

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0409
Valid 21/07/2022

LAND AT CEDARHILL
ALTON

OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH
ALL MATTERS RESERVED
FOR THE ERECTION OF UP-
TO 4 DWELLINGS

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Design and landscape character
- Amenity
- Ecology
- Highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

This application relates to the roadside edge of an agricultural field located on the southern side of Cedarhill, Alton. The development site would span a 113m wide gap of open field between the garden boundary of Fairview to the west and the edge of a protected tree lined hedgerow to the east, to the northern section of the field.

The roadside is bounded by rising highway verge, dwarf stone wall, and traditional hedgerow. From the boundary, the field for the most part, slopes up to the south to form the rise of a hillside towards the treelined high ground that encloses the parcel to the southwest, south and southeast.

Countryside location in an 'other rural area' outside and surrounding the larger village of Alton. The field is located within a landscape character type identified as 'Dissected sandstone uplands' in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. The field parcel has a heritage indicator relating to the site of a former brickworks and a probable associated clay pit from after 1900, a stone ruin to the south of Fairview and southwest of the application site, may be the remains of that.

Loose ribbon development lies opposite the site to the north and a detached bungalow is found to the west. Open countryside bounds the site to the east and south.

PROPOSAL

This application is a re-submission of the previously refused scheme and is again submitted in in outline with all matters reserved and proposes the erection of up-to 4 properties with associated parking provision.

The repeat attempt follows the Council's review of housing delivery and statement published on the 1st April 2021 to the effect that the Council is short of 5 year supply and can demonstrate land supply for just 4.21 years. A materially significant change in circumstance since the previous application was determined meaning that Local

Plan policies relevant to housing delivery are out of date and the application must now be considered under the terms set out paragraph 11 of the NPPF with the 'tilted balance' engaged.

An indicative layout has been submitted. This layout shows how 4 dwellings can be erected on the site in a linear fashion mirroring adjoining built form. It is proposed to utilise a single access point with a private drive serving the 4 properties sited behind the existing / replacement hedgerow.

Each property would be detached and provided with on-plot car parking and attractive landscaping. Whilst design and scale are reserved for later approval, the applicant indicates intent and preference for 2 storey properties, but dormer bungalows could be included if considered necessary. Any future development would exhibit a traditional design response and use of materials.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

Policy SS1 Development Principles
Policy SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
Policy SS10 Other Rural Areas strategy
Policy H1 New housing development
Policy H3 Affordable Housing
Policy DC1 Design considerations
Policy DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
Policy NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14
Section(s) 12

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/1980/0051 Site for 9no. dwellings
Refused

SMD/1985/0028 Site for 9no. dwellings
Refused

SMD/2019/0555 Outline App for 4 dwellings. REFUSED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 6.09.2022
Neighbour consultation period ends: 6.09.2022
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

Six objectors have submitted comments. The planning related concerns fall into the following categories:

- Highway safety
- Impacts on ecology and landscape
- Amenity
- Need for housing
- Design and landscape character

Town / Parish Comments

Alton Parish Council strongly object.

Harm to the character and appearance of this special landscape area because of its prominent and isolated position, its poor relationship to the existing settlement and the visual impact of the development on the entrance to the village.

impractical to construct a junction with the highway which would have sufficient visibility for drivers entering the highway.

The road has no pedestrian facilities and additional pedestrian

The local primary school is nearly at capacity. Permission has already been granted for 48 new houses that have yet to be built in Alton. More house building in our village is not sustainable as children will have to be driven out of the village to other schools.

No public transport serving Alton. Congestion within Alton from current vehicle movements of residents, visitors and employees to Alton Towers. Alton does not have a road network that can cope with an increase in vehicle numbers and maintain the safety of its residents.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No Objection subject to conditions.

A visibility splay of 2.4m x 43m in each direction could be achieved, however, existing hedge would need to be removed with excavation of the bank/verge.

Severn Trent Water

No Objection, subject to drainage conditions

School Organisation Staffs County Council

No Objection. The development would provide four dwellings, less than the threshold of 10. No education contribution is therefore requested.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Holding Objection further information required.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The published updated 5 year housing supply statement concludes that the Staffordshire Moorlands only has a supply of 4.21 years. As such, para. 11d of the NPPF now applies to applications for housing development i.e. grant permission unless covered by policy in the closed list at footnote 7 (e.g. Green Belt, Local Green Space, SSSI etc), or unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole – The “Tilted Balance”.

For the purposes of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the site is outside of the defined ‘larger village’ area of Alton and within an ‘other rural area’, here Local Plan strategy SS10 applies. In these circumstances strategy SS10 of the Local Plan supports housing development in only specific cases, such as: where it involves the conversion of a rural building; provides development to meet an essential need; or rural exception housing. The proposed development would not qualify against any of those exceptions.

In respect of the application site’s relationship to Alton, the site and immediate locality has a character and topography that appears detached and distinct from the village. The village boundary is some 90m to the east of the site, containing a ribbon of houses that extends as a peninsula from the main form of the village. The character of Cedarhill alters beyond the western end of those properties and development becomes increasingly sporadic, transitioning to the wider countryside beyond. The application site therefore, is not located on the edge of, or adjacent to, the settlement and would not provide an appropriate infill location that might be provided for by the ‘larger village’ local plan strategy at SS8. The development would not be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and would lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside and a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. The proposal therefore fails to meet the requirements of the strategy’s accompanying criteria policy H1.

However, despite that conflict with those policies of the Local Plan, paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and Quality of the Landscape

The proposed development would result in the construction of up to four detached dwelling houses with associated on-site parking and outdoor amenity space.

Though all matters are reserved it is evident by the sloping nature of the site that any form of residential development on the plot would necessitate excavation and retaining structures. If this is to be minimised it would instead result in an elevated form of development above the highway. In both instances the development would appear visually intrusive and out of character with the site and locality. Any impact of development on the site would be further exacerbated by the loss of the boundary hedge which would be required to achieve adequate visibility in accordance with comments received from the Highway Authority.

This application fails to accord with policy DC1 which seeks to secure new development of a high quality that is designed to respect the site and its surroundings; and, similarly, fails to accord with policy DC3 which states that the Council will protect, and where possible, enhance local landscape by resisting development which would lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside. As noted above, the intrusive nature of the development within the countryside also causes further conflict with the relevant section of policy H1.

Amenity

Policy DC1 requires new development to protect the amenity of the area in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. Similarly, paragraph 127f) of the National Planning Policy Framework seek to secure development that protects the amenity, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping. The Councils adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Space About Dwellings provides guidance to protect privacy for existing and proposed residents and recommends a separation distance of 22m between facing principle habitable room windows located in the front elevation. The submitted plans demonstrate that this distance is achievable and as such it is not considered that development on the site would result in an unacceptable loss of amenity subject to matters of siting and scale which would form part of the assessment at Reserved Matters.

Ecology

The application as submitted failed to provide sufficient information to assess the full impact of the proposals on any potential important habitat or species. As such, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust raised a holding objection.

In response to SWT the following documents have been submitted for consideration:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 14th April 2020 Herpetologic Ltd
- Reptile Survey Report undated, presume May 2020 Herpetologic Ltd
- A report into the invertebrate conservation interest of Cedarhill, Alton undated, presume May 2020 Herpetologic Ltd
- Indicative Site Layout A4179 – 001 P3 dated 09/06/2020

SWT have been re-consulted on this information and are not satisfied that their initial concerns have been addressed. SWT therefore object to this application on the grounds of insufficient information. The proposal is therefore found contrary to Policy NE1, Biodiversity and Geological Resources, as well as the relevant sections of the NPPF.

Highway Safety

Staffordshire County Council have made a number of comments with regard to the detail of the proposal. However, as this is an outline application with all matters reserved, these can be adequately addressed at the reserved matters stage. No objection is raised from Staffordshire County Council Highways and therefore it is not considered that a refusal on highway safety grounds could be sustained. Various conditions have been recommended and subject to these being imposed it is concluded that the proposal would comply with Policies DC1 and T1 in this respect.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The impacts of the development have been discussed above relevant to those other development plan policies that are generally consistent with the NPPF and significant harm and conflict has been identified. The provision of houses in this location would only benefit and contribute to the economy, local community and housing supply in a limited way and those benefits carry limited weight in favour of the proposal. They would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by adverse impacts. For the reasons given above, the proposal does not constitute sustainable development in accordance with paragraph 11 d) ii) of the NPPF and planning permission should be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 15th September 2022

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council