

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0364
Valid 20/08/2025

**BARN OFF MEADOWSIDE
VIEW
ALTON**

**CONVERSION OF BARN TO
DWELLING**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Local Plan approach to rural development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on the non-designated heritage asset
- The amenity and living conditions of future and existing residents
- Traffic Impacts of the development
- Impacts on Biodiversity and Habitat

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

From Alverton View/Meadowside View, the new residential access road to the recently completed Walton Homes development, the northern edge of the application site presents as a narrow plot between the broader proportions of the adjacent new build properties. The northern edge of the application site abuts the footway and highway with a deep verge planted with laurel to the front of a close boarded timber fence. To the northwest corner of the plot the fence is recessed to provide a paved parking pull in of approximately two car widths (5.3m). To the south, the plot backs onto the older established 19th century dwellings at Ivy House and Woodbine Cottage on Saltersford Lane.

From the road to the north, it is apparent that set back toward the southern end of the site a two storey stone barn occupies the land. The barn is built from a lower ground level below that of the roadside, it appears that the ground around the edges of the building has been excavated to reveal its base and footings, and it is the roof and upper section of the barn's gable end that is visible above the boundary fencing.

The proposal would involve the conversion of the stone barn, which is identified on the Historic Environment Record and visible on late 19th century mapping as a farm or curtilage outbuilding to Ivy House to the north. The building is constructed in squared coursed stone and pitched tile roof. The significance derives from its retention of historic fabric and plan form, illustrative functional character and vernacular construction. With reference to the Council's Local Heritage Register SPD, the building would likely meet the 'architectural interest' in the selection criteria.

It appears that work necessary to convert the barn to a dwelling has commenced and some development has already been carried out. The ground around the barn has been excavated and removed to reveal its base and footings and stone below existing openings has been cut to increase their drop to the new ground level.

The barn has been extended to the north with a single storey stone structure that extends from its side wall and adjoins with two small outbuildings to the north. The existing structure now forms a long linear run of built form, spanning the full width of the site's eastern boundary. The rear of the barn and its outriggers are against, and form, the boundary to the adjacent property on the eastern side. The barn's original roof structure has been replaced with modern construction that opens roof space to first floor and introduces rooflights.

The front elevation of the barn and its outriggers face west across the width of the plot toward the side of the adjacent property. The barn fronts onto a slim patio area that is below a retaining wall that steps up significantly to a lawn area that runs at the same level to match the edge of the highway to the north and the neighbouring boundary to the west. Garden landscaping has already been carried out with the introduction of retaining walls, erection of fencing, and construction of steps.

The footprint of the original barn, to the north and rear of Ivy House on Saltersford Lane, is located within the 'larger village' settlement of Alton as defined in the Local Plan hierarchy at policy SS2. The southern edges of the building coincide with part of the settlement boundary, the rest of the plot/application site and the range of outriggers that extend to the north are all outside of the defined settlement. However, that arrangement is very much superseded by the surrounding housing development of some 22 properties that has been built around the site on what previously would have been surrounding farmland to the edge of the settlement. The barn and the application site are now flanked on all four sides by existing dwellings.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes to complete the barn conversion and construction of the adjoining outriggers to provide a single four-bedroom dwellinghouse (three doubles and a single). The linking extension would provide a large kitchen adjacent to a living/dining area. The old outbuildings at the northern end of the building would provide useful incidental stores.

The conversion works would largely make use of existing openings and building detail whilst proposing the closing or blanking of existing openings on exposed elevations of the building that flank adjoining property.

The application does not seek consent for the construction of retaining walls or the erection of fencing that has already been carried out. The plans do not detail these works, and they are not included in the description of development. The existing block plan marks a line, set back from the highway and stepped in at the sites northwest corner to provide paved parking pull in for two vehicles. On site a retaining wall and timber fence has been constructed and erected along the line shown on the existing survey plan. The fencing may have been permitted by part 2 of the GPDO, however, the retaining structure would not have been permitted.

