Hewitt&CarrServices

Planning & Heritage Statement

Erection of Five Dwellings
Land north of Arons Head, Uttoxeter Road, Alton
For Mr. G. Challinor

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Contents **Page No**

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Site Description	3
3.0	Planning Policy	3
4.0	Other Material Considerations	6
5.0	Statement of Case	8
6.0	Conclusion	14

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Hewitt & Carr Services has been instructed by Mr. G. Challinor to prepare a Planning Statement to support an application prepared by Hewitt & Carr Architects for the erection of five dwellings on a parcel of land to the north of Arons Head, Uttoxeter Road, Alton.

1.2. The application is submitted in outline and seeks approval of matters of means of access. Matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval.

1.3. The indicative layout plan accompanying the application shows the erection of five detached dwellings, arranged in a broadly linear fashion east / west across the site, with each dwelling set within a large plot, and benefitting from off-street parking provision and associated manoeuvring space. The dwelling closest to the Uttoxeter Road is shown orientated towards the highway, with the remainder of the plots shown orientated north/south. Vehicular access to the site is to be taken from the Uttoxeter Road.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site comprises a parcel of pastoral land that extends to some 0.42 hectares in area, and which is located within the rural area on the eastern fringe of Alton village. The adopted settlement boundary for Alton forms the western boundary of the site. The village centre lies a short walk to the north-east of the site and offers a variety of local services and facilities. A mature, indigenous hedgerow encloses the southern boundary of the site, beyond which lies a detached dwelling and its associate curtilage (Arons Head), and further pastoral land. Pastoral land also encloses the eastern and northern boundaries. The Uttoxeter Road encloses the western boundary of the site. Dwellings along the Uttoxeter Road are typically two-storey in nature, but with a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties observable. A short distance to the south of the site lies a parcel of land where outline consent has been secured for the erection of 22 dwellings under application SMD/2015/0435, and which is currently subject to an application for approval of reserved matters (SMD/2019/0486). The Alton and Farley Conservation Area abuts up to a small portion of the western boundary 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) of which the following policies are considered to be of relevance to the determination of the appeal:

3.2. Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to Development Principles and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

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 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 SS2 of the Core Strategy states that provision will be made for 6000 additional dwellings (net of demolitions) to be completed in Staffordshire Moorlands (excluding the Peak District National Park) during the period 2006 to 2026.

3.5. Policy SS3 of the Core Strategy states that development will be located in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and will be distributed between the towns and rural areas. It identifies that some 28% of the total residential provision outlined in policy SS2 will be allocated within the rural areas.

3.6. Policy SS6 of the Core Strategy confirms that the rural areas comprise of the larger villages, smaller villages and other rural areas, and that in total these will provide for around 1680 new dwellings between 2006 and 2026 in accordance with the Area Strategies set out in policies SS6a – SS6c.

3.7. Policy SS6A of the Core Strategy relates to the 'Larger Villages Area Strategy' and states that these settlements (of which Alton is one) shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the local housing needs of the rural areas. The policy goes on to state that local housing

needs will be met by increasing the range of available and affordable housing types and allocating a range of deliverable housing sites primarily within the urban area in locations across the village with good accessibility to local services and facilities, and in locations outside the villages where they are well connected and related to the settlement.

3.8. 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. It goes on to state that essential local needs will be met by allowing the conversion, extension or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policies R1 and R2 of the Core Strategy. Policy SS6c also states that strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.9. Policy H1 of the Core Strategy states that 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. The policy goes on to state that 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, and should be of a density that is compatible with the site, its location and the character of the surrounding area. This will typically be around 30-40 dwellings per hectare in villages. All new dwellings should be built to the 'Lifetime Homes' standard and should be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers, whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of existing occupiers.

3.10. 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 other matters):

- 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;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;

3.11. Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains by, amongst others, resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance.

3.12. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that 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;

3.13. Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy states that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development by (amongst others):

- Resisting any proposed development that could have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site alone or in combination with other plans or projects unless it can be demonstrated that the legislative provisions to protect such sites can be fully met.
- Ensuring development where appropriate produces a net gain in biodiversity and ensuring that any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for.

