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Planning Statement – Outline application for residential development

Land at Cedarhill, Alton

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1 Introduction

1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.

1.2 The author of this Statement Jim Malkin has worked as a principal planning officer in local government, and more recently as a Planning Consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

1.3 This statement accompanies an outline planning application for the erection of up-to 4 dwellings on land at Cedarhill in the village of Alton.

2 Site and Planning History

2.1 The application site comprises a small portion of a larger field located on the edge of the village of Alton.

2.2 Alton is a larger village as defined by the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and is provided with a wide range of services including shops, public houses, restaurants, a first school and other employment opportunities. The site is served by a regular bus service that links the village to wider conurbations including Uttoxeter and Stoke on Trent.

2.3 The site is adjoined by residential properties to the north, east and west and by the reminder of the field to the south.

2.3 The area of land is provided with two separate accesses from the Cedarhill which

currently provide agricultural access to the field. There is a dilapidated stone-built building on the site that was formerly used as a brick kiln. The site is bounded by an existing hedgerow that separates the site from the adjoining highway.

2.4 There is no recent planning history in relation to this area of land. Of relevance to this scheme however is the recent planning consent at 10 Cedarhill, planning reference SMD/2018/0017. This granted consent for the erection of 3 dwellings on a site further away from the village than the application site, and therefore forms a material consideration of significant weight.

2.5 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following aerial photograph.



3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved and proposes the erection of up-to 4 properties with associated parking provision and domestic curtilages.

3.2 This submission is supported by an indicative layout completed by AJS Structural Design. This layout shows how 6 dwellings can be erected on the site in a linear fashion mirroring adjoining built form. It is proposed to utilise a single access point with a private drive serving the XX properties sited behind the existing / replacement hedgerow.

3.3 It is anticipated that each property will be detached and will be provided with on-plot car parking and attractive landscaping. Whilst design and scale are reserved for later approval it is anticipated that properties will be a maximum of 2 storeys and could if necessary, include dormer bungalows. It is anticipated that any future development would exhibit a traditional design response and use of materials.

3.4 Domestic curtilages will be provided to the rear of the properties and will provide a soft edge to the adjoining agricultural fields.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF states that “applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

4.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It explains that in the context of decision taking, this means approving proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies or those most relevant to the determination of the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

4.3 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. As such, in accordance with the footnotes to Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, its local plan is out of date. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is therefore triggered in this instance.

4.4 Paragraph 59 of the NPPF expresses a commitment to delivering housing growth. It states "To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed".

4.5 Paragraph 124 of the Framework relates to design quality. It states "The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities".

Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014)

4.10 Alton is defined as a larger village within the Core Strategy. The following policies of this strategy are on this basis considered the most relevant in relation to this scheme.

4.11 ***SS1 - Development Principles***

The Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- *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.*

All proposals for development will be considered in the context of the District-wide Spatial Strategy and with regard to both its direct and indirect cumulative impact over the longer term. New development will make the best use of previously developed land and buildings and will follow a sequential approach to the sustainable location of development.

4.12 ***SS1a - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development***

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.*

4.12 ***SS6 - Rural Areas***

The rural areas comprise of the following development categories:

- *Larger villages*
- *Smaller villages*
- *Other rural areas*

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

4.11 ***SS6a - Larger Villages Area Strategy***

The following are identified as larger villages:

Alton

Biddulph Moor

Blythe Bridge & Forsbrook

Brown Edge

Cheddleton

Endon

Ipstones

Kingsley

Upper Tean

Waterhouses

Werrington & Cellarhead

Wetley Rocks

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 Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy - March 2014 93 Adopted Core Strategy having regard to local needs (including those of its local market), infrastructure capacity and character. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:

1. *Retain and enhance their role as rural service centres by:*
    - *enabling appropriate development which supports and increases the range and quality of services and facilities available to the rural areas;*
    - *protecting services and facilities which are essential to sustain rural living;*

- *improving connections by public transport to surrounding smaller villages and market towns*

2. *Meet local housing needs 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. *Meet limited employment needs by:*
    - *enabling small-scale new employment development;*
    - *improving and intensifying the use of existing employment areas and, where appropriate, expanding them.*
4. *Ensure that new development reflects and enhances each village's special character and heritage by:*
    - *giving priority to the reuse and regeneration of existing redundant, underused or surplus sites and premises for new development;*
    - *restricting the scale of new development;*
    - *supporting the use of Parish Plans and Village Design Statements to guide future development; protecting and enhancing the setting of individual settlements*

4.13 ***H1 New Housing Development***

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, and where appropriate housing for special groups, to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future population having regard to the Area Strategies in SS5 and SS6.

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.