The application was submitted with a preliminary ecological assessment that was supplemented by letter from the consultant ecologist on the 14th January 2026 as a response to comments from Staffs Wildlife Trust.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS8 Larger Village Strategy
SS10 Other Rural Areas Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/2015/0435 Outline permission 23 dwellings. REFUSED – APPEAL ALLOWED
SMD/2019/0486 Reserved matters 22 dwellings. APPROVED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 20/11/2025
Neighbour consultation period ends: 20/11/2025
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

One neighbour has commented:

No specific objections to the proposed planning application, subject to:

1. Further details on any envisaged party wall agreements to be provided (given note on main proposed plans) and all related legal costs to be covered by the applicant?
2. Working hours of construction activities to be clarified as young children occupy adjacent property – it is requested no activities during weekends and outside 7am-7pm in weekdays?
3. Given there is no information on landscaping/site wide plan, it is assumed no major changes are proposed including any impacts on boundaries?

Town / Parish Comments

Alton CP: Object. Conversion would increase traffic outflow onto the main road, over and above the existing development, via what is already a small narrow access. Also, windows overlooking nearby properties.

Severn Trent Water

Severn Trent requests that any approval be conditioned as follows:

The development hereby permitted should not commence until drainage plans for the disposal of foul and surface water flows have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use.

Planning Practice Guidance and section H of the Building Regulations 2010 detail surface water disposal hierarchy. The disposal of surface water by means of soakaways should be considered as the primary method. If this is not practical and there is no watercourse available as an alternative, other sustainable methods should also be explored. If these are found unsuitable satisfactory evidence will need to be submitted before a discharge to the public sewerage system is considered. No surface water to enter the foul or combined water systems by any means.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Conditional

Staffordshire Moorlands Parking Standards state: Detached/Semi-detached property of 4 or bedrooms will require 3 spaces (2.4 x 4.8m each space) for residents and visitors.

None of the submitted drawings show parking however, the Planning Statement under 5.14 states that two off street parking spaces are proposed. It was noted at the site visit that an off-street parking area (surfaced in block paving and bounded by fencing) is already provided. The off-street parking measures approximately 5.3m wide by 5.1m long.

Parking for 2 vehicles does not meet with the Parking Standards. A plan showing parking for 3 vehicles (2.4m x 4.8m each space) is required, however if the spaces are to abut a hard boundary (fence, wall, etc) then each space abutting the hard boundary should be 3m wide to allow for the opening and closing of vehicle doors.

No objection subject to a condition requiring a revised plan showing 3 parking spaces has been submitted and approved.

SMDC Conservation Officer

The proposed conversion seeks to utilise the existing openings well which would help maintain the overall character of the building. There are no extensions proposed to the building which would help maintain the form and vernacular interest of the building. The Planning Statement mentions that there would be no windows to the north or south elevations, and the proposed elevation indicates the existing openings on these elevations in orange – is it proposed to infill these openings?

Overall, however, the proposal would have minor harmful impact on the significance of the NDHA as it would introduce domestic features and appearance to the building. But this impact has been reduced by minimal alterations and retention of the existing openings.

In summary, the proposal would likely result in a minor harmful impact on the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) as it would domesticise the agrarian character of the building. However, as set out above, the proposed conversion has been designed relatively sympathetically to reduce and minimise the visual impact of these domestic alterations. On balance, the proposal would not result in total loss of significance of the NDHA (par.216 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework) and it seeks to find a long-term use for the building. There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Local Plan Approach to Rural Development

As defined by the Local Plan settlement hierarchy at policy SS2, the site is partly within the 'larger village' of Alton, and otherwise within, what was designated by the Local

Plan, prior to the completion of surrounding housing development, as an 'other rural' area of countryside that surrounds the villages and towns.

In the 'larger villages' and in the 'other rural areas', Local Plan policies SS8 and SS10 apply respectively. Other rural areas will provide only for development which has an essential need to be in the countryside, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. While the 'larger villages' shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of rural housing.

In both cases new housing development in either the villages or the countryside shall accord with Local Plan housing Policy H 1. The 'other rural' area policy SS10 specifically references an allowance for the conversion of a rural building in accordance with policy H1.

Local Plan Housing policy H1 requires that, generally, 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. Specifically, in the 'other rural areas' of countryside, Policy H1 provides for the conversion of rural buildings for residential use where the building is suitable and worthy in physical, architectural and character terms for conversion. In both regards, whether the site is within the village settlement, where policy supports the provision of the bulk of rural housing in these areas, or in the countryside, where the policy makes exception for the conversion of rural buildings, there is, generally, Local Plan policy support for the development proposed.