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of significantly boosting the supply of housing, ensuring highway safety, safeguarding heritage assets, and securing a net gain in biodiversity. The NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this document and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Appeal Decision 3159689 – Land at Saltersford Lane, Alton

4.2. This appeal related to an outline application for the erection of 22 dwellings on a parcel of land within the rural area, a short distance to the south of this site. The appeal decision is a material consideration in the determination of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2018)

4.3. This document sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery. It confirms that the Local Authority has a deliverable supply of housing land equivalent to 1.8 years supply. The content of this document is explored in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Alton Landscape and Settlement Character Appraisal (LSCA)

4.4. This document appraises the character of the landscape around Alton and has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the application. The content of the LSCA is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Planning For Landscape Change SPG

4.5. This document appraises the character of the landscape across Staffordshire and identifies the application site as falling within the Dissected Sandstone Uplands Character Area. The content of the SPG has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

4.6. The new Local Plan has recently concluded its examination in public and is currently undergoing consultation on its Main Modifications. The policies of the emerging plan can now be afforded weight, and the following are considered to be of relevance to the determination of the appeal:

- Policy SS2 of the emerging Plan reflects the provisions of policies SS3 and SS6 and identifies the larger villages as the most sustainable settlements in the rural areas which generally have a good local social infrastructure. The Spatial Strategy focuses the bulk of the rural development in these settlements and seeks to ensure that they are sustained and promoted as service centres. The scale of development in each area should be relative to their current size and infrastructure capacity.

- Policy SS3 of the emerging Local Plan confirms that provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings during the period 2014 – 2033 at an annualised rate of 320 homes per year. Development will be located in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and will be distributed between the towns and rural areas, going on to confirm that 25% of the housing requirement of the District is to be accommodated within the rural areas.

- Policy SS8 of the emerging Local Plan reflects the provisions of policy SS6A of the Core Strategy and confirms that the larger villages will provide for the bulk of the housing requirement of the rural areas by increasing the range of available and affordable house types, and allocating a range of deliverable housing sites with good accessibility to services and facilities.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

5.1. The application seeks outline consent for residential development on a parcel of greenfield land that lies within the rural area, on the eastern fringe of Alton village. Policies SS1, SS3 and SS6 of the adopted Core Strategy set out the Council's preferences for the delivery of new housing and confirm that some 1680 new dwellings will need to be built within the rural areas between 2006 – 2026. Policy SS6A of the Core Strategy identifies that in addition to the three main market towns of Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph, the bulk of local housing needs for the rural areas will be accommodated within the Larger Villages, of which Alton is identified as one.

5.2. The policy confirms that housing sites will be allocated primarily within the built-up areas in locations with good accessibility to services and facilities, and that where development is required to be met on land outside the built-up area, as is likely to be the case with Alton given the constrained, nucleated character of the central core of the village, development should relate well to the built-up area, be capable of being assimilated into the landscape and should have good access.

5.3. The submitted proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS1, SS3, SS6 and SS6A of the Core Strategy, as it will secure the delivery of new housing, in a sustainable location, on the fringe of one of the larger villages where the bulk of the Local Authority's housing requirement for the rural areas is to be accommodated.

5.4. This conclusion is reinforced by the recent appeal decision at Saltersford Lane, where the Planning Inspector concluded that the re-development of that site, within the rural area, was in accordance with policies SS2, SS3, SS6 and SS6a of the Core Strategy. In that particular case the Local Authority had sought to argue that the appeal proposal represented further housing beyond existing permissions, and that the proposed development would not be sustainable in the context of the Development Capacity Study. The Inspector disagreed, concluding that there was no evidence that the proposed development of 22 dwellings on the site would represent a tipping point in terms of the capacity of the settlement. She went on to conclude that even taking into account existing commitments, permissions and the preferred housing site (Capri) the proposed development for 22 dwellings within the overall allocation of 6000 would not be so substantial either individually or cumulatively as to prejudice the emerging strategy or the plan making process.

