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Planning, Design and Access Statement

Alterations and extensions to The Orchard and reconfiguration of site access to enable the dwelling to be accessed from Deebank Heights

At

The Orchard,
Springfield Drive, Leek

August 2023

Document Control Sheet

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION 3
2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY 4
Site Location 4
Relevant Planning History 5
3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 7
Rationale for Development 7
Details of the Proposed Development 7
4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT 9
Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 9
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 11
5 KEY PLANNING ISSUES 13
The principle of the development 13
Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area 13
Impact on Protected Trees 14
Impact on Highway Safety 16
Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Residents 16
6 CONCLUSIONS 17
..... 18

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning & Design Practice is a multidisciplinary practice consisting of chartered town planners, architects and heritage specialists. The practice operates across England and Wales and has an exemplary track record of submitting successful planning applications and in creating sustainable development.

1.2 Full planning permission is sought for alterations and extensions to The Orchard and reconfiguration of site access to enable the dwelling to be accessed from Deebank Heights at The Orchard, Springfield Drive, Leek.

1.3 This report has been structured to provide an introduction to the site and review its planning history; provide details of the proposed development and the rationale for it; an overview of the relevant planning policies and design guidance; and an examination of the key planning issues to be considered.

1.4 Also submitted to accompany the report are the following:

- Location Plan;
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans;
- Proposed floor plans and elevations; and
- Arboricultural Report.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY

Site Location

2.1 The application site comprises the detached dwelling known as The Orchard and the northern and eastern parts of its residential curtilage. The dwelling is located at the eastern end of Springfield Drive. The Orchard sits in the centre of a large plot with significant areas of curtilage to the north, east and south of it. There are residential properties to the north (on Woodfield Court) and west (on Springfield Drive) of the dwelling. To the south is Leek High School. To the east of the curtilage is a former paddock of rough grassland which has the benefit of planning permission for 7 dwellings granted under application ref. SMD/2016/0134. This development is nearing completion.

