

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0109
Valid 04/03/2024

LAND ADJACENT TO
HURSTONS LANE
ALTON

ERECTION OF DETACHED
BUNGALOW

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- The principle of the development in this location
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area including an adjacent Conservation Area
- The impact on residential amenity
- The impact on the ecological value of the site
- The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site lies on the eastern edge of the large village of Alton. It comprises part of a field on the south-east side of Back Lane and Hurstons Lane (at the junction between the two), a country lane running along the eastern edge of the village. There is a field access off the Hurstons Lane. The site comprises a concrete or render solid detached single-storey building with irregular tiled or metal pitched roof and a smaller timber clad structure in the form of a stables building with a low mono-pitch roof. It sits next to the render building. According to the application forms, these were used as pigeon lofts but are now vacant. The buildings have backs wall against the road-side boundary and face the fields in front to the south-east. The road-side boundary to the north-west is marked by a thick hedgerow and some large mature trees. There are no hard-standings on the site including at the access although there is a low timber post-and-rail fence enclosing the buildings. There are a small number of small timber structures along the south-west side perimeter of the field (outside of the application site). To the north-east and south-east of the field are further fields within the same ownership as the application site. There is a graveyard to the south-west. On the opposite side of the lane to the north-west is a row of bungalows with their backs facing Back Lane and two-storey dwellings facing Hurstons Lane. These are within a Conservation Area and the boundary runs along the north-west boundary of the site. The Development Boundary of Alton village runs along the opposite edge of the lane.

PROPOSAL

This is full planning application for a 3-bed bungalow occupying the same part of the site as the two pigeon loft buildings (which would be removed) and which would, like the buildings, run parallel with the road with the back wall to the lane and with a clear primary/front elevation facing the fields with all the main windows on this elevation. It would have a tiled pitched roof and sandstone blockwork walls. It would have a max height of 4.0m. The existing access would be re-used and improved, with hard-surfacing laid onto it and leading to a hard-standing parking area for two cars to the

side of the building. The hedgerow and trees on the north-west boundary would appear to be retained.

The application included a Planning & Heritage Statement and an Arboricultural Report.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS8 Larger Village Strategy
SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy
SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
H1 New Housing Development
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Sections 5 (Housing), 12 (Design) and 16 (Historic Environment).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 18/04/2024
Neighbour consultation period ends: 18/04/2024
Press Advert: 12.3.24.

Public Comments

One letter of support has been received from a local resident.

Town / Parish Comments

Alton PC: Objection raised on the grounds of:

- The development is outside the village plan.
- It is overdevelopment.
- It is an area that has not been previously developed with a permanent structure..

SCC Highways Authority

No objection subject to standard conditions applied to a new dwelling with altered or new access.

Environmental Health

No comments received.

Conservation Officer

Objection.

Conclusion: Due to this accumulation of conflict I assess there to be a negative impact on the setting and historic landscape of this vicinity, the sense of place and the way in which this area is experienced. I do not believe the scheme would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No issues regarding waste collections.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The site is just outside but not adjoining the Development Boundary of the large village of Alton. It is therefore deemed to be in the countryside. The strategy for new housing is set out in Policy H1 of the Local Plan. This generally resists new-build market housing outside of the Development Boundaries of the District which are drawn around the towns and Large Villages. It does state that new housing can be considered if the site adjoins the Development Boundary of a large village but although this runs close to the site, the site does not adjoin it. It runs along the opposite edge of Back Lane and Hurstons Lane where there are existing dwellings.

Policy H1 does allow the redevelopment of “previously developed land” (PDL), including in the countryside. Included within the definition of PDL in the NPPF is “land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure.” I consider the render clad structure to be “permanent” (but not the timber shed) and therefore, the site could be deemed to be a PDL site and in principle could be redeveloped for housing. However, other policies in the Local Plan seek to protect the character and appearance of the area, particularly Policy DC1 and also seek to protect the rural landscapes, rural settings of villages and also Conservation Areas, including their settings.

The site despite being on the edge of a large village maintains a rural character and appearance. The south-east side of the lane comprises fields which gives the land a distinct rural appearance in contrast to the urban village appearance of the opposite side of the lane which clearly acts as a defining line between urban and rural (hence the reason why a Development Boundary was drawn along it). The site is, after all, part of a rural field and the buildings on there are low key structures which do not

dominate the field or alter its overall rural character and appearance. They are not attractive structures but although the design of render building is rather incongruous with the area, its limited height and scale prevent it being visually obtrusive in the landscape. The other buildings are simple small shed or stables-type structures which are not out of keeping with the countryside. I consider that the replacement of the buildings, with a "permanent" building footprint of 43 sq.m (the render building) with a new dwelling of slightly greater height but a footprint of 124 sq.m, substantially larger than the render building, would have a significantly urbanising effect on the area. The distinction between the built-up village and the open countryside in this area would also be eroded because of this.