However, notwithstanding, the authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land, the development plan policies most important for determining the application shall be considered out of date, and it is paragraph 11 of the NPPF that applies. Planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

The provision of a single dwelling would make a small contribution to housing supply and there would be some small economic and community benefit associated with the development in those regards. It is also of note that the existing building has heritage value and makes positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, the proposed development would secure its future with an appropriate re use that is most compatible with its surroundings.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

All strands and elements of Local Plan policy converge to provide protection for the character and appearance of the locality and settlement setting through development that relates well to the form and pattern of existing development.

Specifically, SS8 (larger villages) requires new development to reflect and enhance each village's special character and heritage by giving priority to the reuse and regeneration of existing redundant, underused or surplus sites and premises for new development.

Local Plan housing policy H1 states that 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.

Outside of the development boundaries, development considered to be infill of an appropriate scale and character will be supported, provided that 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.

Local Plan design and landscape character policy DC1 and DC3 require all development to be well designed and to reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area.

The site and the barn are now surrounded by housing, the older heritage dwellings to the south and the recently constructed housing to the northwest and east. The surrounding housing is set out and spaced conventionally with linear arrangement. The old barn does not present conventionally with front elevation to roadside and is not centrally positioned within the plot.

However, the existing barn and its plot are historically established and provide a visually interesting break in an evenly spaced row of new houses. The barn is stone built surrounded by red brick properties and is of an obvious age and historically agrarian character. In these regards, the upper part of the building visible above boundary fence, provides visual interest and attractive contrast within its surroundings. The existing building is of substantial construction and there is value in terms of the building's heritage and its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the locality. The proposed conversion would involve minimal alteration to the building's form and appearance. It would make use of existing openings, retain detailing, and use external facing material that match those of the existing building. The proposed use of the building and the conversion would secure the retention and preservation of the building.

While the plans largely detail the reuse of existing openings to provide windows and doors, the plans and application form are silent on the detail, material and colour of windows and doors to be installed. The quality of the scheme is dependent on the type of windows and doors that are installed. The conservation officer recommends a condition that requires the detail of these windows and doors to be submitted to and agreed prior to installation.

The two-storey barn has stood for decades as an individual building. Recently, and prior to the application, a single storey outrigger has been built to the side, north facing, wall of the barn and this outrigger connects the building run to two small outbuildings at the far north of the site to make a continuous run. The new single storey outrigger is stone built and has a full pitch tiled roof that reflects the pitch and materials of the main barn. It is subordinate to, and relates well, to the form and design of the main barn. There is also evidence on historic maps, that at some point in the past the barn did have some form of outrigger to the north. This addition does not adversely affect the character and appearance of the original building or the area.

To the northern boundary, set back from the highway footway, a vertically boarded timber fence, no more than 2m high, has been erected. The fence is set back behind a verge planted with a laurel hedge and stepped in to provide pull in parking. It appears that the erection of the fence would have been permitted by Part 2 of the GPDO. The orientation of the building against the side of the plot, prevents the dwelling from a conventional arrangement of open front garden and private amenity to the rear. The fencing is required therefore to give the garden privacy and prevent exposure. There are other examples in the street scene where this type of fencing has been provided at boundary or in sections inserted into walls. A good portion of the upper part of the barn, its gable end and roof, remain visible above the fence and the building still makes contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The retaining walls behind the fencing, constructed from blue engineering brick, would not have been permitted. However, the walls are hidden within the plot and do not have impact on the wider environment experienced from public vantage.

There would be no conflict with Local Plan policies SS8, SS10, DC1 or DC3 in those regards.

Impact on the heritage asset

The proposal would involve conversion of a barn, which is identified on the Historic Environment Record and visible on 19th century mapping. The building is gable ended, constructed in squared coursed stone and would have had a tie beam roof construction of probable early 19th C date (stat map entry).

There have been some modern alterations – the roof structure has been replaced with modern construction that has removed the loft and tie beam and opened roof space to first floor area, rooflights installed, and the depth of doors and animal access openings have been increased by cutting the stone below down to an excavated ground level. A single storey outrigger has also been added to the barns northern gable that connects it to two small outbuildings.