5.5. Since then the Local Authority has progressed with its new Local Plan which is currently undergoing its Main Modifications consultation, and identifies that some 6080 dwellings are to be accommodated within the District between 2014 – 2033, at an annualised rate of 320 dwellings per year. Of those dwellings some 25% are to be accommodated within the rural areas, focused on the larger villages, of which Alton is one. The net housing requirement for the rural areas equates to 698 dwellings, of which provision for 660 dwellings is identified (policy SS4 of the Local Plan refers). The policies of the new Local Plan do not define any specific limits on new housing on a village by village basis, and as evidenced above has not identified sufficient land to meet the identified requirement for the rural areas in any event. The proposed erection of five dwellings on this parcel of land is consequently not considered to represent a tipping point in terms of the capacity of the village to accommodate further growth, and as such the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the provisions SS1, SS3, SS6 and SS6A of the Core Strategy.

5.6. Policy SS6c nevertheless states that within the rural areas housing development will be restricted to that which is essential to local needs. The submitted proposal does not fall within any of the categories of development identified with policy SS6c, and consequently the proposal is acknowledged to conflict with the Development Plan in this regard.

5.7. However, owing to the Local Authority's continued inability to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing the conflict with policy SS6c can only be afforded limited weight, a point reinforced by the conclusions of the Planning Inspector in the determination of the nearby appeal at Saltersford Lane, where it was concluded that:

> *"Whilst the proposal would conflict with Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy, given the extent of the shortfall of housing supply, I give limited weight to this conflict".*

5.8. The Local Authority's housing land supply has deteriorated further since the scheme at Saltersford Lane was determined, and now stands at a 1.8 year supply (compared to 1.84% at the time of the appeal). The absence of a five-year supply of housing engages the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the so-called tilted balance, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 11 of the NPPF. Paragraph 11 stipulates that where policies are out-of-date, as is the case here, 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

5.9. The proposal does not conflict with any policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance, and consequently the development does not conflict with criterion i) of paragraph 11. It is furthermore considered that no adverse impacts will arise to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole. This is discussed within the planning balance section below.

Means of Access

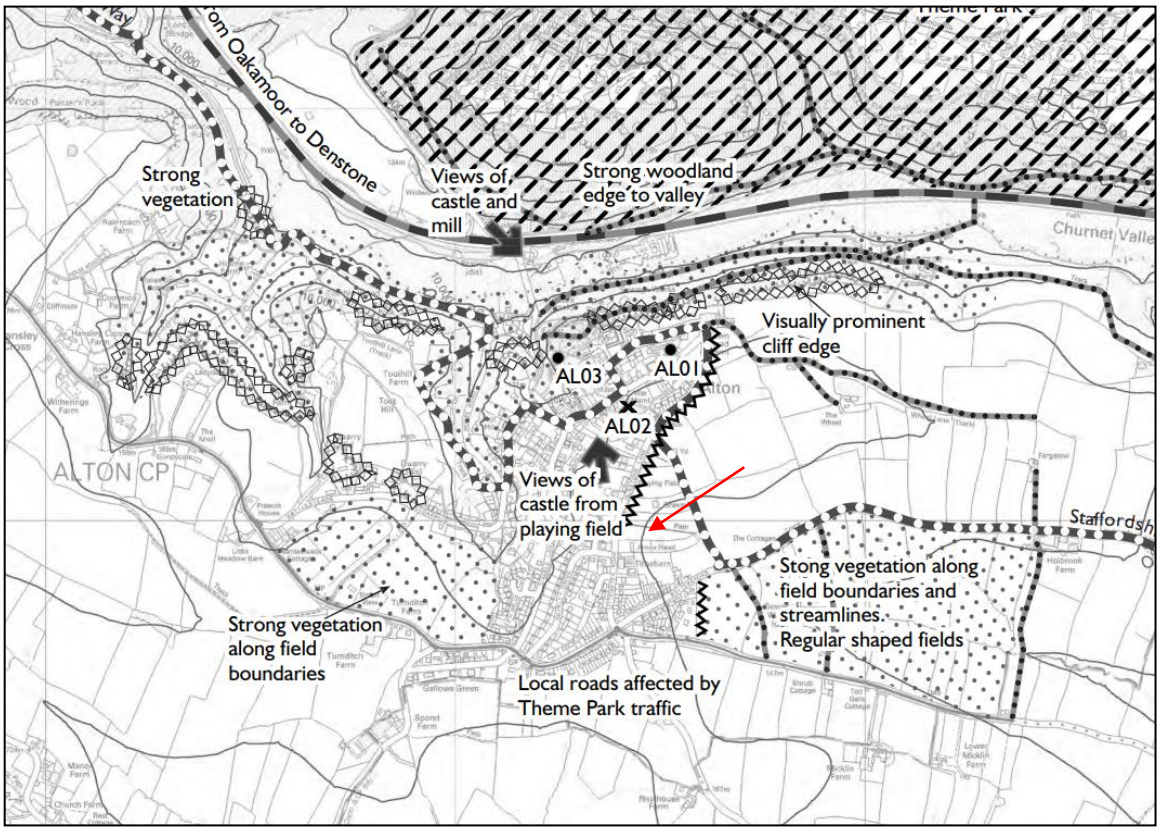
5.10. The application proposes to access the five dwellings from the Uttoxeter Road. The access will afford good visibility in both directions on egress, and the applicant controls the hedgerow across the site frontage, and thus has capacity to lower this to further improve visibility if the Local Highway Authority considers this necessary. The indicative plan accompanying the application demonstrates that each property will be provided with an appropriate level of off-street parking provision, as well as associated manoeuvring space to ensure that vehicles are able to exit the site in a forward gear. It is therefore submitted that the proposed development will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety, and thus accords with the provisions of paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

