

Planning Statement

Change of use of outbuilding to form 1 no. dwellinghouse
Woodside Cottage, Brookhouse Lane, Nr. Werrington
For Mrs. R. Rowson

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Hewitt & Carr Services Ltd. Has been instructed by Mrs. R. Rowson to prepare a Planning Statement to accompany a full planning application for the change of use of a domestic outbuilding at Woodside Cottage, Brookhouse Lane, Nr. Werrington to a single dwellinghouse.
- 1.2. The existing building comprises a single storey structure and was formerly used as a games room ancillary to the main dwellinghouse on the site which lies to the southeast of the building.
- 1.3. The application proposes the change of use of the building to a single dwellinghouse whose accommodation will comprise of an open plan lounge / kitchen / dining room, two bedrooms, hallway and shower room. The gross internal floor area of the dwelling will be 73.9 square metres.
- 1.4. The application does not propose any external alterations to the existing building, with the proposal making beneficial reuse of existing openings. At the western end of the building an area of hardstanding is to be repurposed to provide a garden to serve the dwelling, which will extend to some 72.5 square metres.
- 1.5. At the eastern end of the building, it is proposed to provide two off-street parking spaces to serve the proposed dwelling. These parking spaces will be provided on an existing area of hardstanding. To the south of the building a new pedestrian pathway is to be provided in order to gain access to the rear amenity space without having to pass through the building itself.
- 1.6. Planning permission has previously been sought for the change of use of this building to a dwellinghouse, which included proposals to raise the roof to provide an additional storey, and to construct a detached garage (SMD/2016/0629). That application was refused for the following reasons:
 1. The proposal is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and will result in substantial harm to the Green Belt, thereby conflicting with paragraphs 87-90 of the NPPF
 2. The design of the proposed development is not in keeping with the existing character and appearance of the immediate area and constitutes overdevelopment of the site in conflict with policy DC1 of the adopted core strategy and relevant policies within Chapter 7 of the NPPF
- 1.7. This current application has sought to constructively address those previous concerns, and as a consequence no longer incorporates any form of extension to the building, nor the erection of a detached garage.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site is located within the rural area and forms part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The existing building comprises a single storey, rectangular shaped structure, finished in blockwork/render with a pitched grey tiled roof above.
- 2.2. The building is located to the northwest of Woodside Cottage and Woodside Farm. An area of hardstanding encloses the southern side of the building which serves a parking area associated with Woodside Cottage. Further to the south of that parking area lies the garden of that neighbouring property.
- 2.3. Further ancillary outbuildings are located to the southwest of the site, which comprise of single storey structures. Hardstandings otherwise enclose the site on all sides.
- 2.4. An existing vehicular access wraps around the northern elevation of the building, serving an existing equestrian building further to the northwest which is also owned by the applicant. Beyond that access lies an equestrian manege.
- 2.5. The site is not within a Conservation Area, nor are there any statutorily listed buildings in close proximity of the site. The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 (low-probability of flooding).

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 of which the following policies are of relevance to the determination of the application:
- 3.3. Policy SS3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Future Provision and Distribution of Development' and states that provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings (net of demolitions) to be completed in Staffordshire Moorlands during the period 2014 to 2033 - an annual average of 320 homes per year. Sufficient deliverable land will be identified to provide at least 5 years of development at all times. The policy confirms that of that total provision, some 25% is to be accommodated within the rural areas.
- 3.4. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Other Rural Areas Strategy' and states that these areas will provide only for development which 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. The policy states that the Council and its partners will achieve this through a number of actions, including:
 - Restricting new build housing development in the countryside to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside in accordance with policy H1
 - Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape
 - Strict control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.
- 3.5. Policy H1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Housing Development' and states that:
 - 1) Development should provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenure including a proportion of affordable housing as set out in Policy H3, and where appropriate housing for special groups, to meet the needs and aspirations of the current and future population having regard to the Area Strategies.
 - 2) In line with Government legislation the Council will maintain and update a register of those interested in acquiring self-build / custom-build housing plots across the District. Where a demand exists, residential developments of 10 dwellings (or 0.5ha) or more will make an appropriate contribution towards this need in agreement with the Council. This will be negotiated on a case by case basis.

- 3) All development will be assessed according to the extent to which it provides for high quality, sustainable housing and to which it meets identified housing needs, having regard to the location of the development, the characteristics of the site and the economics of provision.