Furthermore, there are other works proposed which would add to the urbanising impact such as the new areas of hardstanding to improve the access and provide a parking area. The inevitable provision of boundary treatments to separate the site from the field and also the use of the newly formed residential curtilage would add to the visual impact. Outbuildings, garages and sheds would add to the impact. Although a condition can be added to remove the PD rights for outbuildings, this cannot be applied to prevent the rise of domestic paraphernalia such as outdoor furniture, outdoor play equipment and other moveable items normally found in gardens (e.g. rotary dryers).

Overall, the proposal in providing a dwelling, much larger than the only permanent building on site together with the associated new residential uses of the land, would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area including the landscape and rural setting of the village and although the site does afford some screening from the road via the hedgerow to be retained, development would be noticeable at the site access and the development would be very prominent in the countryside when viewed from a number of public footpaths crossing the fields within the property when approaching Alton, adding to the harm to the landscape and village setting.

With regard to the impact on the Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs along the north-west edge of the site, with the proposed bungalow just outside of the boundary, the Conservation Officer comments as follows:

"The heritage statement appraises the area to have survived as an early phase of growth relating to field networks and the settlement, a vernacular element for Moorlands villages. These primitive networks as organically developed comprising of Back Lane and to the south, hug the core of the village and extend out into a vast openness of fields and survived landscape.

The roads or lanes within this vicinity are demonstrated on 1887 first edition maps, and are shown to be one of the two primary routes south out of the core of Alton toward Nab Hill.

The proposal sees a low lying bungalow structure of a similar palette to the vernacular, at the east side of Back Lane.

The lane is single track due to its age as noted, with tall mature trees on embankments, original and perhaps the medieval hedgerow layouts and a public footpath or bridleway running south across pastoral and grazing fields.

I am concerned that the scheme looks to be starkly against the established grain of the area and original core to the village. It looks to replace some modern dilapidated aviaries, except these are not domestic dwellings and as such I cannot see a precedent or tradition for dwellings in this setting.

Domestic dwellings have not ever found a place here as demonstrated on maps, for little over two centuries.

Whilst the scheme does not concern listed buildings, a Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset. I believe the scheme is an intrusion onto the countryside, and falls against the character of the historic settlement and survived landscape. I am not confident it reinforces local distinctiveness or contributes positively, as per policy wording."

The proposed development is not protecting or enhancing or Conservation Area and is contrary to Policy DC2 of the Local Plan. The harm identified was considered to amount to "less than substantial" harm. The NPPF states that where the harm is deemed to be "less than substantial" it should only be allowed where there are significant public benefits considered to outweigh the level of harm identified. I do not consider that the public benefits of one 3-bed dwelling on the edge of a large village, despite being in a fairly sustainable location, would outweigh the harm and the contribution towards addressing housing need or any undersupply of housing would be limited. The proposal is therefore contrary to NPPF Section 16 as well as Local Plan Policy DC2.

I accept the findings of the Tree Report that the one significant mature tree on the site would not need to be removed and the access works can be achieved without harming the tree via "no dig" or similar tree root protection methods of hard-surfacing.

There would be no impact on residential amenity. The proposed windows would face away from existing nearby dwellings. The floorspace would exceed the thresholds in the government's Nationally Described Space Standards and there is ample space around the dwelling for a private garden area within the application site and so the living conditions of the eventual occupants would be acceptable.

The proposal would not harm the ecological value of the area. The only likely protected species using the site is bats which roost in trees (which would not be harmed) or rural buildings but the current buildings are unsuitable as roosts due to the amount of light entering the building through numerous openings.

Highway safety will not be harmed by the proposal. The access point onto the lane is safe and vehicle movements from a new 3-bed bungalow would lead to a significantly increase to and from the site and also along the surrounding roads.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would significantly harm the visual amenities of the area including the rural setting of the village and the Conservation Area in which the village sits and would not provide significant benefits which would outweigh the harm. It is therefore contrary to the Local Plan and therefore should be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston

Recommendation Date: 29.4.24

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council