JMIPlanning
Town Planning Consultants
+44 (0) 1889 566107
enquiries@jmiplanning.com
jmiplanning.com

Appeal Statement on Behalf of Mr Gareth Burton

Fir Grove, Hollington

September 2019

Project	Fir Grove, Fir Bob Lane, Hollington, ST10 4HT
Client	Mr Gareth Burton
Reference	887
Project Team	Teodora Golemdzhiyska/Jon Imber
Version	1
Reviewed by	Jim Malkin

Document Produced by:

JMI Planning Limited
62 Carter Street
Uttoxeter
Staffs
ST14 8EU

Phone: 01889 566107
Email: enquiries@jmiplanning.com

www.jmiplanning.com

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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 appeal statement has been co-produced by Jon Imber and Teodora Golemdzhiyska. Jon Imber has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior 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. Teodora Golemdzhiyska graduated from University of Liverpool with a 1st Class Masters in Town and Regional Planning. She is a Licentiate Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and is currently working as a Graduate Planner in the private sector.

1.3 This statement accompanies an appeal against Staffordshire Moorlands refusal of planning permission to extend the existing dwelling. It should be read in conjunction with the proposed plans which accompanied the original application.

1.4 The application was assigned the reference number SMD/2019/0186.

2 The Appeal Site and Planning History

2.1 The appeal site is located off Fir Bob Lane, which is accessed off Hollington Road. The site consists of a semi-detached, three-bedroom cottage occupied by the applicant.

2.2 The property is square in form and is constructed in stone with a tiled, pitched roof. There is a single-storey flat roof extension from the south elevation which is a later addition which is finished with a light render.

2.3 The property's private amenity space is to the south of the dwelling. It is enclosed by a stone wall and hedge to the west where the property immediately adjoins Spring Cottage, and a hedge and trees to the south and east. A tall hedge and trees separate the appeal site and the property to the east.

2.4 The property is accessed off a private driveway which also serves the dwelling to the east and west.

2.5 A recent planning application (SMD/2019/0186) for the replacement of part of the single storey flat roof portion with a two-storey pitched roof extension and the replacement of the existing flat dormers with pitched dormers was refused on the 17th June 2019.

2.6 The appeal site has no other previous planning history of relevance to this application nor is it subject to any statutory designations.

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



Figure 1 – Aerial photograph of site and surroundings

3 Proposed Development

3.1 The refused application proposed the extension and improvement of the existing dwelling. During the determination process of the refused application conversations were held between the Planning Officer and The Appellant in which the Officer suggested the scheme was re-designed to reflect an extension from the south elevation and a separate extension from the east as a way to break up the bulk of built and massing.

3.2 The Appellant and the architect considered the recommendations put forward by the Planning Officer however it was felt that these would not improve on the unsympathetic appearance of the architectural features, which had been added as later additions to the original cottage. They would have also resulted in the loss of a principle window which serves the existing kitchen. The suggested changes would not address the visual issues and it is for these reasons the Appellant was unwilling to agree these suggestions.

3.3 The proposal seeks to replace part of the single-storey flat roof element with a two-storey extension with a pitched roof to match that of the existing. The existing flat roof dormers are also to be replaced with pitched roof dormers with the aim of re-instating balance to the property which has been lost by the later unsympathetic flat roof additions which jar with the character of the property.

4 Statement of Case

4.1 The application was refused for the following reason:

" The proposed development by virtue of its scale, layout, massing, visual

appearance and its relationship with the existing dwelling, constitutes poor design. Which significantly and demonstrably harms the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the wider rural landscape contrary to Policies SS1, SS6, SS6c, R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, Paragraphs 127 of the NPPF and advice in the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide. The application thereby constitutes an unsustainable form of development, contrary to Policy SS1a of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and paragraph 11 of the NPPF".

4.2 The application was refused on the grounds that the overall scale, massing and visual appearance of the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the wider rural landscape and the development is therefore contrary to Policy SS1, SS6, SS6a, R2 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy.

4.3 The Development Plan relevant to the appeal proposal consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy adopted in March 2014 and the Staffordshire Moorlands 'Design Principles' SPD. The Council are currently in the process of preparing their new Local Plan. The Plan is still in the consultation stages and minimal weight can be given to the emerging policies.

4.4 Policy SS1, SS6 and SS6a of the Core Strategy broadly relate to the sustainability of new development and seek to direct development in line with the settlement hierarchy.

4.5 The most relevant policies in this instance are Policy R2 and DC1 which are focused on the design of new development and the character of the surroundings. The proposals compliance with these policies will be considered in turn below.

Impact on Character and Appearance

4.6 Policy R2 provides guidance for rural housing development. Extensions to existing dwellings are accepted provided they are of a scale and design which does not impact on the existing dwelling and the character of the rural area.

4.7 The form of the dwelling is such that there is no obvious principal elevation and in this instance the Council maintain the opinion that given that the eastern gable contains the main entrance to the house and is the most visible from the public right of way which runs northbound perpendicular to Fir Bob Lane, it is the principal elevation and is therefore considered this to constitute the 'front building line' for the purposes of the Design Principles SPD.

4.8 For this reason the Council deems the proposal as harmful in that it protrudes forward of what is considered the principal elevation and is therefore contrary to guidance set out in the Design Principles SPD. The Design Principles SPD restricts development forward of the building line as this has the potential to significantly harm the character of the dwelling and the wider area in that the original dwelling cannot be read in conjunction with the new additions.

