

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0200
Valid 28/04/2025

SHRUB COTTAGE
DENSTONE LANE
ALTON

A SINGLE SELF-BUILD
DWELLING

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principal of Development
- Design and Visual Impact
- Amenity
- Highway Safety
- Biodiversity Net Gain

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site comprises of a plot of land to the South of the existing dwelling 'Shrub Cottage', situated in the Alton ward. The site is within the open countryside, where development is more restrictive. A cluster of existing outbuildings currently sit on the plot of land, outside the domestic curtilage of Shrub Cottage. The Denstone Lane highway runs adjacent to the Northern curtilage boundary of the site; the site would be served via a shared access with Shrub Cottage off Denstone Lane. The Alton 44 Public Right of Way is situated to the North of the site.

PROPOSAL

The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing large domestic outbuilding and construction of a new-build self-build dwelling. The replacement self-build dwelling would be occupied by the applicants, Mr and Mrs Randall.

The main body of the new dwelling would have a pitched roof; the principal elevation would incorporate a single storey projecting gable with dormer windows on either side, and the rear elevation would incorporate a two-storey projecting gable. The new ground floor accommodation comprises of an entrance hall, study, WC / cloak room, lounge, open-plan kitchen, dining and living area, a utility room and a garage. At first floor level there would be a landing area, five bedrooms (the master room incorporating a dressing room, ensuite and balcony and another bedroom incorporating an ensuite) and a bathroom.

The new dwelling would be constructed from materials which would complement the neighbouring dwelling, including brickwork, tiles, white UPVC and Anthracite Grey Aluminium feature Windows.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS9 Smaller Villages Areas Strategy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
H1 New Housing Developments
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
Appendix 2 Parking Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14
Section(s) 2 – Achieving sustainable development, 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes, 11 - Making effective use of land, 12 - Achieving well-designed places

Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands

New Dwellings and extensions to Dwellings

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD

Part 3 – New Development – Designing in Context

Staffordshire Moorlands Space About Dwellings SPD

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2018/0610 – Proposed side extension. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 31/05/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 30/05/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

No public comments have been received.

Town / Parish Comments

At a meeting of Alton parish council on Wednesday 14th May 2025 planning application SMD/2025/0200 was considered. Mr And Mrs Kevin And Claire Randell, Shrub Cottage Denstone Lane, Alton. A single self-build dwelling. The Council objects to this application on the grounds that it is overdevelopment in the area and visually intrusive into the surrounding countryside.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

The Highway Authority have no objections to the proposed self-build dwelling, subject to conditions.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment. A more limited focus on future growth is to be directed to rural settlements, including the outskirts of Alton. When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The application site is located in the Open Countryside whereby Policy SS10 of the Local Plan (2020) is applicable. Policy SS10 states that these rural areas will provide only for development that has an essential need to be located in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. Policy SS10 (1) states that new build housing development should be restricted in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with Policy H 1.

Part (3) of policy SS10 seeks to protect the quality and character of the area and requires all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Policy H1 (4) states that in the case of new housing outside of the development boundaries:

“limited infill residential development of an appropriate scale and character for the Spatial Strategy will be supported, provided that:

- *The development will adjoin the boundary of a larger village and be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses, or;*
- *The development is well related to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village and will not create or extend ribbon development or lead to sporadic pattern of development; and*

- *In all cases the development will not lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.”*

The proposed self-build dwelling would be located in the open countryside, having no relationship with any of the nearby development boundaries. It is not close enough to Alton to reflect the pattern of development in this village. The dwelling is not considered as infill residential development and would lead to a sporadic pattern of development into the open countryside. Due to the isolated location of the site, the proposed self-build dwelling is considered a prominent intrusion into the countryside. Although the land has previously been developed on, the existing unobtrusive single storey rural buildings would be changed to a larger size and scale two storey building with large areas of glazing, which would appear significantly more prominent and suburban.

As mentioned in the planning statement submitted alongside the application, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing as required by the NPPF. Therefore, the decision-making process reverts to a tilted balance position. Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date , granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”*

Whilst the Council recognise that the proposed self-build dwelling would make a contribution to the housing stock in the Staffordshire Moorlands, the benefit of one new dwelling is a very modest benefit. The harm to the countryside and landscape character would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit, therefore the balance lies in favour of the harm resulting from the proposed development.

Therefore, the development is not considered to be acceptable in principle, as it would conflict with Policies SS10 and H1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

Design and Visual Impact

Policy DC1 seeks to ensure that all development is well designed and of a high quality, contributing to local distinctiveness and harmonising with sense of place.

Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF outline what is expected of good design and required for the development of high quality, beautiful places, and provides for a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's Design Principles SPG outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that new dwellings should relate to existing buildings in terms of scale and proportion, massing and materials and should derive their inspiration from local tradition. The Council's Design SPD outlines the Council's expectations in respect of design and states that a new building should respect the scale of those surrounding it and be well proportioned.

The site is in an isolated location, thus meaning that there is no particular character or context of development in the immediate area. The only dwelling within a closer distance to the site is Shrub Cottage, a detached brick, render and tile dwellinghouse with a pitched roof incorporating gable features.

