

Planning Statement

Change of use of public house to form 1 no. dwellinghouse
Izaak Walton, Sandon Road, Cresswell
For Mr. K. Ball

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an application for the change of use of the former Izaak Walton Public House, Cresswell Lane, Cresswell to form a single dwellinghouse.
- 1.2. The public house has had a chequered trading history and over the last 6 years has had six changes of management, each of whom had tried to make a success of the business, but ultimately were unable to do so. The pub closed its doors in December 2017 and has not re-opened since. The site was acquired by the applicant in who wishes to change the use of the premises to a dwellinghouse.
- 1.3. The resultant accommodation will comprise of a lounge, living room, dining room, kitchen, snug/office, hallway, cloakroom, utility and storerooms at ground floor, with four ensuite bedrooms at first floor. Externally it is proposed to retain the existing car park to the south of the pub as a parking, turning and manouvering space for use by future occupants, whilst to the rear of the pub the existing beer garden will be utilised to provide amenity space for the future occupiers.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site comprises a former public house, located on the eastern side of the Sandon Road, in the village of Cresswell. The pub is a two-storey structure, with public accommodation located at ground floor, and management accommodation above. The building fronts towards Cresswell Lane and benefits from a 28-space car park to its south, beyond which runs the Cresswell Old Road. A disused overflow car park, laid to hardstanding, is located to the south of the site beyond the Cresswell Old Road. Station Farm is located to the west of the site on the opposite side of the Cresswell Road, with Isaac Walton Farm located to the northeast. The site as a whole lies within the north Staffordshire Green Belt, the boundary of which runs along the Cresswell Old Road at the southern end 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 SS1 of the Core Strategy states that 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, amongst others:

- 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;
- 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.

3.3. 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 the Core Strategy (and, where relevant, with policies 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

3.4. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved by, amongst others, allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2. It goes on to state that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

- 3.5. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy allows for the conversion of non-residential rural buildings for residential use where:
- The building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; and
 - It can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable or suitable. In such cases there will be a requirement for a marketing exercise to be carried out by a suitably qualified professional or other evidence that the building would be unsuitable for a commercial use;
 - Conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded.
- 3.6. 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 a marketing exercise by a qualified professional demonstrates that there are no options for continued use as a community facility which are financially viable and it can be demonstrated that the loss of the facility will not disadvantage local residents;
- 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;
 - create, where appropriate, attractive, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate, amongst others, landscaping and designing out crime initiatives;
 - 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;

- 3.8. 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. It goes on to state that these aims will be achieved by ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development, is accessible by sustainable travel modes, provides adequate parking, and facilitates walking and cycling.

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out policies in respect of various issues, including safeguarding the Green Belt, delivering rural housing, securing high quality design and safeguarding 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 Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018)

- 4.2. The five-year housing land supply statement assesses completions and consents granted within the District to determine its overall level of housing land supply. The document 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.

Emerging SMDC Local Plan

- 4.3. Policy H1 of the emerging Local Plan states that in the other rural areas in the open countryside the conversion of rural buildings will be permitted where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets. It goes on to state that when located within the Green Belt, national Green Belt policy will apply.

5.0 STATEMENT OF CASE

Principle of Development

- 5.1. The application proposes the conversion of the former Izaak Walton Public House to create a single dwellinghouse. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy makes provision for the reuse of rural buildings for residential purposes within the rural areas, provided that it accords with the provisions of policy R2. Policy SS6c also notes that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy. Paragraph 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework

relates to development in the Green Belt and allows for the reuse of existing buildings where they are of a permanent and substantial construction and where the proposed use will not detract from the openness of the Green Belt.

- 5.2. Policy R2 of the Core Strategy allows for the conversion of rural buildings to residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion and it can be demonstrated that agricultural or commercial use is not viable (by way of a marketing exercise), or where conversion to residential use would enable a building of particular merit to be safeguarded. The Local Authority has nevertheless confirmed within their emerging Local Plan that the requirement for marketing is in conflict within the NPPF, and consequently those provisions have to be afforded lesser weight.
- 5.3. The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction, with no signs of structural deterioration, and consequently is considered to be readily suitable for conversion having been used as a public house until late 2017. The building is also considered to be worthy in architectural and character terms for conversion, constituting a visually pleasing building that exhibits a number of characteristics that are traditional to the Moorlands. The conversion of the building to residential use will furthermore not derive any adverse impact to the openness of the Green Belt compared to the existing use, and consequently the principle of development is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with the provisions of policies SS6c and R2 of the Core Strategy.