4.9 The appellant disagrees with the Council's position in regard to what constitutes the principal elevation, in that although the main entrance to the property is located on the east elevation this elevation is of limited architectural merit and is at odds with the character of the dwelling and the prevailing character of the cottages dotted along the access road.

4.10 The inspector will note upon visiting the site and observing its relationship with adjoining built form and the wider context from the public right of way along Firbob Lane that it is evident there is a strong north-facing building line which terminates the extend of built form along the track. A similar arrangement of built form is

present to the south of the appeal site suggesting this arrangement is likely to be deliberate.

4.11 The character of the cluster of cottages along the access track is best appreciated when observing the appeal site's winder context from this view, from which the north elevation of these properties along with the east elevation of The Firs are the most visually important as they contribute to the linear symmetry of the cottages which is typical of traditional workers cottages.

4.12 The appeal site's east elevation which the Council considers the principal elevation is of lesser importance as it is not prominent from public vantage points, and does not contain distinctive features which contribute to the uniformity of built along this stretch, like the symmetrical, traditional portions found on the north elevation. The east elevation, subject to the use of contrasting materials and unsympathetic flat roof portions, does not read as part of the original property and detracts from the prevailing character of the cluster of cottages.

4.13 Owing to the above the Appellant maintains the view that the north elevation of the property constitutes the principal elevation owing to its position in relation to the cluster of built form. The proposed extensions will not therefore disturb the north-facing building line or the features on the elevation which contribute to the character of the cottages.

4.14 The Council acknowledges within the Officer's Report that the appearance of the existing is of limited visual merit and state *'It is undeniable that the existing dwelling has an unsympathetic character and appearance, due partly to the design and finish of the fenestration, and competing materials. The application therefore presents an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the building and the wider rural landscape'.*

4.15 Figures 2 and 3 below show the uncharacteristic flat roof extension and circular window which appear at odds with the character of the original building, and also the flat roof dormers which compromise the traditional portions and charm of the pair of semi-detached cottages.



Figure 2 – East elevation



Figure 3 – South elevation

4.15 The siting of the appeal site in relation to the adjoining cottages and their boundary treatment is such that the property could be extended from the south in a manner that is discreetly positioned in relation to views and does not appear dominating of the existing dwelling.

4.16 Figures 4 and 5 below show the location of the proposed extension which will be largely, if not entirely screened by the boundary treatment to neighbouring built form to the west.



Figure 4 – Location of proposal



Figure 5 – Location of proposal

4.17 It is important to note the appeal site is only readily visible from public vantage points when approaching from the north along Fir Bob Lane, a public right of way. Views of the site from the south along the right of way are entirely screened by the existing boundary treatment and adjacent built form and there are no other available public vantage points in the vicinity. The private driveway off Fir Bob Lane which serves the property is not a public right of way.

4.18 The ridge line of the extension is set lower to the host building and therefore sits subordinate to the existing dwelling. The proportions of the extension marry with those of the existing building and the replacement of the unsympathetic flat roof additions with a more traditional pitched, tiled roofscape which helps to better reveal the character of the cottage.

4.19 The appellant acknowledges the proposal introduces a roofscape with a south-facing ridgeline which contrasts with the existing east-facing. This arrangement is comparable to the roofscape of the adjacent properties in the vicinity which set a precedent. On that note the proposed roofscape will be not appear at odds with the prevailing character.

4.20 In terms of materials the use of pebbledash on the south facing elevations of the proposed extensions is considered an appropriate material which match that of the existing. This material is contextually appropriate in the rural setting and sits well in the local vernacular.

4.21 In this respect the proposed development preserves, in terms of its design, location and scale the immediate context and the wider rural landscape character and as such complies with the relevant parts of Policy DC1.

Impact on Amenity

4.22 The Officer's Report acknowledges that the properties which have any potential to be impacted by the proposed development are the properties adjacent the site, these are Spring Cottage, which is attached to the subject dwelling and The Firs, which sits to the east.

4.23 The Report concludes there will be no impact on the amenity of occupiers at Spring Cottage which is attached to the dwelling given there will be no windows sited on the west elevations facing toward Spring Cottage. This is also the case for The Firs owing to the generous distance between the properties and the existing boundary treatment which prevent any adverse impacts upon residential amenity.

4.24 The Report did raise that the siting of the window on the side elevation (east) does face toward The Firs however this window will serve the first floor bathroom and could therefore be obscure glazed which can be secured by means of condition, thus ensuring no direct overlooking between principle windows.

Other Issues

4.25 The proposed development does not increase the number of bedrooms and on this basis there will be no increase in parking provision. The proposals will not therefore result in a material increase in vehicle movements which could prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

4.26 There are no other material planning considerations that are considered relevant to the determination of this application.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The proposed development seeks to replace part of the single storey flat roof element with a pitched two-storey extension protruding from the south and east elevations. Permission is also sought to replace the entirety of the existing flat roof dormers with pitched dormers.

5.2 Rather than a harmful effect, it is argued that the proposals would be an improvement on the existing and would help balance the existing property and restore the original symmetry of the cottage in a way which does not impact on the character of the immediate setting or the wider rural landscape.

5.3 The appeal site's relationship with neighbouring properties is such that there will be no impacts to neighbouring amenity.

5.4 Therefore in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework it is respectfully submitted that this application should be approved.