In addition:

- *Housing for special groups, particularly for older people, should meet a genuine and proven local need and demand and be of a scale and in a location which is appropriate to its needs.*
- *Housing proposals of 10 dwellings or more will be required to provide a mix of housing in terms of size, type and tenure on the site. The final mix will be negotiated with the developer based on local housing needs as informed by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and other relevant factors such as available supply and market demand.*
- *All housing development should be at the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, and with the character of the surrounding area. This will generally be within the range of 40 dwellings per hectare or more in or on the edge of town centres , 30 – 40 dwellings per hectare in other urban areas and villages and 20 – 30 dwellings per hectare in remoter rural areas.*
- *Residential development and redevelopment on unidentified (windfall) sites will be permitted up to an indicative maximum scheme size of 9 dwellings within the Development Boundaries of the towns and larger villages, and up to an indicative maximum scheme size of 5 dwellings within the Infill Development Boundaries of the smaller villages. Exceptionally, larger windfall*

schemes may be permitted where it would provide over-riding affordable housing, regeneration, conservation or infrastructure benefits and it would not undermine delivery of the spatial strategy.

- *All new dwellings should aim to be built to "Lifetime Homes" standard in accordance with the current national advice and targets.*
- *All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of existing occupiers.*
- *All new dwellings must meet the sustainable design and construction requirements set out in policy SD1.*

4.14 ***DC1 – Design Considerations***

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:

- *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.*

4.15 ***DC3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting***

The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. *Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*
2. *Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;*

3. *Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;*

4. *Identifying through the Site Allocations DPD and protecting from inappropriate development, areas of visual open space where the intention will be to retain the land's open and undeveloped appearance. Where appropriate the Council will seek public access agreements with the land owners and seek proposals for the enhancement or improvement of these areas as part of the green infrastructure network in accordance with policy C3. In exceptional cases, limited development of areas of visual open space may be acceptable where this will bring about overriding improvements to the open space itself;*

5. *Recognising and conserving the special quality of the landscape in the Peak District National Park, and ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the National Park.*

5 Five Year Land Supply

5.1 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing as required by the NPPF. The last published figure (March 2016) advised that the Borough can show a 1.89-year land supply. Therefore, in line with paragraph 11 (and associated footnotes) of the NPPF policies that restrict the supply of housing are out of date.

6 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

6.1 The proposals involve the completion of small-scale residential development within a larger rural settlement. In normal circumstances the development of this site would be strictly controlled by Policy R2, under the strategic policies SS6 and SS6c sets out the types of housing development which will be supported in the rural areas, outside of the development boundary. This policy does not make provision for new housing development unless it meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for agriculture of forestry. However, at this point Staffordshire Moorlands District Council cannot exhibit a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land, at the time of the submission of this application the latest published position showed the Authority had housing supply of 1.9 years.

6.2 Therefore in accordance with Footnote 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework, relevant policies for the supply of housing, which comprises strategic policies SS6 and SS6c and specific housing policies H1 and R2, are out of date and cannot be given any weight in the determination of this application. Paragraph 11 prescribes that in these circumstances, planning applications fall to be considered against policies in the NPPF in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF identify three components to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Achieving sustainable development requires economic, social and environmental gains to be sought simultaneously.

Economic

6.3 One of the core principles of the NPPF is that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes that the country needs. Paragraph 19 of the NPPF prescribes significant weight to the economic benefits of proposals in the overall planning balance.

6.4 The proposals would deliver both short term and longer-term economic benefits. In the short term the proposal would bring about the economic benefits associated

with new development including supporting the construction industry both directly through construction jobs on site and indirectly through the supply chain. The local planning authority would also benefit through the New Homes Bonus.

6.5 In the medium to long term, future occupants of properties on the site will support local services and facilities, helping to safeguard their retention and potentially encourage new services in the village. The proposals would also boost the local labour supply, broadening the choice of suitable candidates for local employers.

Social

6.6 The proposals will make a modest but important contribution towards the Council's housing requirement, providing quality homes to meet the significant need within the Borough.

6.7 The site is well related to the existing settlement, which encourages community cohesion and will ensure that new residents do not feel isolated. The proposals would therefore contribute positively towards the vitality of the local community, increasing its population with new residents that can support and enhance local services and partake in social and community activities.

Environmental

6.8 Alton itself contains a number of services and facilities which include a Primary School; GP Surgery; Village Hall; Post Office; Church; Play Facilities; Library; General Store; and 3 x Public Houses, all of which are within 500m of the application site.

6.9 Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

6.10 Manual for Streets highlights the importance of encouraging a wide range of sustainable transport uses and avoid reliance on the private car. Development which is located up to 2km from day-to-day services and facilities are defined as walkable neighbourhoods and can be considered to be within a sustainable location. The application site is therefore clearly in a sustainable location and will support and enhance the vitality of this rural settlement.

6.11 This application is in outline and therefore no final details of the properties are submitted. However, the site is not covered by any specific landscape or heritage designations and therefore final designs of properties should not be too contentious. The existing field is used for haylage and is heavily managed for this purpose, therefore whilst it is green in nature the field is of no particular wider landscape importance, whilst the linear development of the field will appear as appropriate infill between properties to the east and west.

6.12 The most important feature of the field is the existing hedgerow which provides enclosure to the adjoining highway, this is to be retained where possible and replaced where areas of removal are required to facilitate appropriate visibility. This ensures that the character of the village in this area will remain unchanged.