Landscape Impact

5.11. The application site is located within the Dissected Sandstone Uplands character area, as set out within the Planning for Landscape Change SPG. This character area is defined by small to medium scale field pattern of hedgerows with some introduction of stone walls, hedgerow trees, strongly undulating landform with small stream valleys, low intensity pasture farming, a dispersed pattern of settlements linked by small sunken lanes, red brick and stone buildings. The SPG goes on to identify a number of incongruous landscape features, which include stock control fencing, isolated field trees and the untidy, run down appearance to farmsteads. The critical factors which currently limit landscape quality are noted to be a decline in the condition of some of the characteristic landscape features described above, the introduction of some incongruous features, and the relatively poor survival of characteristic semi-natural vegetation (i.e. ancient woodland, semi-natural grasslands and heathland).

5.12. The submitted proposal does not introduce any features which are noted to be incongruous within the landscape, nor will it erode any of the key characteristics of the landscape. The proposal will furthermore ensure that the existing boundary vegetation, in particular the mature hedgerow enclosing the southern boundary of the site, and trees at its eastern end, are maintained. The site is furthermore not identified as constituting landscape that is important to the setting of the settlement, as set out within the Local Authority's Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) for Alton, an extract of which is shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

Figure 1 – Extract of LSCA Alton



Source: SMDC LSCA

Heritage Impacts

5.13. The application site lies adjacent to the boundary of the Alton and Farley Conservation Area, which runs part way along the western boundary of the site. The Conservation Area comprises a designated heritage asset, and consideration has therefore been given to the impact of the proposed development on important views into and out of the Conservation Area, having regard to the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal.

5.14. The development does not impinge upon any important hedgerows as defined within the Conservation Area Appraisal, nor will it detrimentally affect the setting of any buildings noted to be either listed or significant buildings, the nearest being Rose Cottage and Rock Cottage some 196m to the west of the site, round the corner on Lime Kiln Lane. The site is also unrelated to important views identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

5.15. Whilst the development would be visible from within the Conservation Area in views along Hurstons Lane, the proposed development would be filtered by existing vegetation, and any glimpses of development seen against the backdrop of the existing built development in Uttoxeter Road and Saltersford Lane, and in due course, the recently approved development on land rear of

Saltersford Lane. Likewise the proposed development will not appear dominant or intrusive on approach from the west along Lime Kiln Lane, with the new dwelling at the site frontage set behind the existing boundary hedgerow and being read as a continuation of the linear pattern of development that exists along the eastern side of the Uttoxeter Road.

5.16. Neither viewpoints are identified as important within the Conservation Area, and consequently we submit that the proposed development will not derive any material adverse harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset. If the Local Authority considers otherwise, and that the proposal would derive *'less than substantial harm'* it is considered that the benefits of providing new housing on the site, in circumstances where there is chronic shortfall in housing, serve to outweigh any perceived harm. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC2 of the Core Strategy, and the relative provisions of the NPPF.