3.6. Policy H1 goes on to state that:

- a) Housing for special groups, particularly for older people and others as identified in the SHMA or successor document should be of a scale and in a location, which is appropriate to its needs.
- b) Housing proposals of 10 dwellings (or 0.5ha) or more will be required to provide a mix of housing in terms of size, type and tenure on the site unless viability or other circumstances exist. The final mix will be negotiated with the developer based on housing needs as informed by the SHMA or successor document and other relevant factors such as available supply and market demand.
- c) All housing development should be at the most appropriate density compatible with the site and its location, and with the character of the surrounding area. Higher densities will generally be appropriate in locations which are more accessible by public transport and which have good access to services.
- d) All new dwellings should aim to provide flexible accommodation which is capable of future adaptation by seeking to achieve adequate internal space for the intended number of occupants in accordance with the Nationally Described Space standard and delivered to meet accessibility standards set out in the Optional Requirement M4(2) of Part M of the Building Regulations. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis subject to considerations such as viability and design.
- e) All new dwellings must be of sufficient size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of occupiers of existing dwellings.

3.7. Policy H1 also confirms that within the open countryside only a limited number of forms of housing development will be permitted, including:

- the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in architectural and character terms for conversion; or where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.

3.8. Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development shall 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, new development should (amongst other requirements):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, visual impact, sunlight, outlook, privacy, soft landscaping as well as noise, odour and light pollution
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use

3.9. Policy DC3 of the Local Plan relates to 'Landscape and Settlement Setting' and states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

- 1 Resisting development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character or the setting of a settlement or important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
- 2 Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence;
- 3 Supporting developments which conserve or enhance the biodiversity qualities of any natural or man-made features within the landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, walls, watercourses or ponds;
- 4 Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;
- 5 Ensuring that development does not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.

3.10. Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.

2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development, and sets out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of significantly boosting the supply of housing, making beneficial use of existing buildings, securing high quality design, protecting residential amenity, achieving a net gain to biodiversity and safeguarding highway. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Report to Growth & Economy Committee

- 4.2. The Growth Strategy Implementation Update Report dated 7th May 2025 serves to confirm that the Local Authority has a housing land supply equivalent to 2.95 years, against a requirement of 5 years as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

SMDC Space About Dwellings SPG

- 4.3. The adopted Space About Dwellings SPG provides a series of minimum standards that new development should seek to achieve in the interests of providing a high standard of amenity for future occupiers. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5.0 STATEMENT OF CASE

Impact on Green Belt

- 5.1. The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Policy SS10 of the Local Plan confirms that strict control will be exercised over inappropriate development in the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government Policy.
- 5.2. Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out those exceptions, and confirms that the reuse of buildings can be considered

appropriate in the Green Belt provided they are of a permanent and substantial construction and that the development preserves the openness of the Green belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

- 5.3. The existing building is of a permanent and substantial construction, having existed on the site since at least 2003. It is a robust structure, constructed from blockwork with a rendered finish. The change of use of the building will furthermore not give rise to any harm to the openness of the Green Belt, or conflict with the purposes of including land within it, as the proposed amenity space and parking areas are to be accommodated on land that is already established as hardstanding and in residential use. There will be no encroachment of development beyond that which already exists on the site, and the proposal consequently amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 154 of the NPPF and policy SS10 of the Local Plan.
- 5.4. In reaching this conclusion we draw attention to the Local Authority's assessment of application SMD/2016/0629, which had also proposed the change of use of the same building to a dwelling, along with an upward extension to it to create a second storey and the construction of a detached garage. The Local Authority refused that application, but only because of the proposed extension to the building and the proposed garage, commenting as follows in terms of Green Belt matters:

"The proposed development is inappropriate by definition and is harmful to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances exist which outweighs the harm to the Green Belt. The proposed development would **result in a building which is materially larger than the existing single storey building with additions that are substantially disproportionate** to the size of the original building" (our emphasis)

And...

"The **proposed garage comprises a new structure in the Green Belt which is also inappropriate** by definition and would result in substantial harm to the Green Belt, and as such is unacceptable" (our emphasis)

- 5.5. The delegated report raises no concerns about the change of use of the building itself, nor any associated impact of its change of use on the openness of the Green Belt, or any conflict with the purposes of including land within it (other than that arising from the upward extension and construction of the detached garage).
- 5.6. The Local Authority's assessment of application SMD/2016/0629 therefore serves to reinforce our own conclusion that the change of use of the existing building, with no extension or detached garage, is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. The first reason for refusal of application SMD/2016/0629 has therefore been conclusively resolved.

