

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0124
Valid 12/03/2025

THE OLD VICARAGE
DIMBLE LANE
ALTON

PROPOSED GARAGE
(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUES

- Design and visual impact (Listed Building and Conservation Area)
- Neighbour amenity
- Highways

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The former vicarage is a c.1800 house which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the wider setting of a row of cottages along Dimble Lane, which are individually Grade II Listed Buildings. 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.

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 site location is to the south west, 10m from the nearest corner of the dwelling at the bottom of the driveway that provides access with Dimble Lane. The land to the rear of the driveway falls away steeply and is planted with mature shrubs and trees.

The land drops down from Dimble Lane in the east in three tiers – from the roadside dwellings on Dimble Lane, to the application plot on the mid-tier and the bungalows on Cheadle Road below. The dwelling and its surrounding shrubbery has exposure to Cheadle Road to the west

PROPOSAL

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.

The front of the garage would edge the side of the driveway with the bulk of the garage built up on a plinth from the falling land level out into and replacing garden trees and shrubbery.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS8 Larger Village Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

SMDC Design Guide 2018 (SPD)

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

03/00201/FUL Timber framed car port and garage. REFUSED
03/00954/FUL Garage. Approved.
09/01194/FUL Side Conservatory. Approved.
SMD/2025/0144 Side Extension to form Living/kitchen. Pending.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 22/04/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 22/04/2025
Press Advert: 23/04/2025

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Alton PC: Object, the work would not be in keeping with the vernacular of the area.

Tree Officer

No response within consultation period

Conservation Officer

Objection to the proposal. 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).

The garage 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.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

Local Plan policy SS8 identifies Alton as a 'Larger Village' within the Staffordshire Moorlands. Within the larger villages there is support in principle for a range of developments including housing related proposals. The application property is located within the Alton Conservation Area. Whilst there are no 'in principle' objections to the application, all material planning considerations must be satisfied for the scheme to be supported, in this instance they include design, visual impact, neighbour amenity and highways.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area and the significance of the Conservation Area

The garage would be a substantial three car garage structure. With a total width of 9m, across its front and rear elevations, it would also be generous in its 6m depth from front to back. Although the host dwelling and the overall area of the plot is large, available positioning for a garage of this size is limited by reason of the land's topography. The result of this, is that the proposal seeks to provide the large garage to the side of the dwelling and the edge of the driveway on land that falls away steeply. In these regards, the size of the structure is exacerbated with the necessary construction of a supporting plinth to make up levels where the land falls away.

Due to the steeper topography of the site, the height, width and exposure of the garage would have an overbearing, imposing and intrusive impact 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. From Cheadle Road there are views between and above the bungalows toward the applicant's dwelling and the garden shrubbery that help identify the positioning of the proposed garage. The photograph below is taken from Cheadle Road and shows the space between Pine Lodge, to the left, and Easter Lodge, to the right – the proposed location for the garage clearly visible.



The proposed placement of the large garage to the southwest of the host dwelling would adversely impact this verdant character. The garage would be quite a prominent and visible structure particularly in winter months with reduced vegetation. From Knight Lane to the north the Old Vicarage is visible, set within mature attractive garden, as shown in the photograph below taken from Knight Lane to the rear of the Hempbutt.



There is potential for the garage to be visible and intrusive from this Knight Lane location, although the extent of such impacts are difficult to ascertain in the absence of further survey evidence.

In addition to the above, there are concerns that the proposed external finishing in horizontal larch weather boarding is not a traditional material to 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.

There would be adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the conservation area. 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).

There would be conflict with policies DC1 and DC2 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020, the SMDC Design Guide 2018, and the terms of the NPPF.

Amenity

The rear of the garage would be some 3m from garden boundaries shared with dwellings at a lower level to the rear and south west (Easter Lodge in particular). The land from the back of the driveway falls away steeply toward a lower tier and the Cheadle Road properties to the west and south. At the rear the garage would be built up on a platform or plinth, so that it has a floor level to meet the driveway. This means that the height of the elevation backing onto the neighbours would be, at maximum, 3.5m from ground to eaves with the further height of the full pitch roof above, which would be another 2.7m to ridge. This height would be apparent across the, significant, 9m width of the elevation which would begin from an elevated ground level behind the Cheadle Road dwellings. Moreover, the garage would displace garden shrubs, bushes and trees that provides softening and screening to the boundary. In these regards the garage would appear prominent, intrusive and overbearing to neighbours that share a boundary. There would be an unacceptable loss of amenity and conflict here with policy DC1 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020.

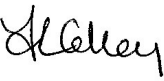
CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would result in adverse impacts on the significance of the Conservation Area and the character and appearance of the area by reason of its size, positioning and use of materials. There would also be harm to the amenity of neighbours that share a boundary with the applicant. There would be conflict with policies DC1 and DC2 of the SMDC Local Plan, the SMDC Design Guide 2018 and the terms of the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 07/05/2025

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council