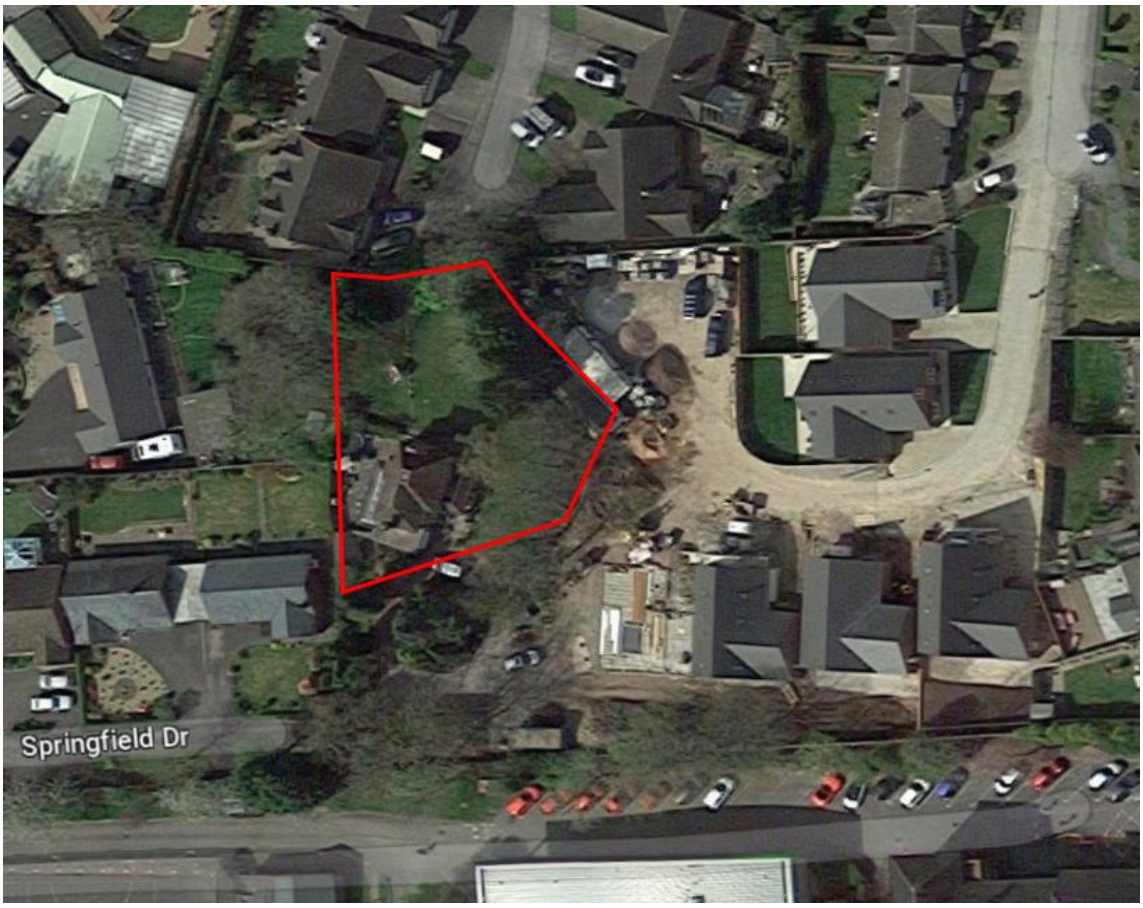

Figure 1: Aerial view of the site (edged in red)

2.2 According to the Adopted Local Plan, the site is located within the town development boundary of Leek. There are no other relevant constraints in planning policy terms.

2.3 The site is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) relating to a single lime tree located to the east of the dwelling (T1) and a group of three trees (G1) consisting of 2 Lime and 1 Ash near the southern boundary of the site.

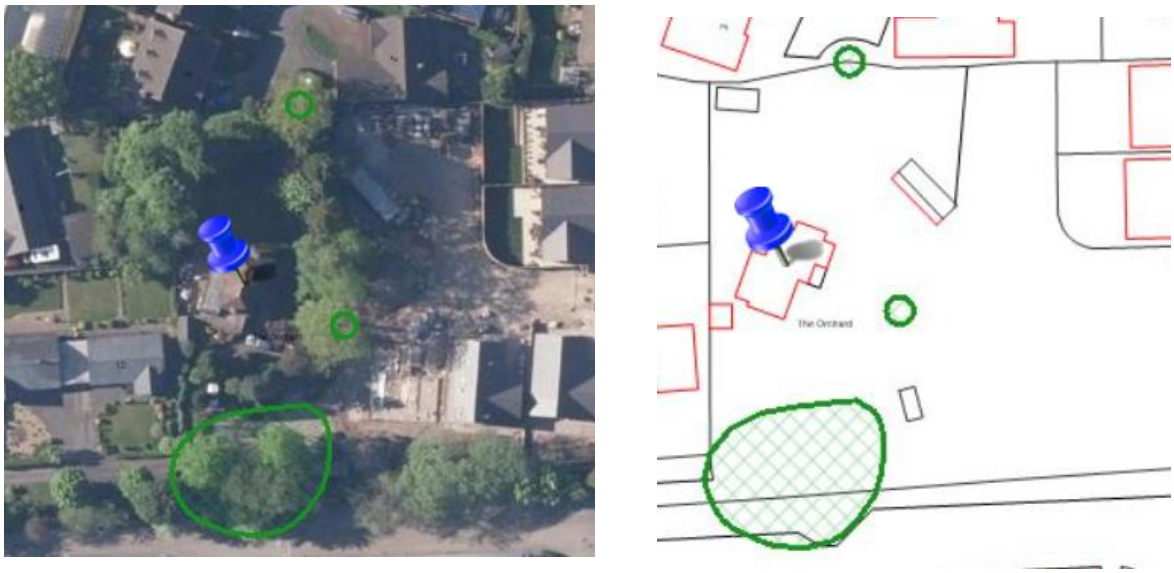

Figure 2: Map to show the Tree Preservation Order (edged in green)

Relevant Planning History

2.4 An application for the erection of a dormer bungalow, alterations and extensions to The Orchard and reconfiguration of site access to enable both dwellings to be accessed from Deebank Heights was submitted in March 2023 (ref: SMD/2023/0132). This was recommended for approval but was subsequently refused by the Planning Committee. The reasons for refusal were:

1. The proposed development would result in the loss of trees which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the area.

2. The proposed extensions to the existing dwelling, by virtue of their scale/massing, design and form, would not harmonise with the scale, form and design of the existing dwelling, resulting in the overdevelopment of that part of the site and harm to the character and appearance of the area.

3. The proposed extensions to the existing dwelling, by virtue of their scale, form and height, would lead to an overbearing form of development when viewed from adjacent existing residential properties to the detriment of the residential amenities of those properties.

4. The proposed extensions to the existing dwelling by virtue of their design, scale and form would fail to respond to, and harmonise with the character of the host dwelling.

2.5 Outline planning approval for the erection of a new dwelling and the creation of a new vehicular access (ref. SMD/2015/0390) was granted in 2015, demonstrating that a new dwelling could be located further away from the existing dwellings without impacting the tree protection areas, and harmful overlooking or loss of light could be avoided. Outline consent was approved which has established the principle for residential development on the site and the 'Deebank Heights' drive to continue to the grounds of The Orchard. Reserved matters were never applied for, and the outline permission has since lapsed.

2.6 Planning permission on land to the east of The Orchard was obtained in 2016 (SMD/2016/0134) for the erection of 7 dwellings, part of the 'Deebank Heights' development, a mix of standard and chalet bungalows, with new private access secured from Deebank Avenue. Six dwellings have been completed, with one still under construction.

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Full planning permission is sought for alterations and extensions to The Orchard and reconfiguration of the site access to enable the dwelling to be accessed from Deebank Heights at The Orchard, Springfield Drive, Leek.

Rationale for Development

3.2 There are four key objectives underpinning this proposal:

1. Restoration of the existing Orchard house is a more sustainable alternative to demolition and will improve the appearance and functionality of the property, bringing it up to modern standards of build and thermal efficiency (the current Orchard dwelling contains no thermal insulation at all and has several structural weaknesses).
2. Access to The Orchard will be redirected via 'Deebank Heights', which more appropriately entertains the front elevation of the property.
3. The proposal will improve the landscaping of the whole site by the removal of dead or poorly conditioned trees and shrubs and the implementation of a suitable plantation scheme.
4. The refurbishment of The Orchard will develop this site in a way that complements the Deebank Heights development currently underway and makes the best available use of the total space available.

Details of the Proposed Development

3.3 The proposed restoration and extension of The Orchard will bring it up to modern standards of comfort and energy efficiency, creating a 5-bedroom property that is better able to meet the spatial requirements of the applicant's family and more commensurate with the size of the plot. The existing study, porch and internal walls will be demolished. The single storey garage to the south of the property will be retained; its roof will be demolished and replaced with a pitched roof to improve the current poor aesthetic appearance of the south elevation. The proposal will also replace the existing roof of the dwelling with a steeper pitched structure to allow rooms in the roof to be formed. Landing rooflights will be fitted with obscured glazing and positioned at a height that does not allow occupants to look down the roof slope. It is proposed that solar panels will be installed on

the south/western aspects of the roof to create sustainable energy generation for the dwelling.

3.4 The changes to the extensions and alterations from the previous application include downscaling of the garage alterations to solely a pitched roof, downsizing the glazed living space on the northern elevation and demolition of the existing utility accommodation on the western elevation. These changes are now at the minimum the applicant is willing to make before the retrofit becomes non-viable.

3.5 Once the above changes have been made, the property will be rendered in 'Chalk Weber Rend System' as per the 'Deebank Heights' development to the east, and the new dwelling (plot 9). Additionally, the walls will be finished with facing brick consisting of 'Ibstock Alnwick Blend', similar to the Deebank Heights development but with more colour variation. The windows, fascia and soffit boards will be an Irish Oak effect.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

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

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

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

4.4 **Policy SS1: 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 [criteria not relevant to this application omitted]:

- 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".*

4.5 **Policy SS2: Settlement Hierarchy** - *"***Towns** – these are the largest settlements comprising of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle which accommodate half of the District's *population and the majority of the District's services and facilities. The spatial strategy* seeks to focus future growth in these settlements and to strengthen their role as service *centres. These settlements will be defined by a Development Boundary."*

4.6 **Policy SD3: Sustainability Measures in Development** - *"The Council will support further* carbon-saving or water-saving measures in both new and existing development in the following ways:

The Council will support measures designed to improve the sustainability of existing buildings (such as improved thermal insulation, water conservation, or the installation of micro-*renewables)."*

4.7 **Policy DC1: 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. In* particular, new development should:

1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
2. be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, *character and appearance".*

4.8 **Policy NE2: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows** - *"The Council will protect existing trees,* woodland and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration.

This will be achieved by:

Requiring that existing woodlands, healthy trees and hedgerows are retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for, and benefits of, the *development clearly outweigh their loss…"*

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.9 **Paragraph 7** of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

4.10 **Paragraph 8** sets out how the goal of *"achieving sustainable development means that the* planning system has 3 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):

- 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
- 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 well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future *needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well*-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and *adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."*

4.11 **Paragraph 11** of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Amongst its main objectives there is a stated aim of significantly boosting the supply of new housing in sustainable locations.

4.12 **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…".*

4.13 **Paragraph 69** goes on to say; *"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. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities *should… d) work with developers to encourage the sub*-division of large sites where this *could help to speed up the delivery of homes".*

4.14 **Paragraphs 126 and 130** set out the importance of achieving well-designed places;

"The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and *other interests throughout the process".*

"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…".*

4.15 **Paragraph 131** is also relevant to this site, given the TPO; *"Trees make an important* contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure *that…appropriate measures are in place to secure the long*-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retaine*d wherever possible…"*

5 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

The principle of the development

5.1 The site is within the settlement boundary of Leek, a market town that Policy SS2 identifies as a location where future growth should be focussed. It is within comfortable walking distance of the services and amenities that Leek has to offer including schools, shops, health services, leisure facilities, bus services and open spaces.

5.2 The proposed extension and restoration of The Orchard will modernise and revitalise the appearance of the dwelling, address existing structural weaknesses, and improve the sustainability of the building. The improved sustainability will be achieved through enhanced thermal insulation, providing an efficient heating source, and solar panels, providing solar energy generation, in line with Local Plan Policy SD3 and the NPPF's support for development that minimises waste and contributes positively to environmental sustainability (para 8).

5.3 In this context, it is considered that the principle of development, the extension and restoration of The Orchard, is acceptable. The proposal, therefore, complies with the principles of housing development as set out in Local Plan policies H1, SD3 and should be considered in the context of site-specific factors which will be discussed below.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

5.4 The Orchard is set in very spacious grounds relative to the surrounding area where properties are set in more modest plots. The Orchard will still retain a generous plot size even after the proposed extension.

5.5 The Officer's Report which recommended approval of application SMD/2023/0132, stated that, regarding the character and appearance of the proposed development, the extension to the Orchard would significantly alter the form and appearance of the current dwelling. However, it is set in extensive grounds and has always been seen in a different visual context to surrounding dwellings. Additionally, the increase in height of the building is not considered to be substantial or excessive. The enlarged dwelling would not be considered to visually dominate or be overbearing towards its surroundings, and the adjacent school has two and three storey forms of buildings so the height and form of the proposed enlarged dwelling would not harm the character and appearance of the wider area. The

Case Officer's recommendation of approval was for a larger dwelling but this has now been reduced and the aspect considered by the neighbour at no.12 to be 'overbearing' (i.e. the large garage with first floor office) has been removed.

5.6 The proposal also complies with Policy DC1 in the respect that it will promote a positive sense of place and identity by improving the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The design of the refurbished dwelling will do this by incorporating matching details and materials, such as the partially rendered finish, which will ensure that the appearance of the property is sympathetic to the bungalows within the 'Deebank Heights' development. The proposal will respect the character and dominance of the original building and be subordinate in terms of its size and massing. The proposed alterations to the roof pitch and external finishes to the building will be consistent with the guidance regarding residential extensions in the 2018 Design SPD, as the aim is to revitalise the building without altering its fundamental character.

5.7 In summary, the original design proposal in SMD2023/0132 was considered compliant with DC1 by the Case officer and the Head of Planning. Notwithstanding this fact, in light of the Planning Committee refusal, the proposal has been reduced further to address the committee's concerns. For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposal would not lead to any significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and would comply with policy DC1.

Impact on Protected Trees

5.8 The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Report prepared by Tree Heritage. There is a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) relating to a single lime tree located to the east of The Orchard and a group of three trees consisting of 2 Lime and 1 Ash near the southern boundary of the site (adjacent to the boundary with the school). The centre tree of the group is located virtually on the boundary. Whilst the two trees on either side of it are located approximately 3-4 metres from the boundary, the new dwelling and associated garage would be located comfortably outside their root protection areas (RPAs).

5.9 The Arboricultural Report states that the current hard surface of the existing driveway will have restricted root growth in this area. The report recommends that root protection barriers are located along the edge of the driveway during the initial phase of development.

Since the installation of the attenuation system, the trees have shown improvements in their condition due to careful digging in the area.

5.10 With regards to the Orchard, it is proposed that one Tilla Cordata be planted to the northwest of the retained pavilion, three Prunus Kanzan be planted to the side of the southeastern gable and a Pyrus Calleryana tree is to be planted in the rear garden of the Orchard to increase the density of trees on site. Special protective measures will be required where the proposed new driveway encroaches into RPA's. This section of the driveway will require a 'no-dig' construction method and the use of a 3D cellular confinement and load spreading system. It is also recommended that all retained trees are protected during the construction period to ensure they are not damaged.

