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Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
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Nigel Smith
3 The Hurstons
Alton
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19/12/2021

Ref: SMD/2021/0635

With reference to your recent email and notification of the “modified” plans for the above application, then I feel that the points laid out below have still not been adequately dealt with and still warrant grounds for refusal.

The only change appears to be the inclusion of opaque and non-opening window panes in the rear face, but these merely show compromise in the design of the plots rather than good original design within keeping and scale of the area.

They do not address; overdevelopment (previously refused even at appeal – see below) proximity of primary windows (well within the 22m limit and above hedge / fence levels due to the raised land on wither side), endangerment of rare tree species that appear to have immunity to Dutch Elm Disease, blocking of light and poor residential amenity.

This plot was originally outside of the village boundary and therefore this level of development should continue to be refused. The original historical village wall can still be seen down the centre of The Hurstons, demonstrating the historical importance of the location to the village.

I write to object to the above planning application on the following grounds:

1. Overdevelopment of the site
 - a. The Heritage statement section 5.6 states that planning permission has been established under a number of applications culminating in SMD/2021/0062, but this is only for one dwelling. Planning has been refused for multiple dwellings on the grounds of overdevelopment on a number of occasions – 12-00240-FUL, SMD/2013/0829 and SMD/2014/0468
 - b. The refusal of development SMD/2014/0468 went to appeal and was still refused. The appeal letter stated that this would have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area as well as a negative impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties in The Hurstons with particular regard to outlook. This would remain the case, as the design has fundamentally not changed.
2. Arboricultural Report
 - a. The Appeal of SMD/2014/0468 stated that the appellants tree survey rated the Sycamore tree to be of only moderate quality, however the appeal stated that it makes

an important contribution to the appearance of the area and its premature loss would be detrimental to the area. Suggested life 20 – 40 years

- b. The latest arboricultural report appears to downgrade the quality and potential life of the trees. The Wych Elm in particular has been neglected by the current owners and the Ivy allowed to run rampant, which has had a negative effect on the health of the tree. This species of tree is now sadly rare in this country and should be protected and looked after rather than felled on the grounds that “it is likely to get Dutch Elm Disease at some point in the future”. Maybe we should terminate all people over 70 on the grounds that they will likely die anyway in the next 20 years!
 - c. I would argue that each further report just aims to promote the removal of trees rather than their protection. Even no dig coverings such as Cellweb would not protect such trees from continuous driveway use and heavy-duty construction equipment.
 - d. The detached garage would clearly be built over the tree root protection area
3. Residential Amenity
- a. The Planning & Heritage Statement references Space About Dwellings SPG rules requiring a distance of 22 metres between principal windows that face one another. This is defined as the main window to a living room, dining room, kitchen, 1st and second bedroom. Plot 1 has Living Room and Family Room (could also be construed as a dining room) which have windows 15 metres from the primary kitchen windows of No. 3 and No. 4 The Hurstons.
 - b. The argument that the direct line of site will be obscured by the boundary hedge is incorrect as both No. 3 The Hurstons and the proposed development are significantly raised above the road / hedge level.
 - c. Even with a hedge of 2m height a clear view will remain from one living space to another.
 - d. Plot 2 will be even closer to No. 4 and No. 5 The Hurstons.
 - e. Together Hurstons Cottage, Plot 1 and Plot 2 will present a continuous brick / tile wall of some 16 metres wide and over 8m tall to The Hurstons as well as blocking morning light to the entire lane, especially in the winter.
4. Road Safety
- a. The SCC Highways response states that Hurstones Lane is a “relatively quiet road”. The highways officers have clearly not been here in the morning, evening and well into the night when very large tractors and trailers / combine harvesters travel along this road at considerable speed exiting and returning to their storage unit at the farm on the corner of Back Lane, Wheel Lane and Castle Hill Road. These vehicles service many of the surrounding farms which means they are travelling this road most days in the farming calendar.
 - b. The entrance to Plot 1 is directly opposite the point where the road narrows from a carriage way just possible for 2 cars to pass, to a single-track carriageway. It would clearly be irresponsible to add another entrance at this point.
 - c. The proposed entrance to Plot 2 adds to the danger by being sited directly opposite a farm gate that is regularly used for loading and unloading horses as well as very close to the exit from The Hurstons to Back Lane and all in a single-track carriageway as the road drops away into a blind corner.

- d. In both cases the proposed parking areas allows for the resident vehicles, but most visiting vehicles would need to either park on the road, which is already often congested in that area, or reverse from or onto the road adding a further road safety hazard.
- 5. Electrical and telephone cables
 - a. The position of Plot 1 is directly underneath the main telephone supply connection to The Hurstons and would directly impact the service to these properties. There is also an electrical supply to the street lights on Hurstones Lane that takes the same route. There does not appear to be any plan to re-site those cables, which would not clear the proposed design.
- 6. Design
 - a. The council has been keen to refuse any change to existing properties in the area on the grounds that it would not be in keeping with the area. This can be evidenced by the number of refused small scale planning applications on punitive grounds. This larger scale development has been refused on multiple occasions over the past 25 years as not in keeping with the local area and overdevelopment of a small rural space. Therefore, I would hope that the previous objections would be upheld and planning refused

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Smith