

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0182
Valid 16/04/2024

HURSTON HOUSE HURSTONS
LANE
ALTON

PARTIALLY RETROSPECTIVE
APPLICATION FOR TRACTOR AND
HAY STORE

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Design and visual impact
- Neighbour amenity
- Public Right of Way
- Highways
- Ecology / Biodiversity Net Gain

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is Hurston House, Hurston's Lane, Alton, a detached dwelling sat within sizeable grounds. The dwelling takes vehicular access from Hurston's Lane, along a private driveway. There is plenty of off-road parking available. Just inside of the main access, the drive branches to the south, this access leads directly to the riding arena and the building the subject of this application.

For the purposes of planning policy consideration, the application site is located within the open countryside, however it does not form part of the Green Belt. The site is also within a landscape area identified as 'Dissected sandstone uplands' where the policy objective is 'active landscape conservation' and 'Highest sensitivity.' The Alton Village Development Boundary is located to the west of the site, on the opposite side of Hurston's Lane. Public Right of Way (PROW) Alton 25 runs along the southern boundary (roughly west-east), whilst PROW Alton 26 runs in a broadly north-south direction along the eastern boundary.

PROPOSAL

The application is described as a partially retrospective application for a tractor and hay store. It is clear from the plans and the site visit, that most of the work has been undertaken, the submitted plans only showing the intent to add a roller shutter door to the widest opening. The building has a roughly 'L' shaped footprint with the plans showing that internally the space is divided into three sections. The largest area is identified as a tractor store, whilst the other two sections are referred to as hay stores. The hay stores have stable doors.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

- SS1 Development Principles
- SS10 Other Rural Areas Strategy
- SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE2 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands

Supplementary Planning Document

1. Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections:

- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 12 Achieving well-designed places
- 16 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 79/08002/OLDDC | Site for residential development. Refused. |
| SMD/2018/0209 | Construction of outdoor riding area. Approved. |

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice. Expired.

Public Comments

One letter of objection received which is summarised as follows:

- Numerous buildings on site without planning permission which are not on the Location and Site Plan which suggests the building in this application has less impact.
- Building is in a prominent position, easily visible from the highway, adjacent housing and footpaths.
- Building is of significant size, with a total site footprint referenced of 1662 square metres,
- Visual impact concerns due to building height and can be seen from the highway and two public footpaths.
- Building is completed but the application states work/change of use has not started.
- This is a domestic premises with equestrian facilities, not agricultural.
- Design and Access Statements says between 25 and 30 sheep graze the land but these are not owned by the applicant and are not housed within the numerous buildings. This statement is misleading.
- The sheep utilise the adjacent land outside the domestic curtilage and are owned and managed by others.
- The application states that the development will not add parking spaces. This is incorrect as there is already a large horse transportation vehicle parked immediately adjacent to this building and appears to be there on near permanent basis when not in use.
- Application states that there are no trees or hedges adjacent to the development which is not true. Numerous ancient and long-standing trees and hedges
- Application specifically states that there is no reasonable likelihood of protected and priority species having been affected by this development, development is already built, how can this possibly be established? One assumes (as a Biodiversity and Conservation report has not been submitted with the application), prior to any survey being conducted and it is now impossible to establish the pre-building work condition.
- This is a very rural location, highly likely that there would be evidence of protected species.

- Without the correct survey of the surrounding habitat it is impossible to state there would be no likelihood of these protected and priority species being affected by this already completed building.
- Application states the Biodiversity Gain Condition does not apply, but it does not match the exemptions within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or Environment Act 2021. This is the first submission for the building and not an amendment to a submitted application prior to 12th February 2024, the requirement applies. Reference to the land being heavily grazed is immaterial to the requirement for the condition.
- No information regarding foul sewage and connection to existing drainage.
- Application states there are no existing employees on the site. This is incorrect as there are staff employed to look after the horses kept at the location.
- Wildlife, tree and biodiversity net gain surveys have not been completed and attempts made to infer they are not required.

