road. The site is located outside but on the edge of Cellarhead village and public transport links are easily accessible to Leek and other parts of the Staffordshire Moorlands as well as the neighbouring city of Stoke on Trent.