6.13 In terms of wider impacts of the proposal the field is not of any particular merit in the landscape. It is viewed against the backdrop of rising land to the south, whilst from longer views from available receptors it will be read alongside the existing dispersed built form that predominates in the Cedar Hill area of the village.

6.14 It is anticipated that the site will be developed by way of a high quality, low density scheme with properties provided with large gardens and frontage car parking which will be served off a private drive behind a roadside hedge. Whilst details are to be agreed at reserved matters stage, we would be happy to work with the Council to secure a design code covering external appearance, and hard and soft landscaping. Compliance with this document could be secured via condition giving the Council

confidence that a high-quality development will be bought forward at reserved matters stage.

6.15 Significant thought has been put into the completion of the indicative layout which shows a private drive hidden behind the hedgerow ensuring that necessary infrastructure is hidden from the street, this also has the added benefit of hiding cars and associated domestic paraphernalia from the adjoining highway. The retention of this hedgerow will ensure that the development is 'dropped into' an existing mature landscape and will not take time to 'mature' as is the case with most developments.

6.16 In determining applications the NPPF requires local planning authorities to aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying various principles. The site is heavily managed grassland, which is mown regularly, this ensures that there will be no impact on the habitats of any protected species.

6.17 The indicative layout shows the properties sited to avoid any conflict with the small number of mature trees to the eastern end of the site.

6.18 The development of the site will however provide opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in terms of the provision of bat access tiles and bird boxes on/within the buildings.

Sustainability Conclusions

6.19 Due to the council being unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, policies for the supply of housing are therefore out-of-date in the context of footnote 7 of the NPPF and no weight should be attached to these policies in the planning balance.

6.20 The site is considered to comprise 'infill' development in a sustainable location which is a short walking distance of Alton village which has a large number of services,

facilities and job opportunities. The site is not subject to any specific landscape or heritage designations that preclude the development of this site.

6.21 The proposed development will provide a small but nevertheless important contribution to the council's under supply of housing and will have indirect benefits for the local construction trade and service economy.

6.22 The benefits of the proposal therefore significantly and demonstrably outweigh any harm that could be associated with the development.

Other Material Considerations

Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

6.23 The built context of the application site is one characterised by variety. Alton comprises of a mix of dwelling types and materials within the character of the centre being one of more high-density development, with densities reducing as you move to the periphery. The immediate context of the development site is one of larger detached properties within good sized plots. Buildings are predominantly two storeys in this area and are constructed of brick with plain clay tiles.

6.24 The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved. It is however anticipated that new properties will follow the prevailing character of the area and will be two storeys with traditional design cues and proportions.

6.25 In terms of the wider landscape impacts of the proposal policy DC3 advises that development which is detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape will be resisted. As set out above the development will be viewed, from wider landscape receptors, against rising land to the south and from other areas against the backdrop of the village and other peripheral development. Owing to the sites location adjoining existing residential development it is considered that this site can

accommodate 4 detached dwellings without resulting in any significant adverse harm to the characteristics of the wider landscape.

Amenity of Neighbours

6.26 Whilst detailed designs and layouts of individual dwellings have yet to be prepared, the illustrative layout demonstrates that 4 dwellings can be accommodated upon the site whilst retaining sufficient separation to neighbouring dwellings so as to avoid unacceptable impacts upon daylight and privacy.

6.27 Whilst there may be a degree of increased noise and disturbance associated with increased comings and goings, this is unlikely to be significant given the level of development proposed.

Highway Safety

6.28 Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds where its impact upon the network would be severe.

6.29 The proposed site access emerges onto Cedarhill, which is subject to a 30mph speed limit. The width and alignment of the carriageway however is such that vehicle speeds adjoining the site are significantly lower than this. This access point, subject to the removal of a small portion of the existing hedgerow, is provided with good visibility in both directions and will not result in an increase in vehicle conflict in the locality.

6.30 The level of development is such that the proposal will not result in a significant increase in vehicular movements on the local highway network and will certainly not prejudice the safe or efficient use of the adjoining highway network.

Flood Risk

6.31 The Environment Agency shows the site lying entirely within Flood Zone 1, where the annual probability of flooding from rivers or the sea is less than 1 in 1000. The dwellings would not therefore be at unacceptable risk from flooding and neither would they exacerbate flood risk elsewhere.

7 Conclusions

7.1 The application is an outline application for the erection of up-to 4 dwellings.

7.2 Staffordshire Moorlands cannot exhibit a five year supply of deliverable housing and therefore the proposals fall to be considered under the presumption in favour of sustainable development as defined by footnote 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council are required to grant planning permission unless *'any adverse impacts of development……significantly and demonstrably outweigh the* benefits of the scheme'. The scheme will provide a small, but not insignificant benefit, in assisting Staffordshire Moorlands to meet their land supply requirements.

7.3 The site is located on the edge of the larger village of Alton which is provided with a range of services and facilities. The site is within walking distance of all facilities and will support the vitality and viability of the village.

7.4 The development would not detrimentally affect the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby dwellings or the safe of efficient use of the highway network. The proposals would not harm protected species or their habitats.

7.5 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable development as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.