Loss of Public House

- 5.4. Policy C1 of the Core Strategy seeks to safeguard existing community facilities unless alternative provision is available within the surrounding area, or it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable by way of a marketing exercise.
- 5.5. The closure of public houses across the UK is well documented, and stems from a general shift in attitudes and pastimes of the public. A report by the Institute of Economic Affairs (2014) attributed the decline in pub numbers to a number of factors, including the introduction of the smoking ban and increased taxation, both in terms of business rates and in terms of taxes on alcohol. Research has also shown that an increasing number of young adults are choosing not to drink alcohol. In 2005 some 15% of young adults confirmed they never drank alcohol. By 2015 that figure had risen to 29% (Source: NMC Public Health Journal). Good for public health, less so for public houses.
- 5.6. The Izaak Walton Public House has had a somewhat chequered trading history, with numerous attempts made by different operators to try and derive a viable income from the business. From 2010 onwards the pub has had six changes of management, each with varying degrees of success, but none ultimately able to generate sufficient profit to sustain the continued operation of the business. The pub has subsequently been boarded up and remains that way to the present day.

- 5.7. The accompanying letter from Fleurets confirms that the pub was put on the market in January 2017, having previously been marketed in 2012 and 2014. Marketing was undertaken for a period of 2½ years, with the property being featured throughout that period on a number of websites, including:
- Fleurets' website
 - Businessesforsale.com
 - Realla
 - Daltons Weekly
 - Zoopla
- 5.8. In addition, targeted marketing was undertaken, with mailshots sent to a total of 16,864 parties who have requested details or viewed similar properties, and those looking for potential conversion schemes. The parties contacted including private individuals, smaller pub operating companies and multiples. The marketing prompted 1,363 specific requests for details of the property, and 14 formal viewings were arranged over the course of the 2½ year period.
- 5.9. The letter from Fleurets goes on to confirm that throughout the 2½ year marketing period a total of 5 offers were received. However, none of these were deemed to be acceptable, either because they were far below asking price, or because the prospective purchaser was unable to demonstrate proof of funding. Of those five offers, at least two were with a view to conversion of the pub to alternative use.
- 5.10. The pub was eventually purchased by the applicant in November 2019 with a view to conversion to residential use. Given the absence of any material interest during the extensive marketing campaign, the continued decline of the pub trade within the UK, and the inability of previous operators to sustain the business financially, it is concluded that maintaining the public house as a community facility is no longer viable.
- 5.11. It is furthermore noted that there are three other public houses located within walking distance of the site which offer similar facilities, thereby ensuring that residents are not unduly disadvantaged by the loss of the public house. The Izaak Walton lies towards the northern end of Cresswell, with residential properties extending to the south west along and off the Sandon Road, and with further catchment properties located in Draycott-in-the-Moors to the north. Alternative pubs within the local area include:
- The Hunter Public House, Cresswell – 1km
 - The Greyhound Inn, Saverley Green – 1.6km
 - The Draycott Arms, Draycott in the Moors – 1.3km
- 5.12. All of these public houses are located a short distance from the residents of Cresswell and are readily accessible on foot, the Draycott Arms in particular which benefits from pedestrian connectivity and street lighting along more or less the whole route. Consequently, it is submitted that local residents would not

be significantly disadvantaged by the loss of this community facility, and that there is no conflict with the provisions of policy C1 of the Core Strategy.

Design & Layout

- 5.13. The proposal involves the sensitive conversion of the existing building, making beneficial reuse of existing openings and avoiding the need for external alterations to the building. Internal alterations are also limited in nature, entailing the replacement of existing doors with a window to serve the new utility room, the insertion of a new window in the rear elevation to serve a new ground floor toilet, and the lowering of cills to the existing ground floor windows in the southern side elevation of the building. The front elevation facing the Sandon Road will be unaltered from its current appearance. As a consequence, the proposed conversion will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the existing building.
- 5.14. Externally it is proposed to reuse the existing beer garden in order to create an area of private amenity space that is more than sufficient to meet the minimum requirements set out within the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards. The existing hedgerow enclosing the southern and eastern boundaries of the site is also to be retained and will continue to provide a good degree of visual enclosure to the existing parking area and proposed amenity space. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable from a design and layout perspective and meets the requirements of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity

- 5.15. There are no immediate residential properties adjacent to the site that would bring about a conflict with the Local Authority's informal space about dwellings standards. The gross internal area of the building (407 square metres) is furthermore well in excess of the minimum required floorspace set out within the DCLG Technical Housing Standards (124 square metres). Consequently, the proposed development will not materially detract from the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and will provide future residents of the property with an acceptable level of amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

- 5.16. The proposal raises no concerns in respect of highway safety implications. The development will reuse the existing vehicular access serving the public house and will entail a substantial reduction in vehicle movements compared to the lawful use as a public house. There is good visibility in both directions on egress and turning space is to be accommodated on site to enable vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear. The proposed development will consequently accord with the provisions of policy T1 of the Core Strategy and paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF.

Planning Balance

- 5.17. The application proposes the conversion of the building into residential use in circumstances where the Local Authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing. In such circumstances paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that planning permission should be granted unless:
- i) *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii) *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*
- 5.18. The submitted proposal will derive a number of benefits when assessed against the NPPF. The proposal will make a positive contribution to the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing land supply and will also derive benefits to the local economy associated with increased household expenditure. Further economic benefits would be derived during the construction phase.
- 5.19. In addition, the proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable location for new housing. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF seeks to avoid the creation of isolated homes in the countryside. However, as this building is located in an area populated by a number of dwellings, it is not considered to amount to an isolated location. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 79 of the NPPF.
- 5.20. Paragraph 103 of the NPPF furthermore states that “*significant development*” should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. It goes on to recognise that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and that this should be taken into account in decision making. The proposed development does not involve “*significant development*”, entailing the conversion of the public house to a single dwellinghouse.
- 5.21. The site is nevertheless considered to occupy a sustainable location in any event. Within a comfortable walk of the site are a number of local facilities, including public houses (discussed above), the Draycott Sports Centre and Cresswell Cricket Club which has recently secured grants to facilitate its use as a community facility. The site also lies less than 2 miles from the centre of Blythe Bridge, which is a short driving distance to the centre of Blythe Bridge which is identified as a ‘larger village’ within the adopted Core Strategy and provides a wealth of local services and facilities, including schools, library, mini-supermarket, health centre, hairdresser and veterinary surgeon. Blythe Bridge also offers rail connections to the wider region. The settlement of Meir is also located a short distance away and offers a variety of services, including health centre, pharmacy, hairdressers, mini-supermarket and a large Tesco superstore

(amongst other facilities). Consequently, even if future occupiers were to use the car to access local services and facilities, such journeys would be short in duration.

- 5.22. The Local Authority has furthermore recently granted consent for the erection of up to 168 dwellings and 33,480 square metres of commercial floorspace (B1, B2, and B8) on land to the south of the site at Blythe Business Park. The approved scheme makes provision for a number of ancillary uses including a community centre and shop. The applicant has secured approval pursuant to the conditions imposed on that consent, and consequently there is a more than reasonable prospect of that development coming forward within the next few years. When it does the site will become even more sustainable, with a shop and community available a short walk from the site.
- 5.23. Attention is also drawn to the provisions of paragraph 118 of the NPPF which confirms that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively. The existing building has been vacant for some time, and the submitted proposal will bring the building back into beneficial reuse, in circumstances where there is chronic shortfall in housing land supply. The provisions of paragraph 118 of the NPPF therefore lend considerable weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.24. The analysis in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3 above demonstrates that the proposal would not derive any conflict with policies aimed at protecting assets of particular importance e.g. the Green Belt, and consequently there is no conflict with criterion i) of paragraph 11 of the NPPF. Furthermore, it is considered that no adverse impacts would arise as a consequence of this development to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the aforementioned benefits (criterion ii). The planning balance therefore tips firmly in favour of approval.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. It is considered that the proposed development constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, as it constitutes the reuse of an existing building and will not give rise to harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal is furthermore considered to encompass a sympathetic design solution that will safeguard the character of the building and that of the surrounding area. There will furthermore be no adverse impacts in terms of residential amenity or highway safety. The loss of the public house as a community facility is also considered to be warranted given attempts to retain the pub as a going concern and the availability of alternative provision nearby.
- 6.2. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS6c, R2, C1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy and policy H1 of the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. The

proposal is also considered to accord with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and will not derive any adverse impacts to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development, and consequently planning permission should be granted in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.