Rural Housing

- 5.7. Policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan make provision for the reuse of rural buildings to create new dwellings where the buildings are worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.
- 5.8. The existing building is evidently in a sound structural condition, with no signs of physical deterioration, bowed walls or any distortion of the elevations or roof. It can consequently be held to be worthy in physical terms for conversion.
- 5.9. The building likewise has a simple, yet pleasant aesthetic, with a rectangular plan form, pitched gabled roof, and a simple arrangement of openings that all reflect the wider vernacular of the Moorlands. The building is consequently held to be worthy in architectural and character terms for conversion and accords with policies SS10 and H1 of the Local Plan in this regard.
- 5.10. In reaching this conclusion we note that in determining the previous application on the site for the change of use and extension of this building (SMD/2016/0629), no concerns were raised by the Local Authority about the principle of converting the building to a dwelling in terms of its worthiness in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. The only concerns raised within respect of the proposed upward extension and detached garage as discussed above.
- 5.11. Whilst that application was determined under the provisions of the former Core Strategy (since replaced by the Local Plan), the relevant planning policies at that time (Policies SS6c / R1/ R2) are very similar in their requirements to the provisions of the current Local Plan (Policy SS10 and H1). Indeed, the provisions of policy R2 were more onerous in that they also required evidence of viability of alternative commercial uses to be demonstrated, in addition to the requirement for the buildings to be worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion.
- 5.12. The Local Authority did not identify any conflict with policies SS6c, R1 or R2 of the Core Strategy in its assessment of application SMD/2016/0629, and given that this current proposal relates to the same building, and the policy tests are very similar, it would be unreasonable for a differing stance to now be taken.
- 5.13. The provisions of paragraph 125 of the National Planning Policy Framework are also of relevance to this proposal, and confirm that planning decisions should:

 “promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified demands for housing where land supply is constrained”
- 5.14. The Local Authority's Growth Strategy Implementation Update Report (May 2025) serves to confirm that the Local Authority only has a 2.95 year supply of housing against a requirement to have a five year supply (paragraph 78 of the NPPF refers), and consequently there is an identified demand for housing.

- 5.15. The proposed development will make a positive contribution towards addressing that demand for housing by making beneficial reuse of an otherwise under-utilised building to deliver a new dwelling. The provisions of paragraph 125 of the NPPF consequently weigh in favour of planning permission being granted.

Design & Layout

- 5.16. The previously refused application on the site (SMD/2016/0629) had proposed the erection of a first floor upward extension to the building which the Local Authority concluded to be out-of-keeping with the character and appearance of the site, and amounted to over-development.
- 5.17. This revised proposal is very different to that previously refused application in that it entails the change of use of the building only. The application does not propose any form of extension to the existing building and makes beneficial reuse of existing openings in order to preserve its character and appearance.
- 5.18. The proposed garden area to the west of the building will be located on an existing area of hardstanding, surrounded by ancillary outbuildings, and consequently will not give rise to any greater harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area compared to that which already exists. The proposed parking area will likewise be created on the existing area of hardstanding to the east of the building, which has historically been used as parking area by occupiers of Woodside Cottage.
- 5.19. No adverse impact to the character and appearance of the surrounding area will therefore arise as a result of the proposed development. The revised proposal has therefore conclusively addressed the second reason for refusal of application SMD/2016/0629 and is held to accord with the provisions of policies DC1 and DC3 of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

- 5.20. The existing building is located in relatively close proximity to Woodside Cottage to the southeast, and a cluster of other ancillary domestic outbuildings to its southwest. An area of hardstanding that provides parking and turning facilities for Woodside Cottage lies immediately to the south of the building.
- 5.21. The internal layout of the proposed dwelling has been designed to prioritise the use of windows in the eastern and western elevations of the building, thereby avoiding any prospect of overlooking of the neighbouring amenity space / parking areas to the south.
- 5.22. The applicant is agreeable to the installation of obscure glazing to the southern facing windows since the open plan kitchen / living / dining room that they serve is also served by windows in the northern and western elevation. In doing so no overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers will arise.
- 5.23. To the west of the building, it is proposed to provide an area of amenity space to serve the proposed dwelling. The amenity space will extend to some 72.5 square

metres and thus exceed the minimum required standard of 65 square metres as set out within the Space About Dwellings SPG.

