

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0401
Valid 04/09/2025

THE OLD PARLOUR
CASTLE HILL ROAD
ALTON

DEMOLITION OF EXISTING
OUTBUILDING AND
ERECTION OF REPLACEMENT
BUILDING FOR USE AS
HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Heritage
- Sustainability
- Neighbour living conditions

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Rural within the Alton Conservation Area and larger village as defined in LP strategic policy SS8. There is an Article 4 notice for Alton but this relates to external cladding only. There is also a Conservation Area Appraisal which for Town Head notes:

Where High Street and Town Head meet the planned settlement ends, historic buildings thin out, and the roads funnel together, entering the fields as a single lane. Here key buildings include those of Town Head farm with its fine three-storey 18th century farmhouse and detached barns (mostly converted), and Nos. 22-23 Town Head, a small 17th century lobby-entrance house (now cottages). Clear views towards the farm and of building platforms that edge that space to the north are available across the surviving fields.

The existing building is a single storey flat-roofed painted block-work outbuilding facing into an enclosed court yard. It is end-on to the road with a blank coursed semi-dressed stone end wall. In fact this wall continues along the west elevation and into a hidden north elevation. There is a part timber extension at the opposite (north) end. Existing plan dimensions 15.7m x 4.6m (72m²).

Current use is given as 'ancillary outbuilding' (and in the DAHS) as 'a former agricultural building'. Sharing the access and courtyard are holiday units formed in a re-built outbuilding (05/01374/FUL) arranged parallel with and close up to the road edge.

Adjacent to the west side is the garden and two-storey end elevation of an unrelated dwelling at no.6 Castle Hill Road.

Listed buildings nearby opposite at Town Head Farm and in the row formed by nos. 1, 2 and 3 The Barn a short distance to the west.

Adjacent to the north is a grassed lawn area within the ownership but not within the red edge and not linked to the application. Beyond this again the land drops away into the wooded ravine of the Churnet Valley. [See file photo 0556.]

PROPOSAL

The building is to be replaced with one of similar rectangular plan form (15.7m x 4.6m) but constructed from “natural stone” and given a traditional-form dual pitched roof completed in “small format Staffordshire Blue plain clay tiles” to ridge height c.4.3m.

The new building is to be used as short stay holiday accommodation with accommodation comprising an open-plan lounge / kitchen / diner; two ensuite bedrooms, and associated entrance hall, cloakroom and storage.

No outdoor amenity space is included but the block plan red edge defines an area within the existing courtyard as ‘parking and turning area’. It is to be noted that the north end elevation incorporates a three-section sliding / folding door unit which as first submitted would open on to the adjacent lawn within the blue edged land. On discussion with the LPA revised plans show this as a non-opening window.

At the request of the LPA a protected species report was requested. This was received 14th January 2026. This concludes:

There are no roosting opportunities for bats in the building other than exceptionally poor potential places of shelter at the rear of metal sheets and metal flashings. The likelihood of use is exceptionally small and can be managed by contractors following the method of working set out [in the submitted report].

There is no evidence of birds nesting in the building and there are no nesting opportunities. The only nesting opportunities are in shrubs close to the building. If birds begin to nest in any of these areas between the beginning of March and the end of August in any year during the development then work must stop until the young have fledged. Development between the beginning of September and the end of February in any year will have no impact on nesting places.

The site for the conversion has no value to biodiversity and comprises entirely building and hard standing. There will be no net loss of biodiversity for the site if the extension is built.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The LPA can accept that this proposed development is exempt from BNG requirements as there is no unsealed surface involved (under 25m² de minimis category).

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles

SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS8 Larger Villages Area Strategy
SS11 Churnet Valley Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
E4 Tourism and Cultural Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

Other

- Alton Conservation Area Appraisal adopted 23rd February 2008.
- Alton Article 4 which provides that external cladding of walls and dwellinghouses in Conservation Areas within the area administered by the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council shall NOT be "permitted development" for the purpose of that Order and requiring express planning permission to be obtained.

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

78/06068/OLDDC – Erection of loose boxes – approved

05/01374/FUL – Rebuilding of outbuilding to form holiday accommodation – approved [subject to condition 5: The building hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling known as The Old Parlour and shall not be sold or otherwise disposed of as a residential unit without the written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To avoid any future undesirable fragmentation of the curtilage or the creation of a separate residential use.]