5.11 All retained trees will require protection during construction work to ensure there is no further damage. This can be achieved with a Construction Exclusion Zone (CEZ), using barriers to exclude vehicles, personnel and materials from that area.

5.12 The applicant recently met with the Arboricultural Officer on 28th July to carry out a site visit and reassess the implications of the previously refused application. As there is very limited visibility of the site's trees from Deebank Avenue and the connecting walkway with Mountside Gardens, the Arboricultural Office concluded that the trees and woodland implications remain unchanged from the report given for the previous application SMD/2023/0132.

5.13 At that same site meeting, potential options for siting the detached garage/office accommodation were also explored. However, no practical alternative siting was considered viable and the applicant has therefore agreed to concede the office accommodation proposed in the extension design proposal in SMD/2023/0132.

5.14 Additionally, the Officer's Report for the site in application SMD/2023/0132 stated that only 6 trees were to be removed which were not considered to be of significant amenity value. 5 of the trees are Class C and U, with one being Class B but there are still 3 similar trees and 5 trees to be planted. The trees have a limited contribution to the overall appearance of the area and their removal is not objectable. The 4 existing, mature, high-quality trees protected by a TPO will be retained and protected.

5.15 The measures that have been set out above to protect the trees within the site are consistent with policy NE2 from the Local Plan and Paragraph 131 of the NPPF and will help mitigate impacts on the trees that have been identified in the Arboricultural Report. Any decision to the contrary would be in direct conflict with the considered views of the council's Arboricultural Officer. In summary, the proposal is fully compliant with Local Plan Policy NE2

Impact on Highway Safety

5.16 The Orchard will be accessed via the existing vehicular access to the 'Deebank Heights' development at Deebank Avenue. There will be a slight increase in traffic along the private drive but this will not result in a significant increase in vehicular movements and will not impact highway safety.

Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Residents

12 Springfield Drive

5.17 There will be no adverse impact on the amenity and privacy of 12 Springfield Drive. The proposal will take the footprint of the dwelling 1 metre further away from the boundary with 12 Springfield Drive by removing the existing ageing utility extensions and creating the new elements of the dwelling at its northern end.

5.18 The existing garage will be refurbished with a pitched roof that integrates with the sloping roof of a reduced utility space along the western elevation. These changes will improve the visual amenity of the current unattractive roofing structures to the existing garage and utility extension.

5.19 The Case Officer's report from the previous application stated that, regarding the impact on neighbouring amenities, the presence of the Orchard and its rear elevation are an existing legacy impact on No.12. Therefore, the proposed extensions to the dwelling in SMD/2023/0132 would not lead to an overbearing impact, any loss of light, or adverse impacts on privacy levels.

5.20 In summary, it is proposed to extend and alter the Orchard whilst respecting the amenities of adjacent occupiers and providing a suitable level of amenity to future occupiers. This is consistent with Local Plan policies SS1, H1 and DC1, as well as the relevant SPDs, which

require new residential development to be well-designed, of a density compatible with the plot's size and considerate to the amenity of residents.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Planning permission is sought for alterations and extensions to The Orchard and reconfiguration of site access to enable the dwelling to be accessed from Deebank Heights at The Orchard, Springfield Drive, Leek.

6.2 The Orchard will retain a generous plot size, with enough space to conduct the proposed extension, whilst remaining larger than all of the adjoining plots. The proposed extension and alterations will improve the sustainability of the property and create a more attractive, functional home for the applicant's family.

6.3 Whilst the properties on Springfield Drive are constructed linearly the site lies at the end of a row, the extensions and alterations to the dwelling are reasonable given the size of both the existing property and its curtilage. The Orchard is not visually prominent in the context of the surrounding area and the proposed retrofit will not be harmful to its character and appearance.

6.4 The proposal is fully compliant with policy NE2 as the most important trees will be retained and safeguarded, and the dwelling will be designed to ensure no significant conflict between future occupiers and the trees.

6.5 The proposal to build a new dwelling on the site will not have a significant impact on the amenities of 12 Springfield Drive, nor will future occupiers of the proposed dwelling be subject to poor living conditions. Concerns raised by the planning committee in refusing application SMD/2023/0132 have been fully addressed.

6.6 Overall, it is considered that planning permission should be granted as there are no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against relevant local and national planning policies.

PDP

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