

Appeal Statement on Behalf of AJS Rees Developments

Woodbine Cottage, Saltersford Lane, Alton

March 2025

Conversion of outbuilding to annexe – Woodbine Cottage, Alton

Project	Woodbine Cottage, Alton
Client	AJS Rees Developments
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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 statement, 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.
- 1.3 This statement accompanies an appeal against Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's refusal of Planning Application SMD/2024/0478.

2 The Appeal Site and Planning History

- 2.1 The appeal site comprises a detached annexe and holiday let serving Woodbine Cottage, Saltersford lane, Alton.
- 2.2 The appeal 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 (LPA reference SMD/2024/0478).

- 2.6 Planning permission was subsequently granted for the use of the building as an annexe and holiday let in February 2025 (LPA reference SMD/2024/0571).

3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The appeal relates to Planning Permission SMD/2024/0478, which proposed converting the annexe into a separate dwelling.
- 3.2 The proposals do not involve any internal or external alterations to the building.
- 3.3 The proposed dwelling features an open plan kitchen, dining room and lounge together with a wc and shower room on the ground floor and two bedrooms and a wc on the first floor.
- 3.4 Two dedicated off-street parking spaces are proposed within what is currently the garden of Woodbine Cottage. These will be accessed directly off Saltersford Lane.

4 Reason for Refusal

- 4.1 The application was refused on the following grounds:-

“1. The proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, it would not be well related to the existing pattern of development and would erode the distinctiveness of the locality. The development would not complement the local context or the established layout which includes strong

roadside boundary features with parking set-back from the road and good plot spacing around dwellings. The increased parking provision taken from the host dwelling's curtilage would result in a loss of strong boundary feature and a very vehicle dominant layout, with parked vehicles being prominent within the roadside street scene. In these regards there would be conflict with Policy SS8, H1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

2. *The building would not provide a high quality house having regard to its location, the characteristics of the site, the limited space within the plot, and its proximity to neighbours. A regular and sustained use of the building as an independent and sole residence would introduce an intensity of use and activity in a concentrated area that would affect the amenity of surrounding neighbours through overlooking, noise and disturbance. The building and its limited plot would fail to provide acceptable standards of amenity and living conditions for future occupiers that would use the accommodation as their sole and independent residence. In these regards there would be conflict with Policy SS8, H1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.*
3. *The proposal to provide a low quality substandard dwelling would make a negligible contribution to housing supply and there would be little or no benefit associated with that. The adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.”*

5 Statement of Case

- 5.1 The local planning authority refused the application on the grounds that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, that it would harm the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings and that the building would not make a suitable sole residence. These issues will be considered in turn below.

Impact upon Character and Appearance of Area

- 5.2 The annexe was originally an agricultural outbuilding on the edge of the village. It was finished in blockwork with a corrugated profile sheet roof.
- 5.3 When it was initially converted into an annexe, the building was overclad in timber boarding and re-roofed with plain tiles.
- 5.4 A modern residential development which has been constructed to the north and east has effectively moved the annexe from the edge of the settlement, incorporating it within the built form of the village.
- 5.5 The Council's delegated report states that the building retains the character and appearance of a secondary outbuilding, which it is inferred is appropriate for an annexe, but inappropriate for a standalone dwelling. The delegated report states *"Whilst the building's appearance as a secondary outbuilding within its residential setting is a product of its history as a farm shed, as a dwellinghouse it would appear strangely appointed, positioned and arranged in a manner that is at odds with the pattern of the surrounding residential development"*.