Alton Parish Council

Comments received are... *'The council were unable to decide on a view on this application and no propositions were put forward. Therefore, the council has no opinion on this application.'*

Conservation (SMDC)

No comments. No objections.

Environmental Health

No objections subject to conditions and informative/advisory notes.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

No objections. No ecological reports have been provided. The application is exempt from BNG, however, it is still subject to NPPF, which requires some net gain on the site. This should be secured with planning conditions.

Conditions

To fulfil the NPPF requirement at least two bird boxes and two bat boxes, suitable for Pipistrelle species and Brown Long Eared, should be installed on the building. These should be made of woodcrete or Ecodyrocrete if possible, to ensure that they last a long time and should be installed as per manufacturers or Bat Conservation Trust guidelines. Additionally, native fruit or nut bearing trees of local provenance, such as crab apple, hazel or rowan could be planted on the site to improve its value for wildlife. The design and access statement states that there will be no external lighting, this should be conditioned to ensure it remains this way. If any external lighting is considered in the future, appropriate bat surveys should be carried out and lighting should be used that complies with the BCT on Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommendation Summary: Acceptance

Notes to Planning Officer

Application is for tractor and hay store. Visibility at the site access onto Hurstons Lane is severely restricted. However, application is for a store which will not in itself affect trip generation. Applicants are advised to consider improvements to visibility at their access. There is clearly adequate space within the curtilage of the site to accommodate any parking. Site of the proposed store is close to public right of way Alton 26. SCC Rights of Way should be consulted for their view. Current records show that there were no Personal Injury Collisions on Hurstons Lane within 50m either side of the property access in the previous five years.

Peak and Northern Footpaths

We note that the PROW Alton 26 is close to the proposed site. The use of any PROWs, and the safety of users must not be affected by the development, nor during the work taking place.

Rambler's Association

Footpath Alton 26 runs very close to where the proposed planning is to take place. This must not affect the rights of the public to use this path during and after work has been done.

Severn Trent Water

No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Public Rights of Way (SCC)

The Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way for Staffordshire show public rights of way adjacent to the application site. However, from the information submitted it does not appear they will be directly impacted by the proposed development.

Staffordshire County Council has not received any application to add to or modify the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way in that vicinity.

The possibility of the existence of a currently unrecognised public right of way, makes it advisable that the applicant pursue further enquiries and seek legal advice regarding any visible route affecting the land, or the apparent exercise of a right of way by members of the public.

The following should be brought to the attention of the applicant and noted in the planning consent if granted:

Public Footpath No.25 Alton Parish runs adjacent to the application site, along the southern boundary of the application site.

Public Footpath No.26 Alton Parish runs east of the proposed development.

(Rights of way in Staffordshire may be seen on our online web map here: [Staffordshire County Council Public WebMap](#))

The granting of planning permission does not constitute authority for any interference with the public right of way and associated items - or its obstruction (temporary or permanent). This is the case both during the building stage or once the development is completed should the permission be granted. The term obstruction, in this context, applies to items such as gates or stiles which are regarded as licenced obstructions which must be sanctioned by the highways authority, and also to any vehicles parking on the right of way, including those associated with construction.

NPPF 104. states that: Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

Users of the path must be able to exercise their public rights safely and the path be reinstated if any damage to the surface occurs as a result of the proposed development

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application site is located roughly to the east of Alton Village; it is outside of the Village Development Boundary and is within the open countryside for the purposes of planning policy consideration. The site does not form part of the Green Belt. Policy SS10 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan states that the Other Rural 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 Planning Statement informs that the building would provide 'safe and secure storage for the existing mixed agricultural/equestrian use of the smallholding.' The LPA are also informed of the following;

- Smallholding is some 14 acres in size
- Is a mixed use unit of sheep and horses
- 25-30 sheep graze the land each year
- 6 horses are housed in a stable block to the north of the application site
- Tractor shed would house a small compact tractor which is used for the maintenance of the holding and grading of the adjacent arena
- Supplementary feeding for the horses and sheep is required and there is no storage currently on the holding. All of the existing stables are utilized
- Building complies with policy SS10 of the Local Plan

Local Plan policy SS10 states that the 'other rural areas comprise the countryside and the Green Belt outside of the development boundaries of the towns and larger villages and the open countryside surrounding the smaller villages.'