- 5.24. The internal floor area of the dwelling (73.9 square metres) is also noted to exceed the minimum floor space requirement for a two bedroomed / three person dwelling, as dictated by the National Described Space Standards (61 square metres).
- 5.25. Having regard to the above considerations it is concluded that the proposed development will not give rise to any loss of amenity to neighbouring residential occupiers, and will provide future occupiers of the dwelling with a good standard of amenity. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies DC1 and H1 of the Local Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

- 5.26. The application site benefits from an existing means of vehicular access off Brookhouse Lane to the southeast of the building, which will be shared with Woodside Cottage and Woodside Farm. The access is wide enough for two vehicles to pass one another, and benefits from good visibility on egress onto Brookhouse Lane. Two off-street parking spaces are to be provided to the east of the building, thus meeting the Local Authority's car parking standards for a two-bedroomed property.
- 5.27. The site furthermore occupies a reasonably sustainable location, approximately 1.5km from Bucknall where a variety of day-to-day services and facilities are on offer and accessible via bicycle. Day to day services and facilities on offer within Werrington are also available on foot (1.5km) via public footpath Werrington 25 and Washerwall Lane.
- 5.28. It is furthermore noted that no concerns about the sustainability or otherwise of the site's location were raised by the Local Authority in its assessment of application SMD/2016/0629. In the absence of any material change in circumstance it would be unreasonable for a differing stance to now be taken.
- 5.29. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policy T1 of the Local Plan and guidance set out within paragraphs 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.30. The submitted proposal entails the reuse of an existing building and re-purposing of existing sealed areas of hardstanding only. Consequently the development will not give rise to the loss of any habitat. The proposal is therefore exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

Planning Balance

- 5.31. The Local Authority's housing policies are out-of-date on account of them being unable to demonstrate a five year deliverable supply of housing as required by paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2.95 years supply).

- 5.32. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF dictates that in such circumstances proposals should be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development (the so-called tilted balance) and that planning permission should be granted unless:
- i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear 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.*
- 5.33. The proposal will not result in any conflict with policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance, as it has been shown that it amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt (paragraph 11(d)(i) of the NPPF refers).
- 5.34. It is furthermore submitted that no adverse impacts will arise as a consequence of this development to *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole (paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF refers)
- 5.35. Social and economic benefits will be derived through the delivery of a new dwelling on the site. Policy SS3 of the Local Plan confirms that over the plan period 2014 – 2033 provision will be made for at least 6080 additional dwellings at an annualised rate of 320 dwellings per year. The policy also states that sufficient deliverable land will be identified to provide at least 5 years of development at all times.
- 5.36. That however is far from the case. The Local Authority has a long history of housing under-supply and at no point since 2014 has the Local Authority delivered sufficient housing to meet the stated annualised housing requirement of 320 dwellings per annum, let alone the revised annualised requirement of 454 dwellings per annum as set out within more recently published Growth Strategy Implementation Update Report.
- 5.37. The proposed change of use of the existing building will make a positive contribution towards meeting the Local Authority's chronic shortfall in housing in circumstances where there has been a persistent under-delivery of housing. The proposal will also derive benefits of to the local economy, both to local tradesmen during the construction phase, and though the expenditure associated with the creation of one additional household. Environmental benefits will also ensue as a consequence of delivering a new dwelling through the reuse of an otherwise under-utilised building.

- 5.38. We submit that the proposed development will not give rise to any adverse impacts to significantly and demonstrably outweigh these benefits when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole, and that consequently planning permission should be granted in accordance with the presumption favour of sustainable development.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:
- The proposal amounts to an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.
 - The proposal will not give rise to harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
 - The proposal will provide an acceptable level of amenity for future occupiers of the dwellings, whilst also safeguarding neighbouring amenity.
 - The proposal will not have an adverse impact on highway safety within the locality.

- The development will generate a number of benefits that will not be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any adverse impacts and thus planning permission should be approved in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.2. The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS3, SS10, H1, DC1, DC3 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Space About Dwellings SPG.