

SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS

LAND AT HURSTONS LANE, ALTON

SEPTEMBER 2022

1. Comments on Local Authority Statement of Case

1.1 The Local Authority sets out in its Statement of Case the following main issues which I address in turn below:

- Principle of Development
- Siting and Design
- Neighbour Amenity / Living Conditions
- Area Character and Appearance
- Heritage – the Alton Conservation Area
- Highways

Principle of Development

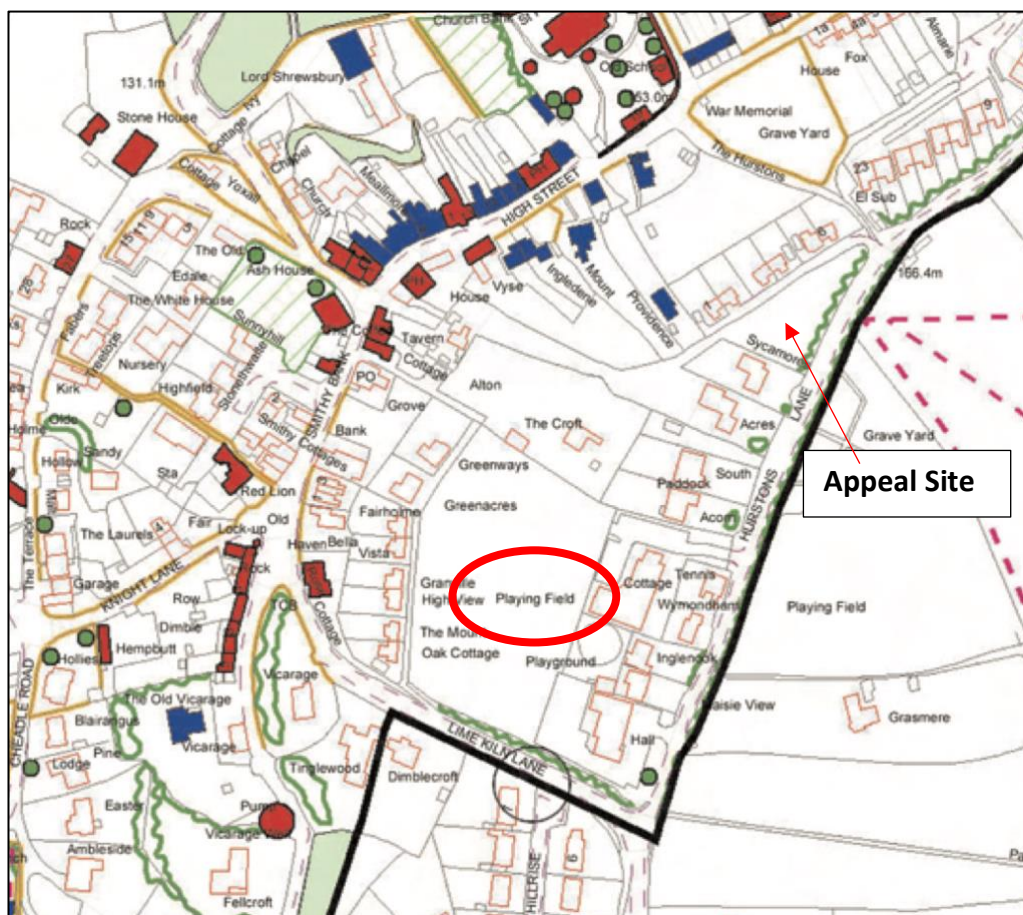
1.2 It is agreed with the Local Authority that the principle of development is acceptable on this site owing to its location within the defined settlement boundary of Alton (policies SS8 and H1 refer).

Siting and Design

1.3 The Local Authority makes reference in paragraphs 8.5 and 8.6 of its statement to the Conservation Area Appraisal for Alton. As the Local Authority acknowledges, the focus in the appraisal on Hurstons Lane is on views out to the northwest from an existing playing field, and that it “does not appear to have specific bearing on the appeal site”. I would agree. The Conservation Area Appraisal talks specifically about the existing playing field set between Hurstons Lane and Lime Kiln Lane, commenting that it provides “a public open space whose northern fringe provides fine views out towards Alton Castle” (paragraph 6.3 of the CAA).

- 1.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal goes on to state that “While building to the east of this area has no impact on the historic core of the Conservation Area, it does impact on fine views out to the northwest where it is intervisible with the Castle, sounding a warning note against an automatic assumption of further development in this area” (paragraph 8.4 of the CAA). The parcel of land being discussed lies some 115 metres to the southwest of the site (see Figure 1) and the development of houses upon the appeal site will not **have any impact on the important views identified**, as they will be wholly screened by existing built development located in between.

Figure 1 – Location of Playing Field off Hurstons Lane



Source: SMDC Conservation Area Appraisal – Alton

- 1.5 The Local Authority goes on to comment in paragraph 8.7 that the northeastern half of the site, with its strong hedges and dominant trees, form of a prominent green wedge marking the end of Hurstons Lane and represents an important juncture of public routes. The Local Authority goes on to contend in paragraph 8.8 that a new 3m wide entrance would be formed off Hurstons Lane, coupled with the laying of hardstanding and that the loss of trees and construction of the two storey dwellings, would mark a very significant change and loss to the character and appearance of the streetscene.
- 1.6 The proposed development preserves the vast majority of the existing hedgerows that enclose the northeastern, northwestern and northern site boundaries. In doing so their contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area will be preserved. By consolidating the proposed dwellings towards the southernmost portion of the site, the development will furthermore not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with the dwellings being viewed against the backdrop of existing built development to the south, west and northwest. The trees along the eastern site boundary are no longer suitable for retention and have been agreed for removal by the Local Authority's Tree Officer. An application to remove those trees ahead of the winter months is due to be made shortly as they are unsafe. There is ample space towards the northeastern corner of the site for meaningful and effective replacement tree planting to take place, which can be secured via planning condition.
- 1.7 The Local Authority asserts in paragraph 8.8 that of the remaining undeveloped frontage to Hurstons Lane, the appeal scheme would introduce constructed development to some 70% of that frontage. That conclusion has evidently been reached by including the area of proposed hardstanding. The dwellings themselves however will extend only 52% along the Hurstons Lane frontage, with the 22 metres of frontage northeast of the dwelling on Plot 2

being kept free from buildings. In doing so the northeasternmost part of the site will retain a sense of openness and spaciousness.

1.8 The Local Authority also raises concerns that the remainder of the land would be used as residential garden, but as they correctly point out, the extant permission on the site has already established consent for the use of the entirety of this plot as residential curtilage to the approved dwelling. Consequently, the proposed use of the land as domestic curtilage will not have any greater impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area than the extant permission.

1.9 It is noted in respect of siting and design that the Local Authority raises no concerns about the detailed scale, massing and design of the dwellings themselves, so it can be consequently concluded that the dwellings will be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Neighbour Amenity / Living Conditions

1.10 The Local Authority comments that the proposed dwellings would be sited too close to the neighbouring properties to the northwest, specifically citing an overbearing impact. In raising these concerns the Local Authority cites conflict with the adopted Space About Dwellings Guidance.

1.11 The Space about Dwellings Standards set out recommended guideline distances that should be achieved in the interests of safeguarding privacy, light and outlook. It recommends a distance of 14 metres be achieved between a principal window and an elevation with no principal facing windows, or where obscure glazing is to be provided. Where windows serving a principal room face one another the recommended interface distance increases up to 22 metres. The Space About Dwellings Standards define a principal room as

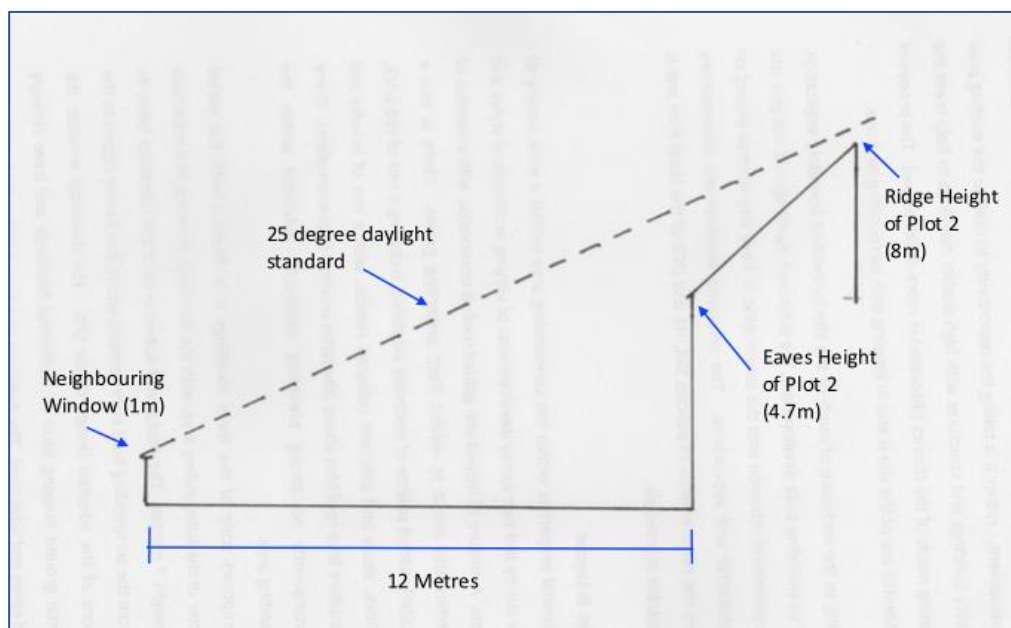
comprising “the main room in a living room, dining room, kitchen and first and second bedroom”.

- 1.12 Plot 1 will have a small window on its rear elevation at ground floor which will serve a family room. A family room is not defined as a principal room by the Space About Dwellings Guidance, but is nevertheless proposed to be non-opening and fitted with obscure glazing. Directly above it will be another non-opening, obscure glazed window which will serve Bedroom 3 (the bedroom being served by a clear glazed window to its side elevation). The aforementioned windows will face out towards the gap between nos. 2 and 3 The Hurstons where there are recessed garages, and towards a recently constructed detached garage built in the rear garden of Hurstons Cottage. The windows will not directly face any principal windows and by virtue of their obscure glazing and distance of approximately 20 metres, will more than meet the recommended separation distance of 14 metres.
- 1.13 Further along the rear elevation of Plot 1 there will be a set of bi-fold doors serving the lounge. Those doors also face towards the gap between nos. 2 and 3 The Hurstons and will be set at angle to the principal windows in the front elevation of no.3 The Hurstons such that no direct window to window overlooking will occur. No conflict with the Space About Dwellings Standards will therefore ensue. Nevertheless, if the Planning Inspector harbours any concerns about the impact of this window on neighbouring amenity, the appellant would be willing to install obscure glazing to the doors as the room it serves is also served by a south-easterly front window. The proposed window above at first floor serves an ensuite shower-room and derives no concerns about overlooking or loss of privacy.
- 1.14 On the rear elevation of Plot 2 there will be windows / doors serving a family room, utility room, w.c. and lounge, with windows above at first floor serving bedroom 3, a bathroom and ensuite. Some concern has been expressed that

Bedroom 3 is larger than the other bedrooms, but that is not the case with both Bedrooms 1 and 2 having a greater floor area than Bedroom 3.

- 1.15 None of these rooms constitute a principal room as defined by the Space About Dwellings Standards and all will lie at an angle to the principal windows of Nos. 3 and 4 The Hurstons to the west, such that direct window to window overlooking does not occur. The obscure glazed nature of the proposed windows / and or their non-principal room status, coupled with the interface distance of 14 metres that is achieved (measurement taken at 90 degrees to the window pane) means no harm to neighbouring amenity will ensue.
- 1.16 In terms of overbearing impact, consideration has also been given to the Local Authority's daylight standards as set out within the Space About Dwellings Guidance. The standards dictate that where a new building is to be sited facing the principal windows of existing properties it must be designed so that there is no obstruction to daylight beyond a vertical angle of 25 degrees from the midpoint of the nearest window.
- 1.17 The section in Figure 2 overleaf demonstrates that the proposed dwelling on Plot 2 will not derive any conflict with the 25-degree standard. In the interests of robustness, the mid-point of the neighbouring window in the section has been set at a level of 1m above ground level whereas in reality it would be higher than this. In addition, the section is based on the closest physical point between Plot.2 and no.4 The Hurstons (12.3m), again in the interests of robustness. The section demonstrates that no conflict with the 25 degree standard will ensue. The impact lessens further as the gap between the buildings increases.

Figure 2 – 25 Degree Daylight Standard



- 1.18 Some concern is expressed by the Local Authority about the height of the proposed dwellings compared to that of the existing dwellings on The Hurstons. The existing dwellings at nos. 3 and 4 The Hurstons have a ridge height of 7 metres (based on scaled elevations submitted under application SMD/2020/0600 for no2. The Hurstons which has the same house type). The proposed dwellings will stand between 7.8 metres and 8 metres tall so will not be 2 metres taller as alleged by the Local Authority, and with appropriate finished floor levels will assimilate well with their surroundings without having an overbearing impact. The dwellings have been signed to have broadly commensurate ridge heights to the adjacent dwelling Hurstons Cottage.
- 1.19 The imposition of a planning condition to require details of existing and proposed finished floor levels can be imposed to ensure that the dwelling is constructed to an appropriate level in relation to its surroundings. The proposed ridge height is to be no taller than the adjacent cottage known as Hurstons Cottage.

- 1.20 Having regard to the considerations set out above it is concluded that the proposed development will not give rise to any harm to neighbouring residential amenity by virtue of overlooking or overbearing impact.

Character

- 1.21 For the reasons set out within the Siting & Design section above it is concluded that the proposed development will be of a scale, massing, design and layout that is in keeping with the prevailing character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 1.22 The Local Authority contends that the removal of the existing tree T1 would be harmful to the character of the area but acknowledges that at some point in time its removal may be likely to become necessary. Tree T1 is in a poor condition, and it has been recorded that the fork in the tree is dangerous and may come down in strong winds. Irrespective of the outcome of the appeal the appellant will be applying to remove this tree ahead of the winter months when the risk to the tree from high winds will be at its greatest.
- 1.23 The appellant's Arboricultural Consultant has had discussions with Steve Massey (Tree Officer at SMDC) where it was confirmed that the removal of the tree would be acceptable provided that replacement tree planting is carried out. The general location of new tree planting has been shown on the submitted, being consolidated towards the northernmost corner of the site where there is ample room for the trees to grow without them becoming constrained in the future by the presence of the neighbouring properties or the proposed new dwellings. A detailed landscaping and planting scheme confirming species type, number and maintenance regime can be secured via planning condition.

Highways

- 1.24 I agree with the Local Authority's assertion that the proposal is acceptable from a highway safety perspective having regard to the conclusions of the Local Highway Authority.

2 Comments on Third Party Representations

- 2.1 The concerns raised by third parties have been addressed within the original Grounds of Appeal and in the above supplementary comments so I have nothing further to add.