Notably, the owners of Shrub Cottage obtained planning permission for a two-storey side extension under SMD/2018/0610. However, some works were completed which did not form part of the approval, namely the window above the Juliet balcony on the side elevation of the extension and the rear dormer feature. None of these features comprise permitted development. As the works were not completed in accordance with the approved plans, the Council were not given opportunity to make comment on them. Therefore, any similar features on the new dwelling shall not be accepted based on comparison with any unlawful work completed to Shrub Cottage.

The new-build self-build dwelling would replace a series of existing outbuildings outside the domestic curtilage of the site. The new dwelling and its curtilage would extend beyond the existing development pattern, encroaching further into the open countryside. The new dwelling is larger than Shrub Cottage in its footprint, size and scale and whilst the existing outbuildings are single storey, the new dwelling would be two storeys. Resultingly, the self-build dwelling would have a significantly more prominent and intrusive impact on the rural character and countryside landscape, due to its suburban style and design. In the context of the land surrounding it, the new-build self-build dwelling is considered to comprise overdevelopment.

The existing outbuildings at the site have a higher solid to void ratio, consisting of considerably more stonework than glazing. The proposed self-build dwelling incorporates an excessively large amount of glazing and the side elevations incorporate a lot of glazing in the form of collections of windows. The excessive amount of glazing on the proposed self-build dwelling would be a complete contrast to the predominantly blank walls of the existing outbuildings, which blend into the countryside landscape. Due to the isolation of the site, the area forms a tranquil landscape, devoid of any streetlights meaning that the area gets particularly dark during the evenings. Consequently, the glazing would illuminate the surrounding countryside and the dwelling would incongruously stand out amongst the isolated, rural landscape.

Materials used in the construction of the proposed self-build dwelling would match those used in the construction of the neighbouring dwelling at Shrub Cottage. Brick, tiles, white UPVC and anthracite aluminium would be used in the construction of the

proposed new dwelling. Thus, the proposed materials would be considered acceptable in this instance and would not be considered to detract from the character of the area.

The proposal, by virtue of its size, scale and siting does not maintain the character of the existing dwelling and area. The proposal would therefore not accord with the provisions of local plan policy DC1 and section 12 of the NPPF in this regard.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF seeks to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants. Local Plan Policy DC1 requires development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and to not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity.

The site sits within the immediate context of one dwelling; Shrub Cottage, Denstone Lane is situated to the North of the site.

Notably, the site sits amongst a generous, spacious curtilage plot. The new-build self-build dwelling would be substantially stepped of the common boundary between the site and Shrub Cottage, thus mitigating any detrimental loss of light or overshadowing from occurring. Upon completion of a site visit and assessment of the plans submitted, it is clear that there would be no 45 degree angle breaches from the proposed dwelling to any habitable fenestration on the adjoining neighbouring dwelling.

The North facing front elevation of the new dwelling would face towards the neighbours at Shrub Cottage. Whilst there would be four glazed features of fenestration on this elevation, this elevation is located approximately 32 metres plus from the rear elevation of Shrub Cottage. A 22 metre distance is considered sufficient to comply with the fenestration separation standards set out in the Staffordshire Moorlands Space About Dwellings SPD. Therefore, it is not considered that the privacy amenity of the neighbours at Shrub Cottage would be adversely impacted.

Notably, a balcony would be located on the South facing rear elevation of the new dwelling. Despite this, the balcony would not face towards any neighbouring dwellings within close proximity. Therefore, no overlooking would occur on any neighbours as a result of the proposed balcony.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and should contribute to making high quality places. Policy T1 seeks to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development does not lead to an increase in on

street parking.

Staffordshire County Council have stated that they have no objections to the proposed development, subject to conditions. The new build dwelling is of a larger size, incorporating five bedrooms. In accordance with the Staffordshire Moorlands Parking Standards, the garage and driveway at the site would accommodate three off highway parking spaces.

Thus, the proposed development is compliant with Policy T1.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Policy NE1 of the Local Plan aims to ensure that the biodiversity and geological resources of the District and neighbouring areas will be conserved and enhanced by positive management and strict control of development.

All development is now expected to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value unless exceptions apply. One of the exceptions is for self-build dwellings, this is what has been applied for (confirmation on the application form). The architect has confirmed that the first occupants would be Mr and Mrs Kevin and Claire Randell. Mr and Mrs Randell are named on the application form as the applicants. In the event of an approval an appropriately worded condition would need to be included in order to secure occupancy.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In consideration of all the above, the application is recommended for refusal. The proposed new-build self-build dwelling would not be acceptable in principle, due to its isolated location in the open countryside. The site has no relationship with any of the nearby development boundaries and is not close enough to Alton to reflect the pattern of development in this village. The dwelling would lead to a sporadic pattern of development, creating a prominent intrusion into the countryside. Furthermore, the size and scale of the proposed self-build dwelling would exacerbate the prominent and intrusive impact of the dwelling on the rural character and countryside landscape. The suburban style of dwelling with an excessive amount of glazing would detract from the rural landscape, appearing incongruous and illuminating an area of isolated rural countryside.

Whilst the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, the benefit in housing land supply terms from a single dwelling is limited and is considered to be substantially and demonstrably outweighed by the harm identified above.

Therefore, the proposed development is recommended for refusal.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

Case Officer: Hannah Varley
Recommendation Date: 20/06/2025

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council