

HERITAGE STATEMENT

**17 HIGH STREET,
ALTON**

DECEMBER 2023

Site Address:

17 High Street, Alton ST10 4AQ

Applicant:

Seletar Ltd.

Proposal:

Single storey rear extension and alterations

Heritage Statement:

Date Issued: 8th December 2023

Report Prepared By:

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1 Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Seletar Ltd. to prepare a Heritage Statement to accompany a planning application prepared by Hewitt & Carr Architects for a single storey rear extension and alterations at the above property in Alton.
- 1.2 The property is unlisted but sits within the Alton & Farley Conservation Area. There are a number of listed buildings in close proximity, including the attached White Hart Inn.
- 1.3 The proposals seek to demolish an existing lean-to and outbuilding and erect a single storey extension in their place. The replacement structure is to be in brick, with a flat roof, bi-fold doors, and glazed lantern.
- 1.4 It is also proposed to alter the rear elevation by blocking up two first floor windows and installing double doors with a Juliet balcony serving the newly formed master bedroom.

2 Planning Policy

2.1 The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014-2033 (adopted 2020), of which the Policies DC1 & DC2 'The Historic Environment' are of particular relevance.

2.2 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that 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 (amongst other matters):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
- 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;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping.

2.3 Policy DC2 states that "the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment."

- 2.4 Policy DC2 goes on to state that “all applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.”
- 2.5 Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that “in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”

3 Assessment of Historic Significance

- 3.1 No. 17 High Street lies in the centre of the village of Alton, within the Staffordshire Moorlands. The property sits to the north side of the high street within a terraced row that includes the Grade II listed White Hart Inn (HE Ref. 1037923), adjacent on the east side, and Grade II listed No. 11 (HE Ref. 1293539), five properties to the west.
- 3.2 Beyond The White Hart Inn lies Grade II* listed St. Peter's Church (HE Ref. 1191066), the grounds of which include a number of listed memorials and a sun dial. The Old Police Station (HE Ref. 1037925) and School House (HE Ref. 1191161) sit along the boundaries of the churchyard.
- 3.3 To the opposite side of the high street, a little further west, lie Grade II listed Vyse House (HE Ref. 1293452) and The Bull's Head Inn (HE Ref. 1037926).
- 3.4 The Staffordshire HER returns 25 results within 100m of the site, including the above listed buildings. One further building of note is the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (HER Ref. MST19147), located opposite The White Hart Inn.
- 3.5 The property also sits within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area, designated in 1971. A conservation area appraisal (CAA) was completed in 2008, following consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- 3.6 The CAA identifies three elements of settlement – an early irregular phase relating to pastoral farming, the site of the past and present castles, and a later planned extension to the village. The property lies within the medieval planned settlement which accompanied Alton Castle. The nearby church was first recorded in 1176.

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- 3.7 The CAA goes on to state that Alton has all the expected features of a medieval planned settlement, incorporating a High Street flanked by building plots (tofts) with long rear gardens (crofts) served from behind by 'back lanes.' This is clearly evidenced in the row of properties to the north of the High Street, which includes No. 17.
- 3.8 Despite Alton not having a charter, these holdings were called burgage plots and each 'burgher' would likely have had a portion of land by his house as well as a share of the town's arable land and access to grazing, with each household gaining a dual income based on farming and commerce at the regular town market.
- 3.9 By the 19th century, the principal occupation of the village had shifted from farming to the building trades, mainly employed at the expanding Alton Towers estate. The Tithe Apportionment of 1843 describes the plot (together with No. 15) as 'House & Garden' with four separate occupants. The land was owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury.
- 3.10 A character assessment of Alton was completed by Staffordshire County Council as part of the Extensive Urban Survey in 2013. This document identifies the High Street as 'HUCA (Historic Urban Character Area) 2' and states that four Grade II listed buildings have been dated to the 18th century while other buildings, of probable 19th century date, survive along the street. The assessment also speculates that any of these properties could retain evidence of earlier fabric within their structures.
- 3.11 As such, evidential value is high within Alton High Street. As the EUS states, there is potential for below ground deposits to survive and the historic buildings, dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries, have the potential to reveal earlier fabric, given the area's medieval origins.
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- 3.12 Historic value is also high, given the number of surviving and legible heritage assets, both listed and unlisted, and the well-preserved street pattern and burgage plots.
- 3.13 Similarly, aesthetic value is particularly high. The historic buildings contribute significantly to the character of the area.
- 3.14 Finally, communal value is also high. The surviving historic core of Alton enables both the local community and visitors to directly engage with the history of the area.

4 Impact Assessment

- 4.1 The CAA identifies No.17, along with the majority of buildings fronting the High Street, as significant within the context of the historic core. Though later than some of the surrounding properties, No. 17 is an attractive and historic residence that makes a positive contribution to both the character of the area and the setting of other heritage assets, including the adjacent 18th century White Hart Inn and the Grade II* listed St. Peter's Church.
- 4.2 The proposed extension and alterations are concentrated towards the rear of the property, leaving the High Street elevation unaffected. Clearly this principal elevation makes the most contribution to the character of the area and its high levels of aesthetic and communal significance.
- 4.3 The rear of the property makes very little contribution to the character of the public realm as it is largely concealed from Castle Hill Road by other development.
- 4.4 The proposed demolition of the modern lean-to conservatory and the blockwork outbuilding, and their replacement with a single storey extension, should serve to have a positive impact upon this outlook.
- 4.5 The design of the extension allows the original parts of the property to remain legible. The two existing first floor windows are modern insertions, and their loss will have no negative impact upon the character of the property, nor the conservation area.
- 4.6 The loss of what appears to be an original stone lintel in favour of new double doors is regrettable, but the impact on the property is negligible and has no influence on the conservation area, the adjacent Grade II listed building, nor the setting of any other nearby heritage assets.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The submitted proposal is considered to accord with policies DC1 and DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy by replacing unfavourable 20th century piecemeal development with a modern high-quality design, leading to an overall positive impact upon this historic property.
- 5.2 Having regard to paragraph 194 of the NPPF, the proposals will not give rise to any material harm to the Conservation Area or neighbouring buildings as heritage assets, which leads to the conclusion that there will be no deterioration to the significance of these heritage assets as a consequence of the proposed development.

6 Sources

Historic England

Staffordshire HER

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

National Heritage Gateway

National Library of Scotland Historic Maps

Staffordshire Past Track

Alton & Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (2008, updated 2011)

Alton Historic Character Assessment (2013)