

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 7th April 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0124
Site Address: The Old Vicarage, Dimble Lane, Alton
Proposal: Proposed garage

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	- Alton and Farley Conservation Area 5 Dimble Lane – Grade II (listing ref: 1374690) 4 Dimble Lane – Grade II (listing ref: 1190975) - House adjoining Dimble Cottage to the South – Grade II (listing ref: 1037920) 1, 2 and 3 Dimble Lane – Grade II (listing ref: 1037919)
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in Alton and Farley Conservation Area and the wider setting of a row of cottages along Dimble Lane, which are individually Grade II Listed Buildings.

Alton & Farley Conservation Area covers the hamlet of Farley to the north and the village of Alton south, along with Alton Towers parkland in the middle. The significance of the Conservation Area relates to the medieval origins of both settlements, historic association with the Talbot family, retention of 17th and 18th century buildings, predominant construction of buildings in stone, large areas of wooded slopes and the dramatic views of Alton Castle along the skyline. The former vicarage is a c.1800 house which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Listed Buildings along Dimble Lane are a mixture of early-18th and early-19th century cottages, the ones closest to the development site constructed in ashlar stone

with herringbone tooling and plain tile roofs and the ones to the northern end of the lane constructed in painted brick and plain tile roofs. Their significance derives from their retention of historic fabric and plan form, association with the development of rural houses in North Staffs and development of post-medieval Alton village and illustrative vernacular and traditional construction.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal would involve the construction of a 3-bay garage to the southwest of the Old Vicarage. The garage would be approx. 9m (L) x 6m (D) x 5.2m (H). The application form sets out this would be constructed in larch weather boarding, a brick plinth, oak framing and Staffordshire blue tiles to the roof.

This would be a substantial structure in size. The scale and footprint of this could likely be accommodated in this large plot. However, due to the steeper topography of the site, there are some concerns regarding the height and potential visibility and overbearing impact this could have on the Old Vicarage and the wider Conservation Area.

As set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal, the mature greenery to the west of the property makes a positive contribution to the semi-rural character of the Conservation Area and acts as intervening visual buffer to the modern dwellings along Cheadle Road. The proposed placement of a garage to the southwest has the potential to impact this verdant character. Whilst the site plan indicates that no trees would be removed with the development, the garage would still be quite a prominent structure and has the potential to be quite visible particularly in winter months with reduced vegetation.

In addition to the above, there are concerns from a conservation perspective with the proposed external finishing in horizontal larch weather boarding. This is not a traditional material in the Conservation Area. As set out in the Council's Design Guide (2018) and the Conservation Area Appraisal (2007), there is no precedent for horizontal timber cladding/weatherboarding in the locality. It would look at odds with the traditional walling finishes in the area – predominantly stone, brick and render/limewash. It would be a visual distraction that would diminish and erode the architectural character of the designated area.

Overall, the proposal would result in a degree of harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area due to the potential prominence and visibility as well as the inappropriate external materials. The proposal would unlikely impact the setting of the Listed Buildings along Dimble Lane due to limited inter-visibility.

From a conservation perspective, it would be recommended that the external walling of the garage is altered to be more sympathetic to the traditional construction of buildings within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Following this, it would be recommended that a sectional drawing of the site is provided to illustrate how the

proposed garage would sit within the topography and how it may impact views within and outside the site.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Buildings (s.66) and preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (s.72).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment
- Alton and Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would likely result in a minor-moderate level of harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). There does not appear to be clear and convincing justification for the level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) and there would be no heritage-related public benefits arising from the proposal (par.215 of NPPF). We object to the proposal from a conservation perspective and recommend the following:

- Alterations to the external walling finish to be more sympathetic to the traditional construction of buildings within the Conservation Area

- Further information, such as a sectional drawing of the site, to better inform the impact on the wider views

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson