

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0144
Valid 21/03/2025

THE OLD VICARAGE
DIMBLE LANE
ALTON

PROPOSED EXTENSION TO
FORM A LIVING / KITCHEN
AND UTILITY ROOM

(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. The dwelling's north facing side elevation has some exposure, across the neighbour's garden, to positions on Knight Lane between the Hempbutt and the Vicarage Row garages. To the boundary of the applicant's north facing, side elevation, there is a dry stone wall which in places is in need of some repair and rebuilding and a large mature tree on the neighbour's side.

PROPOSAL

The proposal would involve a single-storey side extension, the principal part of which would be approx. 6.9m (H) x 6.8m (W) x 6.8m (L). There would also be a smaller addition 3.7m (H) x 1.7m (W) to the rear. The addition would extend from the dwelling's north facing side elevation. Toward the stone wall and garden boundary and a large

mature tree that grows up against that stone boundary (the tree is to be felled and the applicant has provided notification to the LPA).

The proposed design, whilst contemporary in its frontage, would mimic the external finishing materials, roof pitch, overhanging eaves and decorative vergeboard which are distinctive features of the main building.

A revised plan has been submitted which omits roof lights from the front facing roof slope. The applicant confirms that there is intention to repair and rebuild in places the existing wall and this is shown detailed in a supplementary plan that has been submitted.

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.
SMD/2025/0124 Detached Garage. REFUSED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 16/05/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 16/05/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Alton PC: Objection. The proposed work would not be in keeping with the local vernacular.

Conservation Officer

The proposed design, whilst contemporary in its frontage, would mimic the external finishing materials, roof pitch, overhanging eaves and decorative vergeboard which are distinctive features of the main building. This would be a large extension in height and scale, but its stepped down ridge would help make it a subservient addition.

Overall, the proposed extension would likely result in a complementary modern addition to the building that would not detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It would, however, be suggested that the rooflights to the front elevation of the extension are removed as these would create a slightly cluttered appearance to the front elevation which has the potential to distract from the architectural interest of the 19th century part of the building and, given the elevated position of this property, has the potential to be prominent in wider views within the Conservation Area. There is also large expanse of glazing to this frontage so there is not clear justification for the need for these features to the front elevation.

Subject to the removal of the rooflights to the front elevation, the proposed extension would unlikely harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Listed Buildings which would comply with s.66 and 72 of the Act, Section 16 of the NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework. With the removal of the rooflights to the front elevation, there would be no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

Tree Officer

I visited the applicants at The Old Vicarage on 13th September 2024 to look at and discuss their concerns about the large mature Sycamore on the northern boundary. In fact the tree is actually just over but immediately adjacent to their northern boundary and grows from within the curtilage of Lavender Cottage, 5 Dimble Row. The owner of Lavender Cottage was also present and involved in the discussion.

There was concern that the tree had developed a habit of shedding large branches into their garden where they have a patio/sitting area. Also on inspection there is a huge cavity at the base of the tree where presumably a very large stem was previously lost many years ago. The cavity retains water, and decay is developing in the wider base of the tree at the union supporting the 3 remaining very large stems.

Whilst not imminently/urgently dangerous, the tree is unfortunately not appropriate to retain in this location. I advised that if they and/or the tree owner was to submit a Conservation Area tree work notification of intent to fell the tree, we could not (in view of its size, surrounding targets and in particular the significant defects noted above) reasonably make a TPO to provide permanent legal protection and in effect require the tree to be retained.

A formal notification of intent to fell the tree was indeed submitted (on 1st March 2025). The LPA has not made a new TPO within 6 weeks of receipt of the Conservation Area tree work notification and, therefore, the notified work may proceed under a default consent.

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, and neighbour amenity.

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

Policy DC1 of the Local Plan requires all development to be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, the policy requires the development to be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating materials appropriate to the character of the area.

The SPD guidance says that *"The key to a sensitive approach is to take note of what is there already before preparing the design and to work with the building's character. An extension should respect the dominance of the original building and be subordinate to it in terms of its size and massing. Setting back the new section from the building line and keeping the eaves and ridge lower than the parent building will help" ... "New buildings should use facing materials that either match or complement those of the surroundings"*.

The Council's conservation officer makes positive comments about some of the design detailing that would be included with the proposal and a revised plan has removed rooflights from front facing roof slope. The development is unlikely to harm the character and appearance or significance of the Conservation Area. The proposed side addition would be subordinate in size and scale to the original dwelling, it would not disrupt the balance and proportions of the dwelling's existing front, principal, elevation.

The proposed addition would extend from a side elevation that has some exposure and prominence, across an open area of garden, to views from Knight Lane to the north. The side elevation of the dwelling has an elevated and central positioning within an attractive arrangement of the dwellings to Dimble Lane to the east, those to Cheadle Road to the west and the terraced gardens that lie between.

However, it is considered that the contemporary arrangement of glazing across the proposals front elevation would be largely concealed, particularly from the lower level of Knight Lane, when the stone boundary wall is repaired and its full height is restored

in accordance with a drawn detail that has been submitted as a supplementary plan. On the other side of the boundary the neighbour has a shed and mature shrubbery that would also assist with the screening of the side addition and its front elevation in particular.



The side addition would extend some 6.8m from the side elevation towards the boundary and a mature tree of apparent amenity value. However, the Council has received notification of an intent to fell the tree and has not elected to make a preservation order. The tree officer has inspected the tree and confirms a stem branch has broken off and it is collecting water at its base and has begun to decay.

There would not be adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the conservation area. There would not be conflict with policies DC1 and DC2 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020, the SMDC Design Guide 2018, or the terms of the NPPF.

Impact on Amenity

The glazing across the width of the additions front elevation would be at a higher land level than the dwelling and its plot (Blairangus) to the west on Cheadle Road. However, the glazing would look onto a significant garden depth of 20m. The garden boundary is lined with mature trees and shrubbery so that the dwelling to the west would not be overlooked. At this distance, overshadowing or overbearing impacts also do not raise any concerns.

The patio French doors proposed for the addition's side elevation would be flanked by the repaired and restored stone boundary wall that would prevent overlooking of the neighbour's garden to the side from internal eye height. Again given the distance to the neighbouring property to other neighbouring properties, including the Old Vicarage Cottage, and the single storey nature of the proposal no other overshadowing or overbearing impacts are likely.

The development would not have an unacceptable impact on neighbour's amenity and there would be no conflict with Local Plan policy DC1 in these regards.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not result in adverse impacts on the significance of the Conservation Area and the character and appearance of the area. A more contemporary arrangement of full height glazing across the development's front elevation would be largely concealed from, Knight Lane to the north by the repaired and rebuilt wall, the neighbour's shed to the boundary, and general shrubbery and bushes across the neighbour's garden. 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 : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 16/05/2025

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council