

PLANNING STATEMENT

**OAKHILL FARM
UPPER TEAN**

MARCH 2024

Site Address:

Oakhill Farm, Draycott Road, Upper Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4JH

Applicant:

Mr. & Mrs. Williams

Proposal:

Change of use from 3no. holiday lets to 3no. dwellinghouses

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 21st March 2024

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Report Prepared By:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy has been instructed by Mr. & Mrs. Williams to seek planning permission for the change of use of 3no. existing holiday lets located at Oakhill Farm, Oakhill, Upper Tean, to form 3no. dwellinghouses. The application is part-retrospective.
- 1.2 Planning permission to convert the existing building to holiday lets was originally granted under application SMD/1998/0347, and was subject to a planning condition that restricted the occupancy of the accommodation to short stays not exceeding four weeks (Condition 4).
- 1.3 Planning permission was subsequently granted under application SMD/2017/0347 to vary that condition so as to allow the premises to be used for both short stay holiday accommodation and for living accommodation within Use Class C3 for up to a maximum period of 6 months by any party at any one time.
- 1.4 There are three holiday lets on the site, known as Alice Cottage, Strawberry Cottage, and Harry's Cottage. The application proposes the change of use of those holiday cottages to form 3no. dwellinghouses, along with associated works to create individual areas of private amenity space for each property, along with some minor elevational changes.
- 1.5 Harry's Cottage is the northernmost of the three cottages, and has a gross internal floor area of 79.20m². Its accommodation will comprise of three bedrooms, living room / kitchen, hallway and bathroom. An area of private amenity space is to be created to the north of that property, enclosed by an indigenous hedgerow. The property will also retain an existing patio area at the front, and will also retain its existing 2no. parking spaces alongside.

- 1.6 Strawberry Cottage is the middle of the three cottages and has a gross internal floor area of 81.95m². Its accommodation will comprise of a kitchen, living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. A new area of private amenity space is to be created to the rear of the property, accessed through a new doorway created in the rear elevation of the building. A new front doorway is also proposed to this dwelling, along with the blocking up on the existing side entrance. Associated internal layout changes are also proposed to reflect those changes to the exterior of the building. Parking for this dwellinghouse (2no. spaces) will retained within the shared parking area located to the southwest of the buildings as per existing arrangements.
- 1.7 Alice Cottage is the southernmost of the three cottages, and has a gross internal floor area of 90.50m². An existing ground floor bedroom is to be removed as part of the application with the resultant accommodation comprising of a living room, kitchen, dining room, home office and hallway at ground floor, with stairs leading up to two bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor. The property will retain its existing area of private amenity space to the rear, along with the existing area of hardstanding / patio to its front. Parking for this dwellinghouse (2no. spaces) will retained within the shared parking area located to the southwest of the buildings as per existing arrangements.
- 1.8 Vehicular access to the site will continue be taken via the existing track to the north of the cottages, which winds its way down to the Draycott Road to the north/northeast. No alterations are proposed to the vehicular access.

2 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site is located within the rural area, and comprises a part two storey / part single storey range of former agricultural buildings that were converted into holiday accommodation as three separate cottages back in 1998.
- 2.2 The cottages lie to the west of the existing farmhouse and a small cluster of other properties. A vehicular access serving the farmhouse is located to the east, with a shared access serving the cottages running down the western side of the buildings.
- 2.3 A range of agricultural buildings of varying size are located to the west of the site, and to its south / southwest. The site is otherwise surrounded by open fields which extend all the way down to the Draycott Road to the north.
- 2.4 The site is located within walking and cycling distance of the range of day-to-day services and facilities on offer within Upper Tean, as well as its public transport connections.
- 2.5 The buildings on site are not statutorily listed, nor do they lie within a Conservation Area.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and states that 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
- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers
- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community
- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce
- 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
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations
- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions.

3.3 Policy SS3 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Future Provision and Distribution of Development' and states that provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings (net of demolitions) to be completed in 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 policy goes on to confirm that 25% of the total housing requirement will be delivered within the rural areas.

3.4 Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and confirms that the other rural areas comprise the countryside and the green belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages. The policy goes on to state that these areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. This will be achieved via a number of actions, including:

- Allowing the conversion or replacement of an existing rural building in accordance with policy H1.
- Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape
- Limiting uses which generate a substantial number of regular trips in areas that are not well served by public transport

3.5 Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that, amongst other requirements:

- 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 H3, 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.
- 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.
- All housing development 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.

- All new dwellings should aim to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation by seeking to achieve adequate internal space for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space standard and delivered to meet accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis subject to considerations such as viability and design.
- All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings.
- Housing development on sites not allocated for such purposes in Policy H2 will be supported within the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages subject to compliance with the Spatial Strategy and wider Local Plan policies.