Scale, Appearance and Layout

5.17. Matters of scale, appearance, layout and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval. The indicative layout accompanying the application nevertheless demonstrates that the proposed quantum of development can be satisfactorily accommodated on site without giving rise to significant and demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area, or the amenity of neighbouring amenity. The surrounding area does not exhibit a strong prevailing vernacular, and the recently approved scheme at Saltersford Lane is noted to involve incursion of development eastwards from the Uttoxeter Road. This submitted proposal reflects that scheme and will ensure existing boundary features will be retained unaltered. The development of this site for housing will therefore not materially detract from the character and appearance of the area and will accord with the provisions of policies H1 and DC1 of the Core Strategy.

Other Issues

5.18. The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in order to demonstrate that the development can be undertaken without adversely impacting on important trees or habitats. The applicant is agreeable to implementing the recommendations set out within these documents, which can be secured by way of a suitably worded planning condition. In doing so the development will accord with the provisions of policy NE1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Planning Balance

5.19. The submitted proposal will derive a number of material benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole. Firstly, it will deliver five new dwellings to help address the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing land supply and will generate support for local services and facilities associated with the generation of additional household expenditure within the local economy. The Local Authority's 'Quantifying the Economic Impact of New Development' report calculates that each new dwelling constructed within the District will contribute

£9,388 per annum to the local economy – equivalent in this case to £46,940 per annum. Each new dwelling also generates an initial one-off spend of £5,000 and will also generate work for local tradespeople during the construction phase, helping to support local jobs. The economic benefits of the proposal will therefore be significant.

5.20. In determining the nearby appeal at Saltersford Lane, the Planning Inspector concluded that:

> *"Moreover, the proposal would support a local service centre in accordance with Policy SS6a of the Core Strategy and paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The proposal would also have economic benefits in the short term during the construction phase and in terms of future occupiers supporting local businesses in the longer term. These factors weigh significantly in favour of the proposal".*

5.21. The proposal will also generate significant environmental benefits as a consequence of delivering new dwellings in a sustainable location. In determining the appeal at Saltersford Lane, the Planning Inspector concluded that:

> *"I acknowledge that the only bus service is soon to be withdrawn from the village and consequently residents would be reliant on the private car to access higher order services in nearby towns. Nevertheless, Alton has a range of services including a primary school, GP surgery, village convenience store, village hall, post office/newsagents, churches, sports pitch/playing field, mobile library and local employment opportunities at the nearby theme park. Consequently, there are a range of services within walking distance of the site to meet the day-to-day needs of future residents. In light of the range of services within the village, I agree that the settlement is a sustainable location for small scale development".*

5.22. For the reasons set out above, the proposed development will not derive any adverse impacts to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development, and consequently it is considered that planning permission should be granted in accordance with the titled balance in favour of approval.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- Alton village is a target for significant housing growth up to 2026, with policy SS6a recognising that development may be required to be accommodated on land outside the built-up area;
- The Local Authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year deliverable supply of housing (1.8 years) and as such the proposal should be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- The proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development that will deliver numerous social, economic and environmental benefits;
- The application site occupies a sustainable location in close proximity to the existing services and facilities on offer within the village;
- The proposed means of vehicular access will not result in severe impacts to the local highway network;
- The application site does not lie within a part of the landscape that is noted as being important to the setting of the village within the LSCA, and will not materially detract from the defined character of the landscape;
- The proposed development will not materially detract from the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset;
- The indicative layout plan submitted demonstrates that the proposed quantum of development can be accommodated on the site in a manner that achieves a spacious form of development that relates well to the character of the area, and which safeguards the amenity of neighbouring occupiers;
- The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on important trees within the site, or give rise to harm to important habitats;

6.2. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies SS1, SS1a, SS2, SS3, SS6, SS6a, SS6c, DC1, DC2, DC3, H1 and NE1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, and Planning for Landscape Change SPG.

6.3. Whilst the proposed development is acknowledged to conflict with the provisions of policies SS6c of the Core Strategy, it is considered that this conflict is outweighed by other material considerations as discussed in the Planning Assessment above, and that no adverse impacts will arise to significantly and

demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole.

6.4. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant outline planning permission for the proposed development in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in policy SS1a of the Core Strategy, and paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework.