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Planning, Design and Access Statement

Erection of 3 dwellings
(Outline)

At

Land at Top Building,
Back Lane, Heaton

March 2023

Document Control Sheet

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning & Design Practice is a multi-disciplinary practice spearheaded by chartered town planner, architects and heritage specialists. Established in 2002, the company has a long track record of success.

1.2 Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of 3 dwellings at Land at Top Building, Back Lane, Heaton, SK11 0SH.

1.3 The report has been structured to provide an introduction to the site and its planning history; details of the proposed development; an examination of the planning policy context; and a detailed discussion of the key planning issues.

1.4 Also submitted to accompany the report are the following:

- Site Location Plan;
- Site Block Plan as existing;
- Site Block Plan as proposed;
- 3D Visuals of the proposed scheme; and
- Preliminary Ecology Appraisal.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

Site Location

2.1 The site is located in Heaton, a village within the Staffordshire Moorlands. The site is located centrally within the village, next to a converted residential barn known as 'Top Building' and a garage in separate ownership and to the north of Back Lane which forms the norther edge of the "Triangle".



Figure 1: Aerial image of the site (edged in red)



Figure 2: Extract of the site from the Staffordshire Moorlands Map



Figure 3: Extract of the site from the Staffordshire Moorlands Map

2.2 Access to the site is currently gained via a field gate located close to the northeast corner of the site.

Planning policy designations

2.3 In planning policy terms the site is located in the open countryside but is not located in the Green Belt.

2.4 The site is within Flood Zone 1, meaning it is at the lowest risk of flooding.

2.5 There are no listed buildings on or in close proximity to the site.

2.6 There are 2 public footpaths which run to the north and east of the site, namely Heaton 8 and Heaton 6.

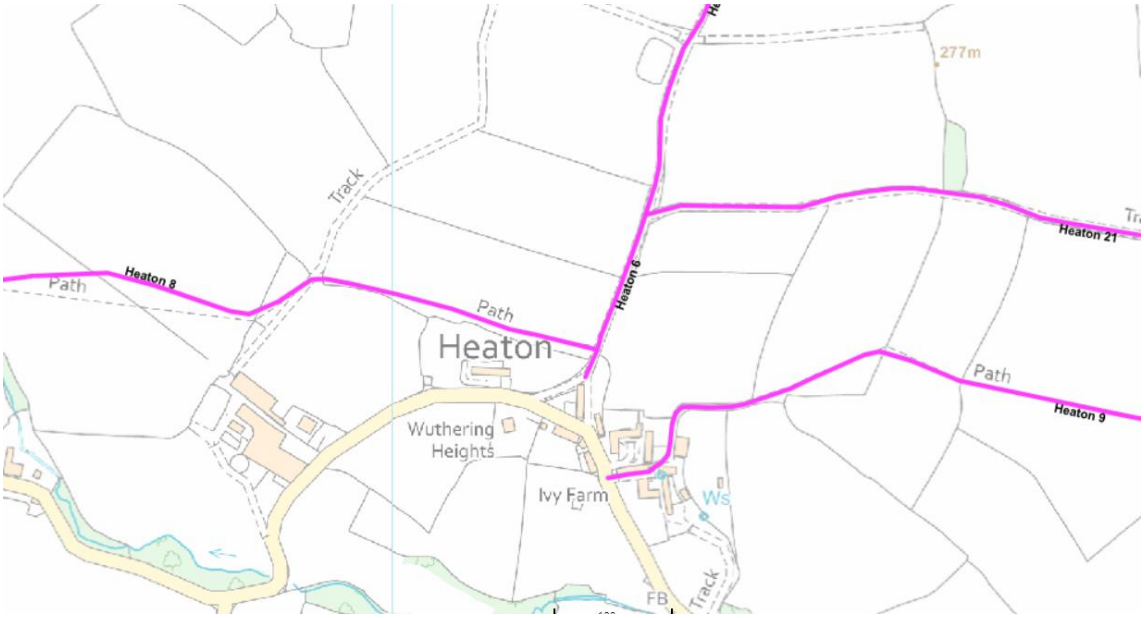

Figure 4: Public footpaths map from the Staffordshire County Interactive Map

Relevant Planning History

2.7 There is no relevant planning history for the site.

2.8 The Planning history for 'Top Building', to the west of the site, encompassed by the blue site edge is as follows:

Planning Ref	Proposal and decision

SMD/2002/0079	Conversion of agricultural building to dwelling – *Refused, 24/06/2002*
SMD/2004/0015	Conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to dwelling – *Approved, 29/04/2004*

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of 3 dwellings at Land at Top Building, Back Lane, Heaton, SK11 0SH.

3.2 An indicative site plan has been prepared, as shown in figure 5, which shows the dwellings arranged in an arc which broadly follows the alignment of Back Lane, with each dwelling having its own access from Back Lane and with adequate garden space and parking provided. A pair of semi-detached dwellings and one detached dwelling are proposed. The existing site boundaries consisting of walls, trees and hedgerows will be largely retained.



Figure 5: Indicative Site plan sketch scheme



Figure 6: 3D sketch of the proposed development



Figure 7: Photograph of site looking north east



Figure 8: Photograph of the site taken from the southern edge, facing north-easterly, on Back Lane



Figure 9: Photograph of the existing access in the northeast corner



Figure 10: Photograph of the wall running along the southern/southeastern boundary of the site



Figure 11: Photograph looking west across the site

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 The purpose of this section is to set out the relevant planning policy background which is pertinent to the site and proposed development, as well as identifying any key studies or reports which will assist in the determination of this application.

4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3 The development plan consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, which covers the plan period of 2014 to 2033, and was adopted in 2020. Other material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF') and the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD adopted in 2018, which identifies the overarching principles in securing good design. Other relevant guidance includes the Council's Space About Dwellings SPG adopted in 1998, which contains guidance intended to protect the amenities of existing and future residents when residential development is proposed.

4.4 For ease of reference, these are considered under the following headings:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Adopted Local Plan (2014-2033); and
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020)

4.5 Policy SS 1: Development Principles – *"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, in partnership with other agencies and services:*

- *A mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities;*

  …

- *A healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment;*
- *Development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings; …"*

4.6 **Policy SS 2: Settlement Hierarchy** – *"**Rural Area Smaller Villages** – these villages generally have a poor range of services and facilities and it is often necessary for local residents to travel outside the village for most of their daily needs. Development on a large scale would be unsustainable in these villages, as it is will generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys outside the village and may undermine the spatial strategy. However, it is recognised that these settlements have a limited role in meeting the development requirements for the District which may assist in maintaining the vitality of the smaller villages. These settlements are not defined by a Development Boundary and only limited development of an appropriate nature will be allowed. Where relevant, Green Belt policy will also apply."*

4.7 **Policy SS 3: Future Provision and Distribution of Development** – *"Provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings (net of demolitions) to be completed in the Staffordshire Moorlands during the period 2014 to 2033 - an annual average of 320 homes per year. Sufficient deliverable land will be identified to provide at least 5 years of development at all times. The Council will monitor the annual development rate and manage supply to ensure that future provision will continue to adequately meet identified needs and reflect development potential."*

4.8 **Policy SS 4: Strategic Housing and Employment Land Supply** – *"In order to meet the housing requirements identified in Policy SS 3, sufficient land will be identified to accommodate at least 3763 additional dwellings."* This states that 25% is allocated to Rural Areas, with a net figure of 698 dwellings required. Small sites will be allowed an infill provision of 30 dwellings per year, with a total provision of 330 dwellings.

4.9 **Policy SS 9: Smaller Villages Area Strategy** – *"These settlements shall provide only for appropriate development which enhances community vitality or meets a social or economic need of the settlement and its hinterland. The Council and its partners will achieve this through the following actions:*

…

2. Meet community, social or economic need by:

- *Enabling limited new housing development, including small infill schemes in accordance with Policy H1*
- *Allowing for rural exceptions housing in appropriate locations (in accordance with Policy H 1). This will be additional to the housing provision for the rural areas.*

4.10 Policy H 1: New Housing Development –

"1) 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 H 3, 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."

"3) All development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision.

c) All housing developments should be at the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, and with the character of the surrounding area. Higher densities will generally be appropriate in locations which are more accessible by public transport and which have good access to services."

"4) Housing development on sites not allocated for such purposed in Policy H 2 will be supported as follows: …

b) Outside of the development boundaries, limited infill residential development of an appropriate scale and character for the Spatial Strategy will be supported, provided that:

…

- *The development is well related to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village and will not create or extend ribbon development or lead to sporadic pattern of development; and*

c) In all cases the development will not lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside."

4.11 Policy H 3: Affordable Housing – *"3) In or on the edge of villages, affordable housing schemes that are of an appropriate scale for the spatial strategy will be permitted on suitable rural exceptions sites which are well related to services and facilities and where a demonstrable need exists within the local area which cannot otherwise be met by means of provision in the plan. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the Council's discretion where it would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community."*

4.12 **Policy DC 1: Design Considerations** – *"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 Guide SPD"*

National Planning Policy Framework

4.13 The updated National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2021. The framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

4.14 Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.15 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.16 Paragraph 11 (d) states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development by *"approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay"* or *"where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date".*

4.17 Paragraph 60 states that; "To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed…".

4.18 Paragraph 69 states that; "Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly."

4.19 Paragraph 79 reads as follows: *"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby."*

4.20 Paragraph 130 sets out the importance of achieving well-designed places;

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

(a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit…".

5 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

Principle of the Development

5.1 The site, in planning policy terms, lies within the "Smaller Village" of Heaton. Policy SS9 of the Local Plan seeks to allow an appropriate level of sensitive development within smaller villages. Heaton is one of the identified smaller villages listed under the policy, which do not have defined development boundaries. Appropriate development within these smaller villages will be supported so long as the development enhances community vitality or meets a social or economic need. All new development is also required to reflect and enhance each village's special character

and heritage by protecting and enhancing the setting and historic character of the village, including heritage assets.

5.2 Policy H1 relates to housing development and establishes requirements with respect to mix, specialist house types, quality, housing on unallocated sites and housing exceptions in the open countryside. Policy H1(4)(b) allows for limited infill residential development of an appropriate scale and character for the Spatial Strategy on sites outside of settlement boundaries, subject to certain criteria. These require such development to be well related to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village and to not create or extend ribbon development or lead to a sporadic pattern of development. Policy H1(4)(c) requires housing development to not be prominent in the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on its character and appearance.

5.3 The Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) do not define infill development. Accordingly, the question of whether a development would be considered as an infill site is a matter of planning judgement.

5.4 Heaton is a somewhat dispersed settlement but the largest concentration of development is the one in which the site is located, comprising around 25 dwellings clustered around the junction of Heaton Bank and Back Lane. The site therefore occupies a central location within the village, with housing to the south, southeast and west of it. The site lies between 'Top Building', a converted barn, to the west and Black Horse Cottage to the east (albeit the latter is on the southern side of Back Lane). Furthermore, the site's topography, sloping down towards Back Lane, reinforces the site's visual connection with the houses to the south and southeast and there is a strong rear (northern) boundary in the form of a hedgerow which distinguishes the site from the wider countryside beyond.



Figure 12 - Location of the site within its context

5.5 For the above reasons, whilst the Framework does not provide a definition of 'infill', it is considered that the development would more closely represent infill development, and not ribbon development as required by Policy H1 4) b). The proposed development would retain the nucleated character of the village, representing a logical rounding off of development on the northern side of the "Triangle". It would therefore not lead to a sporadic form of development or a prominent intrusion into the countryside. The form of development proposed, in terms of the appearance, form and layout of the dwellings is traditional and would be well related to the existing character and pattern of development of Heaton. Furthermore, given the site's intimate relationship with existing development it would not be prominent in the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on its character and appearance. The proposed development therefore accords with Local Plan Policies SS9 and H1.

5.6 For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable as it complies with Local Plan Policies SS9 and H1.

Whether it enhances community vitality or meets a social or economic need

5.7 The pretext to Local Plan Policy SS9 states that *"The smaller villages have a more limited role as service centres, but they are vital to the rural areas particularly in terms of providing for local housing and rural employment needs. A major issue for smaller villages is the loss of local population through lack of housing opportunities. The proposed strategy for the smaller villages therefore seeks to allow an appropriate level of sensitive development which enhances community vitality."* There is clearly, therefore, an acceptance that whilst residents in smaller villages are reliant on the private motor car to carry out their basic day to day needs, a modest amount of new housing is essential to their long term health and vitaility. The proposal will provide 3 new dwellings in Heaton which will provide the opportunity for new people to move into the area or for existing residents to relocate to more suitable housing, thus freeing up those houses.

5.8 As the Framework at paragraph 79 recognises, *"Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby."* Services and amenities in Heaton to meet everyday needs are limited. Swythamley and Heaton Community Centre provides a useful community venue as a Post Office for multiple mornings within the week, an early years/nursery group and for meetings, film nights, special occasions and other regular events for locals. Heaton House Farm is a popular wedding venue and provides employment opportunities for future residents. The site, however, is only a short drive from Rushton Spencer with a number of essential amenities, services and bus links to nearby towns, such as Leek and Macclesfield. These include a primary school, two public houses and a number of small-scale businesses which provide employment opportunities. The vitality and viability of all of the above would be supported by the provision of 3 new dwellings within a 1 mile radius. The proposal therefore complies with the spatial aims of Local Plan Policy SS9 and paragraph 79 of the Framework.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

5.9 As noted above, the site is well related to the existing pattern of development in the village and the development of 3 no. sympathetically designed dwellings would fit comfortably within the context of the village and will act as a natural enclosure of development around 'The Triangle'.

5.10 The sympathetic and traditional design of the dwellings will reinforce local distinctiveness, complementing the special character of the countryside and village, in line with Policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

Impact on highway safety

5.11 Access to the site is envisaged via 3 separate driveways from Back Lane, as shown on the indicative site layout plan. Vehicle speeds and traffic levels are such that this will not have a detrimental impact on highway safety, as required by policy T1 which seeks to ensure that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development.

Impact on Ecology

5.12 A preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by Elite Ecology. This survey effort involved both a desktop study and field survey being undertaken. Its conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- No designated sites that were revealed by the ecological data search provided by SER fell on the proposed re-development site itself.

- No habitats of conservation concern were located on the site itself. Therefore, the proposed scheme of works will not impact upon any rare or valuable habitats.

5.13 In addition, the report recommended that a number of site enhancement measures could be incorporated into the site post-development including the provision of bat boxes, a bat friendly planting scheme, the retention of the southern boundary wall and the retention of a wildlife corridor along the northern boundary.

Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Residents

5.14 Given the location of the site and its relationship with adjacent properties, a development of 3 houses along the lines of that envisaged on the indicative site layout plan would not adversely affect the amenities of adjacent properties or lead to a poor living environment for future occupants of the proposed dwellings.

Impact on Highway Safety

5.15 Access to the dwellings would be from three separate access points on Back Lane along the southeast boundary of the site. Visibility from the site is good and Back Lane is lightly trafficked, such that a modest increase in vehicular movements would not compromise highway safety.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of 3 dwellings at Land at Top Building, Back Lane, Heaton, SK11 0SH.

6.2 The principle of development on the site is deemed acceptable in line with policies SS9 and H1 of the Local Plan. Infill development is acceptable within the village given that it relates well to the existing pattern of development. The dwellings will be carefully designed and will reinforce local distinctiveness by complementing the village and its countryside character, in line with Policy DC1 of the Local Plan. The site is an appropriate location for a small development of 3 houses and the development will help to maintain the vitality of Heaton and surrounding villages including Rushton Spencer.

6.3 The development will provide suitable access to the highway network and will ensure acceptable living conditions for new and existing residents of Heaton.

6.4 The proposal does not raise any other significant planning concerns. It is therefore concluded that the proposal complies with relevant policies in the Development Plan and that there are no other material considerations that count against the proposal. It is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

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