

Supporting Statement in relation to the change of use of annexe to a holiday let

Woodbine Cottage, Alton

December 2024

Change of use of annexe to holiday let – Woodbine Cottage, Alton

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.
- 1.2 The author of this appraisal, Jon Imber, has worked as both a development control and forward planning officer in local government, and more recently as a senior planning consultant in the private sector. He has extensive knowledge of the planning system and experience of the appeals process. He is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

2 Site and Planning History

- 2.1 The application site comprises a detached annexe serving Woodbine Cottage, Saltersford lane, Alton.
- 2.2 The application site lies on the eastern edge of the village. Surrounding uses include residential properties to the south and west, and a newly built residential development to the north and east.
- 2.3 The site is currently accessed via a gated entrance off Saltersford Lane.
- 2.4 The annexe was formed by altering and converting an outbuilding pursuant to Planning Permission SMD/2022/0290 dated 22nd July 2022.
- 2.5 A planning application seeking to use the property as a separate dwelling was refused in December 2024 on the grounds that the proposed parking arrangements would

harm the character and appearance of the area, and that the building would not make a suitable sole residence (LPA reference SMD/2024/0478).

2.5 The site and its surroundings are shown on the following aerial image.



Figure 1 - Aerial photograph of site

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The applicant has taken the Council's decision regarding the previous proposals to convert the building into a dwelling into consideration. However, an alternative use for the building is still sought.

- 3.2 The site's location on the edge of the Churnet Valley and within very close proximity to Alton Towers, a major tourist attraction, provides an attractive offer for holidaymakers. As such, the site presents an ideal opportunity to capitalise on the increasing popularity of holidays within the UK.
- 3.3 No internal or external alterations to the annexe are required or proposed.
- 3.4 Off-street parking would be provided within the existing parking area serving Woodbine Cottage.

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF states that *"applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise"*.
- 4.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It explains that in the context of decision taking, this means approving proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.
- 4.3 Paragraph 12 confirms that the presumption in favour of sustainable development established by the Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that conflicts with an up-to-date local plan should not usually be granted planning permission, and decisions that depart from an up-to date development plan should

only be taken if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

- 4.4 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF prescribes significant weight to the need to support economic growth and productivity.
- 4.3 Paragraph 88 of the Framework supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both the conversion of existing buildings and the provision of well-designed new buildings. It specifically supports the development of sustainable rural tourist facilities.

[Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan \(2020\)](#)

- 4.5 The site lies within the settlement boundary of Alton, which Policy SS8 identifies as a 'Larger Village'. Policy SS8 sets out that within settlement boundaries a range of development is acceptable in principle, including the conversion of existing buildings to alternative uses.
- 4.6 Policy SS 11 states:-

"The Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The Churnet Valley Masterplan provides a comprehensive framework for development in the Churnet Valley and development should be in accordance with the Masterplan. Within this area particular support will be given to the following forms of development and measures:

- *short stay and long stay visitor accommodation;*
- *the expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities;*

- *measures to enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley;*
- *measures to remediate and restore derelict land, buildings and features including the appropriate redevelopment of sites;*
- *actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the valley, including the maintenance, buffering and connection of designated sites and actions to mitigate climate change. measures that support and integrate the heritage transport infrastructure of the valley, sympathetically with enhancing and developing links to strategic footpaths, cycle and horse riding routes.*
- *measures to improve connectivity and accessibility to and within the Churnet Valley by sustainable transport means.*

Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and demonstrate strong sustainable development and environmental management principles. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximize opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.

Complementary and sensitive highway improvements to access routes and/or measures to support other alternative means of access will be required to serve any developments which generate significant additional demand for travel.

5 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The site lies within the Alton Settlement Boundary, as well the Churnet Valley, an area which the Council has identified as being suitable for sustainable tourism development, including the provision of tourist and visitor accommodation.
- 5.2 The Churnet Valley Masterplan identifies the site as lying within the Alton character area. The Masterplan sets out key actions for the character area, which principally involve the sensitive expansion of Alton Towers. Elsewhere minimal development is envisaged, including conversion of existing buildings, development within settlement boundaries and sensitive development to support and maintain existing facilities.
- 5.3 The conversion of this existing building to holiday accommodation is consistent with the objectives set out for the Alton Character Area within the Churnet Valley Masterplan.
- 5.4 The site lies within an area popular with visitors. It is within very close proximity to Alton Towers, as well as excellent opportunities for walking and other outdoor activities in Dimmingsdale and the wider Churnet Valley. Additional tourist accommodation in the area would provide a boost to local services such as nearby public houses and restaurants and existing attractions such as public houses in Alton and nearby villages and the Ramblers Retreat Cafe.
- 5.5 In accordance with Policies SS8 and SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and Paragraphs 85 and 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the broad principle of the proposed development is therefore acceptable.

Visual Impact

- 5.4 No internal or external alterations to the building are required or proposed. Parking for the holiday let is to be accommodated within the existing yard at Woodbine Cottage, which is within the applicant's control.
- 5.5 The proposals therefore preserve the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Impact on Residential Amenity

- 5.6 No extensions to the building are proposed, and no new windows or doors are to be installed. The existing ground floor windows on the front and rear elevations do not overlook neighbouring dwellings. The two first floor bedrooms are served by rooflights on the east elevation, which do not overlook neighbouring dwellings. The only openings facing Woodbine Cottage are secondary windows or do not serve habitable rooms. The proposals would not therefore result in an unacceptable reduction in daylight or privacy to neighbouring dwellings.
- 5.7 The concerns raised in respect of the previous application for a standalone dwelling in terms of the nationally described space standards and garden size are much less relevant to tourist accommodation, which is occupied on a short-term basis. Holidaymakers are likely to spend less time in the dwelling and garden than permanent occupants, since they are likely to be taking advantage of local attractions and public houses. The delegated report considering the previous proposals corroborates this, stating that guests with permanent accommodation elsewhere *"need not require or be afforded the same standard of amenity or living condition"*.

- 5.8 The holiday let will be managed by the occupiers of Woodbine Cottage, who will be on hand in the unlikely event that holidaymakers are causing excessive noise or disturbance. Ultimately however tourist accommodation is not fundamentally incompatible with neighbouring residential uses. Holidaymakers are likely to cause no greater impact in terms of noise or disturbance than guests visiting the existing annexe.

Impact upon Highway Safety

- 5.9 The proposals provide adequate off street parking whilst retaining sufficient provision for Woodbine Cottage. The proposals will not therefore prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposals involve the creation of a holiday let within the Alton Settlement Boundary and within the Churnet Valley.
- 6.2 The proposals would not detrimentally affect the character or appearance of the building or its surroundings.
- 6.3 The development would not detrimentally affect the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of the existing dwellings or the safe or efficient use of the highway network.
- 6.4 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable development which accord with Policies SS8 and SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.