3.6 Policy H1 goes on to state that in the other rural areas in the open countryside, only the following forms of housing development will be permitted:

- a) Affordable housing which cannot be met elsewhere, in accordance with Policy H3
- b) A new dwelling that meets an essential local need, such as accommodation for an agricultural, forestry or other rural enterprise worker, where the need for such accommodation has been satisfactorily demonstrated and that need cannot be met elsewhere.

- c) Proposals for replacement dwellings, provided they do not have a significantly greater detrimental impact on the existing character of the rural area than the original dwelling or result in the loss of a building which is intrinsic to the character of the area.
- d) The conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.
- e) Proposals to redevelop previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.
- f) The subdivision of an existing residential dwelling provided it is not in an isolated location.

3.7 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and 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 requirements):

- 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 creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use

3.8 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by (amongst other requirements):

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
3. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of significantly boosting the supply of housing, securing high quality design, and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Space about Dwellings SPG

- 4.2 This document provides a series of numerical standards that new development should seek to achieve in the interests of safeguarding residential amenity. The content of the SPG has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMD/2022/0656 – Alderlee Farm, Meerbrook

- 4.3 The above application granted planning permission for the change of use of 3no. holiday lets to 3no. dwellinghouses on a site within the rural area of the Staffordshire Moorlands, in a location far less sustainable than the current application site. The conclusions of the Local Authority in their assessment of that application have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMD/2018/0547 – Land rear of Whyte Gate, Breach Lane, Upper Tean

- 4.4 The above application granted planning permission for the erection of 5no. dwellings on land within the rural area approximately 500m to the northwest of the current application site. The conclusions of the Local Authority in their assessment of that application have been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 The application site is located within the rural area, wherein policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan make provision for the reuse of rural buildings for residential use provided that the building is worthy in structural, architectural and character terms for conversion.
- 5.2 The site comprises an aesthetically pleasing range of traditional, former agricultural buildings that are constructed from red/orange facing brickwork with Staffordshire Blue tiled roofs atop. The buildings are currently in use as 3no. holiday lets, so can be readily held to be in a sound structural condition.
- 5.3 The buildings are also unquestionably worthy of conversion in architectural and character terms, comprising as they do a vernacular form of development that contributes positively to the character of the Staffordshire Moorlands. The change of use of these buildings to form 3no. dwellinghouses is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan and is acceptable in principle.
- 5.4 It is also noted that the Local Authority currently has a significant shortfall of housing. Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework no longer requires local authorities to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing where its Local Plan is less than 5 years old (as is the case with the Staffordshire Moorlands), it nevertheless remains a fact that the Local Authority's housing delivery performance continues to fall well short of the targets it set for itself within policy SS3 of the Local Plan.
- 5.5 Policy SS3 confirms that over the plan period 2014 – 2033 provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings at an annualised rate of 320 dwellings per year. The Local Authority has a long history of housing under-

supply and the table in Figure 1 below, taken from the Local Authority's latest Monitoring Report, serves to demonstrate that **at no point** since 2014 has the Local Authority delivered sufficient housing to meet the annualised housing requirement of 320 dwellings per annum (Policy SS3 refers).

Figure 1 – Table of Housing Completions (Source: SMDC Monitoring Report)

Year	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	Rural	District Total
2014/15	149	60	31	38	278
2015/16	29	28	10	32	99
2016/17	44	40	4	40	128
2017/18	40	33	13	56	142
2018/19	14	6	87	58	165
2019/20	85	18	22	78	203
2020/21	79	15	41	66	201
2021/22	29	11	57	80	177
2022/23	23	4	128	87	242
Total	492	215	393	535	1,635
Local Plan Target (%)	30%	20%	25%	25%	100%
Percentage % (to date)	30.1%	13.2%	24%	32.7%	100%

5.6 The Local Authority's Statement of Five Year Housing Land Supply (as of 1st April 2023) confirms that the annualised housing requirement now stands at 597 dwellings per annum in order to meet the housing shortfall. In all of the monitored years, apart from 2014/15, the Local Authority has failed to achieve even half of that new annualised requirement.

5.7 There is consequently a significant demand for the delivery of new housing within the District, and the submitted proposal will make a positive contribution towards meeting that need, providing 3no. dwellings in a sustainable location. Two of those units will also comprise of bungalows which area also in strong demand. Such benefits weigh heavily in favour of approval.