All of this has degraded the value and significance of the building as a heritage asset. However, overall and otherwise, the building retains its modest vernacular character. The remaining significance derives from its retention of historic fabric and plan form, illustrative functional character and vernacular construction. With reference to the Council's Local Heritage Register SPD, the building would likely meet the 'architectural interest' in the selection criteria.

The proposed conversion seeks to utilise the existing openings well which would help maintain the overall character of the building. Overall, however, the proposal would have minor harmful impact on the significance of the NDHA as it would introduce further domestic features and appearance to the building. But this impact has been reduced by minimal alterations and retention of the existing openings.

In summary, the proposal would likely result in a minor harmful impact on the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) as it would domesticise the agrarian character of the building. However, as set out above, the proposed

conversion has been designed relatively sympathetically to reduce and minimise the visual impact of these domestic alterations. On balance, the proposal would not result in total loss of significance of the NDHA (par.216 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework) and it seeks to find a long-term use for the building.

Those minor harmful impacts would not be adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The benefit associated with the development would outweigh the harm.

Impact on Amenity

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that development protects 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.

Unusually, the building has elevations direct to boundary on two sides – the rear, east facing, elevation and the end gable facing south. Both elevations face adjacent property. This is a legacy of the building's established and historic positioning and relationship with its surroundings.

The south facing end elevation faces directly onto the curtilage of the dwelling at Ivy House to the south. There are existing openings on this elevation – upper floor window, a pitching door to first floor, and a pitching hole to the loft. Submitted plans show that these openings would be blocked with matching facing stone, so that layout does not make use of windows facing out across the neighbour's property.

The building's east facing, rear elevation backs onto two adjacent properties - part of the curtilage/garden boundary belonging to the new dwelling at 12 Meadowside View; and, partly, over lapping with a run of outbuildings adjoining Woodbine Cottage on Saltersford Lane to the south. The back of the barn and the run of adjoining outriggers, in the majority, face onto adjacent property with blank facing stone wall that provides boundary containment. The rear of the barn would contain a small bedroom window at first floor that would face onto the blank gable end of the adjacent outbuilding, with limited outlook that would otherwise face out across the tiled roof of the outbuilding. Beyond, the other side of the adjoining property at Woodbine Cottage, the next property boundary is 23m from the back of the barn. At ground level the back of the barn would present a fixed full height glazed panel, of doorway proportion, to serve a small hallway. That ground floor panel would face onto the existing outbuildings against the boundary.

All of the barn conversions outlook is provided with windows included in the front elevation that face out across the width of the plot towards the side garden boundary of the adjacent property at 10 Meadowside View. The boundary is marked with the side wall of a brick garage built up to the boundary and a close boarded garden fence. At ground floor level the windows serving a bedroom, living room and a kitchen diner, would be below the step up in ground levels to the retained garden and face onto a narrow patio area and a retaining wall. These windows would have limited outlook and would not overlook the adjacent garden.

The first floor of the barn conversion and the bedrooms provided within would be reliant on roof lights, meaning that, save for a small bathroom window, there would be no conventional first floor windows to overlook the adjacent property. The centre of the roof lights, already installed, have a bottom edge more than 1.7m above first floor level. They would provide the room with natural light and ventilation but very limited opportunity for the overlooking of the adjacent garden.

Overall, the living conditions and amenities of adjacent neighbour's would not be unacceptably affected and there would not be conflict with Local Plan policy DC1 in those regards.

The existing building, if it were converted as proposed, would provide acceptable amenity and living conditions for future occupants. At ground and first floor levels the dwelling would provide three double bedrooms (two ensuite) and a single bedroom (4 bedrooms) across a total of 136 sqm of habitable gross internal floor space. That would be more gross internal floor space than is required, in nationally described space standards, for a dwelling that accommodates 4 bedrooms and 8 persons (standard requires at least 124 sqm). Additionally, to that habitable floorspace the dwelling would provide additional incidental storage space accessed from the garden.

At ground floor, the rooms would be well served by open bifold glazing and a series of slim vertical windows that would provide natural light and garden outlook to principal rooms. At first floor, bedrooms would have limited outlook, dependent only on roof lights, but would be provided with natural light and ventilation. Out door amenity space would be ample, providing slim patio space immediately to front windows and doors and garden beyond for recreation and planting.