SS10 moves on to state 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.'

SS10 states that it will achieve its aims through a number of actions such as

1. Meeting housing requirements
2. Sustaining the rural economy
3. Enhancing and conserving the quality of the countryside
4. Regenerate underused major developed areas in the countryside
5. Enhancing tourist opportunities
6. Maintaining the Green Belt in accordance with Government policy

This does not appear to be a development which sits comfortably within any of the actions (listed 1 – 6) above for the following reasons

1. Proposal does not relate to housing
2. Application is not presented as being a development which is needed to sustain the rural economy
3. This is not a scheme which aims to enhance and/or conserve the quality of the countryside
4. Not an area to be regenerated
5. Does not relate to tourism
6. Site is not within the Green Belt

For these reasons it cannot be said that the proposal complies with the requirements of policy SS10, and therefore there is no support in principle for it.

Design and visual impact

The building is presented as a tractor and hay store. The tractors are said to be needed for maintenance of the holding and grading of the adjacent arena. The other part of the building has the unmistakable appearance of two stables. The LPA are told that the 'stable' part of the building would provide hay storage. However, the design includes internal (timber?) panelling above a blockwork plinth, and concrete floor extending to the base of the walls. The building is not designed with ventilation in mind. Whilst this is not necessarily an issue for a machinery store, it does raise concerns in terms of its appropriateness for storing hay/fodder. Good ventilation is needed to prevent heat/moisture build up and resultant mold. Whilst the stable doors may be open at certain times, the openings are not large and do not guarantee good air flow / circulation within this part of the building. This part of the building is simply not designed for its intended purpose, it is a stable, but the application is not proposing this.

Local Plan policy DC1 (amongst other aims) seeks well-designed and high quality development which would add value to the surrounding area and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings. SPG 'Design Principles for Development: Agricultural Buildings' requires agricultural buildings to 'consider end or three-quarter views so that the bland side elevation is the least visible' and 'align the building so that it forms a group with existing buildings.' PROW Alton 26 runs along the eastern side of the site, approximately 10 metres of blank wall will be visible from it and approximately 14 metres of blank wall

being visible from PROW Alton 25 to the south. Combined with the ridge height ranging from approximately 4.5m – 5m (due to land level variations), the building

The proposal also does not comply with the Design Principles SPG in that the building is divorced from existing on-site buildings.

It can only be concluded that the design of the building is inappropriate for its location as it does not appear to be designed for the entirety of its intended purpose. For this reason the scheme is also considered contrary to Local Plan policy DC3 as it has an unwarranted and visually intrusive impact upon the open countryside at this point. DC3 seeks to resist development which would lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside.

Neighbour amenity

No issues in terms of neighbour amenity impact. Whilst it is likely that the building would be seen from surrounding properties it will not have any overbearing relationship with surrounding dwellings.

Public Right of Way

Whilst the building does raise visual impact concerns when viewed from nearby PROW Alton 25 and Alton 26, the building does not have any physical impact upon the established right of way.

Highways

The County Highways Officer's comments can be read in full within the 'Consultations' section of this report. It is noted that the officer considers the existing access to have severely restricted visibility, but acknowledges that the building would not generate trip generation. The officer also considers there to be sufficient parking within the site. For these reasons the County Highways officer has no objections to the application.

Ecology/Biodiversity Net Gain

A retrospective Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric has been submitted as well as a BNG Assessment. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) have confirmed that the development is exempt from BNG but is still subject to NPPF consideration which requires some new gain on the site. There are no SWT objections however conditions are recommended to secure bird and bat boxes, and fruit and/or nut bearing trees. SWT also request a condition to prevent external lighting.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined within the report it is recommended that the application is refused on the basis of no 'in principle' policy support, design and visual impact.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Refuse

Case Officer: L. Jackson

Recommendation Date: 12.12.2025.

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council