Sustainability of Location

- 5.8 The application site is considered to constitute a sustainable location for new housing, a conclusion we reach having regard to the conclusions of the Local Authority in its assessment of application SMD/2018/0547 for land rear of Whyte Gate, Breach Lane, Upper Tean. In granting consent for the erection of 5no. houses on that site, the Local Authority commented that:

*“In terms of whether the site is in a sustainable location, although Totmonslow does not appear to have any significant services (and there no longer appears to be a bus service despite the presence of bus shelter), **the site is located one mile from Upper Tean which has a significant range of shops and services and where there are frequent bus links to Stoke and other towns.** Furthermore **the site is connected to the village via a footpath along the main road and the absence of any large hills between the site and the village would encourage walking and cycling into the village and ease the reliance on car travel** and hence reduce the potential for emissions harming the wider environment. The village of Draycott, which has some limited services including public transport, is 1.5 miles the other direction and reached via an almost continual footway. **I would consider the site has a moderate sustainability score and therefore would accept the principle of new housing at the site**” (our emphasis)*

- 5.9 The above site is located further from the village of Upper Tean than the current application site. The route between the application site and the village is along the existing access track, which is not heavily frequented by traffic, and connects with the existing pedestrian footway on the Draycott Road. The distance between the site and the village centre is just over 1km. By contrast the site rear of Whyte Gate is located 1.5km distant.

- 5.10 In consideration of this matter we also draw attention to the Local Authority's approval of consent for the change of use of 3no. holiday lets at Alderlee Farm, Meerbrook to dwellinghouses under application SMD/2022/0656. That site was found to constitute an unsustainable location for new development. Planning permission was nevertheless granted on the basis that the development would be no less sustainable than the existing holiday let uses on the site. Those same conclusions ring true for this application which also has existing holiday lets on site, which are permitted to be occupied for up to 6 months at any one time.
- 5.11 The proposal derives no conflict with the provisions of paragraph 84 of the NPPF as it will not result in the creation of isolated homes in the countryside; the new dwellings having a close physical association with neighbouring residential properties to the east of the site. We consequently submit that this site constitutes a sustainable and appropriate location for new housing that meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and policies SS10 and T1 of the Local Plan.

Design & Layout

- 5.12 The submitted proposal largely retains the buildings as they exist today, with only some minor external changes to the elevations of Strawberry Cottage being proposed to provide a new front door, a new back door, and to block up the existing side door which currently serves as the main entrance to that particular cottage. The proposed external alterations will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the existing building, nor the wider surrounding area.
- 5.13 Externally it is proposed to create a new area of private amenity space on an existing area of mowed grass to serve as the garden for Harry's Cottage. That amenity space will exceed the recommended minimum standard of 65m²

(82m²) and is to be enclosed by a mature hedgerow planting in order to provide privacy for its users. The property will also continue to benefit from the existing patio area to the front.

- 5.14 A new area of amenity space is also proposed to be created to the rear of Strawberry Cottage. That amenity space will meet the minimum required standard of 65m² and will be located on an existing area of hardstanding / grass. It is to be enclosed by a close board fence to match that which encloses the adjacent garden to Alice Cottage.
- 5.15 The garden serving Alice cottage is to be unchanged from existing and provides a private amenity space of 63m². Whilst this represents a very modest shortfall against the minimum target of 65m², Alice Cottage also benefits from a large patio area to its front, which by virtue of closing off of the existing doorway to Strawberry Cottage, will become more private as a consequence.
- 5.16 The internal floor area of the proposed dwellings will also provide an acceptable level of residential amenity for future occupiers, meeting the minimum requirements set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards. These are detailed below in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Compliance with NDSS

	Accommodation	NDSS	Proposed
Harry's Cottage	3 bed / 4 pers.	74m ²	79.2m ²
Strawberry Cottage	2 bed / 4 pers.	70m ²	81.5m ²
Alice Cottage	2 bed / 4 pers.	79m ²	90.5m ²

- 5.17 The proposed development will consequently derive no harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and will provide an acceptable level of residential amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings. The proposed

development is therefore in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, H1 and DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

- 5.18 The application site benefits from an existing means of access off the Draycott Road via an existing track that serves both the site and a cluster of other residential properties to the east of the site. The access affords reasonably good visibility in both directions on egress from the site and has good forward visibility along its length.
- 5.19 The access currently functions as the vehicular access to the holiday accommodation, so the impact of the development on highway safety will be no greater than that which already occurs, bearing in mind that the cottages are permitted to be occupied for up to 6 months at any one time by any one person.
- 5.20 The application proposes the retention of the existing on-site parking provision which provides for 2no. spaces per dwelling. That level of parking provision meets the adopted Car Parking Standards, and consequently the proposed development will not lead to any severe residual impacts to highway safety and meets the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The reuse of the existing building complies with the Local Authority's adopted housing strategy for the District.
- The site occupies a sustainable location within walking and cycling distance of day-to-day services and facilities on offer within the village.
- The proposed development will not derive any material adverse impacts to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- The proposed development will provide a good standard of residential amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings.
- The proposal will not result in any severe residual impacts to highway safety.

6.2 The proposed development is therefore held to be in accordance with the requirements of policies SS1, SS3, SS10, H1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Staffordshire Moorlands Space about Dwellings SPG.