Highway Safety

Local Plan Policy DC1 requires that development provides for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

The NPPF states that in assessing applications for development, it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

In comments the Highway Authority point to Council parking standards that require 3 off road parking spaces for a four-bedroom dwelling. At best the current layout provides just two spaces. Also of note, the width across the parking area makes limited provision for two adjacent cars to park with circulation space and room to open car doors. Standard dimension for a parking space 2.4m x 4.8m, each space individually would comply, however, spaces abutting walls or fences as in this case should ideally be increased to a width of 3m to comply with standard. The full width of the area measures at 5.3m, 0.7m less than standard.

The ability to provide additional parking space or increase width within the layout is restricted by boundary and a dramatic fall from retained levels beyond the edge of the spaces. One of the four bedrooms would be a single or a box room, the overall size of the dwelling would not be extravagant and, occupied conventionally, car ownership

would not necessarily exceed two. Width is restricted between boundary fences, but not dramatically so, it is feasible that occupants with two car ownership could manage with the restricted width, without it being necessary to park on the highway.

Overspill, or visitor, roadside parking adjacent to the footway would not cause dangerous obstruction or congestion on a slow-moving residential access road that terminates at a turning head. The parish council are concerned about an increased traffic outflow onto the main road via what is already a small narrow access. That is not a concern shared, or a view supported, by the Highway Authority. The addition of a single modestly sized dwelling would not significantly increase traffic movements over and above that of the existing housing development. The narrowing to the short section of road between the junction approach with Utttoxeter Road and the east of the access to the east, serves to slow and control traffic flow, onto the main road.

On balance, impacts on highway safety would not be unacceptable given the context and circumstances of the site. It would not be an adverse impact that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit associated with the development. Relaxation of standards would enable the delivery of a dwelling in a residential area and the future security and reuse of a building with heritage value and contribution to the character and appearance of the area, that could not otherwise be delivered.

Impacts on Biodiversity and Ecology

The Environment Act (2021) places a legal requirement on all development, unless otherwise exempt, to compensate for impacts on and loss of biodiversity habitats with the delivery of a 10% net gain on site or, where this cannot be achieved, off site, which can include the purchasing credits from a registered habitat bank.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that policies and decisions should minimise impacts on biodiversity and that development should mitigate or compensate for the loss of habitat whilst delivering enhancement and net gain in habitat.

It is agreed that because development has already commenced and the application seeks partly retrospective permission, the application can claim exemption from the BNG legislation.

The building has been surveyed by an ecologist for bats. However, the development commenced before the building had been surveyed and the ecologist has surveyed a building where the roof structure had already been replaced with modern construction. By replacing the roof structure a lofted roof, with high bat habitat potential, would have been removed. The submitted bat survey does not consider the value of the former structure or the extent to which habitat had already been lost.

The ecologist has addressed criticism in these regards, with a supplementary submission that addresses the point and provides recommendation relative to compensation and mitigation for the loss of bat habitat. To comply with the terms of the NPPF, the submission also recommends planting to enhance biodiversity within the plot. The consultant from the Staffs Wildlife Trust has endorsed and does not object to the recommended enhancement and mitigation.

Other Considerations

One of the neighbours, assumed to be adjacent to the east, does not object to the development but raises points of concern. The neighbour questions whether party wall agreements are envisaged and whether there would be changes to the boundary. The Party Wall Act is civil legislation and not a material planning consideration. The development will be subject to the terms of the Party Wall Act and will need to comply so far as it applies and is relevant. Any breach of that Act is enforceable through the courts and should be pursued by the effected landowner after taking the appropriate legal advice. There does not appear to be any changes to boundary treatment proposed here, retaining wall and boundary close boarded fencing has already been erected to boundaries and the rear stone facing wall of the development's adjoining outrigger would provide the boundary to the neighbour at the east.

The neighbour is concerned about being disturbed by work during the construction process and asks that controls and limits are placed on the hours that work and/or noisy activity can take place. This would be common practice, and a suitable condition is available and often used to protect amenity.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The existing barn is an obvious dwelling conversion in waiting, a substantial and sizeable stone building within adequate curtilage surrounded by other dwellings. The treatment of the building would respect its form and character using existing openings, sensitive detailing and use of materials. There would be no unacceptable impacts on character and appearance, residential amenities, or highway safety. There would be no conflict with local plan policy or any harms that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits associated with the delivery of a dwellinghouse.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 04/12/2025

X 

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council