- 5.6 The proposals do not involve any external changes to the building. Its character and relationship with the surrounding built context in visual terms therefore remains completely unchanged. Within the streetscene there would be no perceptible difference between the proposed dwelling and the existing holiday let, and the Council's argument that the visual appropriateness of the building is a function of its purpose is fundamentally flawed.
- 5.7 The delegated report also suggests that the proposed parking spaces would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The report states that the prevailing character of the lane sees car parking set back from the frontage behind strong boundary features.
- 5.8 The appellant does not consider the Council's assessment of the prevailing character of the lane to be accurate. Most of the properties along Saltersford Lane feature parking across the frontage. Where present, boundary treatments across the road frontage tend to take the form of relatively low walls or hedgerows. As a result, parking in front of dwellings is prevalent and is a baseline characteristic of the area.
- 5.9 The proposals feature two parking spaces alongside the proposed dwelling. Whilst it is accepted that these would be visible within the streetscene, they would not appear out of keeping with the prevailing character of Saltersford Lane identified above. The spaces are alongside rather than in front of the dwelling and the Council's assertion that they would dominate the streetscene is not accepted.
- 5.10 It is also pertinent that the two parking spaces could be provided to serve the existing annexe under permitted development rights, provided that they are finished in an impermeable surface. Saltersford Lane is not a classified highway.

Impact upon Amenities

- 5.11 The Council's delegated report states that the proposed dwelling would unacceptably overlook 16 Meadowside View, and would cause an unacceptable increase in noise and disturbance to 14 Meadowside View.
- 5.12 There are no ground floor openings facing 16 Meadowside View. The two first floor bedrooms are served by rooflights on the eastern roof slope. These rooflights allow natural light to permeate and give an outlook of the sky, but do not unacceptably overlook principal windows serving the neighbouring property and do not look down into its garden.
- 5.13 Permanent residential use of the annexe would not be incompatible with the residential use of neighbouring dwellings. It is not unusual for the private amenity areas of neighbouring dwellings to be close together.
- 5.14 It is also pertinent that the building now has permission to be used as a holiday let. Whilst this remains associated with Woodbine Cottage, it nonetheless means that it can lawfully be occupied by visitors only connected to the appellant via a financial transaction. It is not considered that the permanent residential use of the building would have any materially greater impact upon the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings in terms of overlooking or disturbance than its approved use as a holiday let.

Living Conditions

- 5.15 The Council's delegated report suggests that the property would not provide sufficient quality housing and standards of amenity necessary for occupation. The report highlights the following specific issues:-

- The kitchen window on the front elevation is overlooked from the highway
- The property does not comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards
- The bedrooms are not served with light, ventilation and outlook from opening conventional windows.

5.16 It is accepted that the kitchen window is relatively close to Saltersford Lane. However, it is not unusual for residential properties to front the highway. The adopted highway terminates at a turning head to the west of the site, and as such movements past the kitchen window are extremely limited such that they would not be unacceptably intrusive.

5.17 The proposals create a two bed roomed property. The NDSS requires a two bed four person property to have a minimum gross internal area of 79m². Gross internal area excludes any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m. Calculated on that basis the property has a GIA of 97.7m², which comfortably exceeds the minimum standard.

5.18 The NDSS requires double bedrooms have a minimum floor area of 11.5m² and a minimum width of 2.75m. Neither of these requirements take into account restricted headroom. Both bedrooms have floor areas of over 14m², and both are almost 4m wide.

5.19 The proposed dwelling therefore comfortably complies with the Nationally Described Space Standards.

5.20 Each bedroom is served by a rooflight allowing natural light to permeate, and giving an outlook without overlooking neighbouring properties.

- 5.21 The property is a two bedroomed unit which is not likely to be occupied by a family. Instead, it is more likely to be occupied by older couples or young professionals. It's private amenity space is commensurate with the likely occupation of the building, and it is also pertinent that the property benefits from close proximity to outdoor recreation opportunities in the Churnet Valley.
- 5.22 The property would therefore provide a good standard of living for future occupants.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposals create an additional dwelling which would make a modest but important contribution towards addressing the Council's significant shortfall in housing land. The site is sustainably located within the settlement boundary of one of the District's larger villages.
- 6.2 The use of the property as a dwellinghouse would not harm the character or appearance of the area and would not harm the amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings. The dwelling would provide a good standard of living for future occupants.
- 6.3 The proposals therefore constitute sustainable development supported by local and national planning policies.