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: **28.10.2025**

Neighbour consultation period ends: **21.10.2025**

Press Advert: **29.10.2025**

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Alton Parish Council – “no objections”

SMDC Heritage Conservation

The proposal would be situated in Alton Conservation Area and within the wider setting of Townhead Farmhouse, which is a Grade II Listed Building. The significance of Town Head Farm House derives from its retention of historic fabric and plan form, association with the development of farmsteads in the 17th century, illustrative of vernacular construction with some polite architectural influence. The parlour historically was linked to the farmhouse, but has since been converted to residential use.

The existing outbuilding is of no heritage value, and its demolition would not harm the significance of the Conservation Area nor the setting of the Listed Building.

The proposed materials would be characteristic of the surrounding built heritage. It is noted the proposed elevations would include windows and rainwater goods in upvc, which is not a traditional material. However, it is considered that these features would be on non-principal elevations and, if detailed well, could still be sympathetic to the appearance of the Conservation Area in this instance.

Whilst there would be an increase in height and potentially an increase in the visibility and prominence of the building from the street, the proposed roof form would be more sympathetic to the traditional and vernacular construction of buildings elsewhere in the Conservation Area. Its scale would still be subservient to other historic ancillary buildings in the historic Townhead farmstead and the increased height would not result in a visual dominating building.

Overall, the proposed development would be a slight enhancement to the appearance of the Conservation Area and would have a neutral impact on the setting of the adjacent Listed Building.

Heritage Consultation Conclusion

In summary, the proposed replacement building would be a slight enhancement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and have a neutral impact on the setting of the Listed Building. This would satisfy the provisions of s.66 and 72 of the Act, Section 16 of the NPPF and policy DC2 of the Local Plan. There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

For any consent granted, the following conditions are suggested:

(a) Before any construction occurs above damp-proof course (DPC) of the replacement building hereby approved, a stone sample panel, showing stone type and finish, as well as its coursing, jointing and pointing technique, shall be provided on site

for inspection and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the agreed sample panel details.

Reason: In order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

(b) Before the new roof hereby approved is installed for the replacement building, samples or detailed specifications of the new roof tiles to be used, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be carried out only in accordance with the agreed materials.

Reason: To ensure the development preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

(c) No works shall be commenced in respect of the features identified below, until details of their design, fixing and finish in the form of manufacturer's specification or drawings and sections at a scale of not less than 1:10 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be undertaken and retained for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

- i. External windows including roof windows, doors and their immediate surroundings, including details of glazing and glazing bars.
- ii. Treatment of window and door heads and cills
- iii. Ridge, verges and eaves
- iv. Extractor vents, flues and/or airbricks

Reason: In order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

The property is located on Castle Hill Road (Road No. D1359) which is an unclassified road with a speed limit of 30 mph and benefits from streetlights. Castle Hill Road serves residential properties but also serves St. John's and St. Peter's Churches, Youth Retreat Centre, and a farm. There are no footpaths along the entire stretch of Castle Hill Road.

The proposed building will be used as holiday accommodation and will consist of 2 ensuite bedrooms and kitchen/diner and lounge. The existing building currently houses a store, games room and maintenance store.

The proposed building will be accessed via an existing access off Castle Hill Road which also serves The Old Parlour. A yard area to the rear shown on submitted Drawing Number MTOP-SA-XX-XX-DR-A-0101 Block Plan shows parking and turning for both the proposed building and The Old Parlour. Parking for 2 vehicles is allocated for the proposed building.

Parking is sufficient and meets the Parking Standards. The proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the adopted highway and therefore there is no objection (application number SMD/2025/0401) subject to the following condition.

The car parking area shall be provided as shown on the approved Drawing Number MTOP-SA-XX-XX-DR-A-0101 Block Plan and shall thereafter be kept of its intended purpose.

Reasons

To comply with NPPF; to comply with SMDC Local Plan Policy DC1 and T1; in the interests of highway safety.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The proposed development lies within the development boundary for the larger village of Alton – policy SS8 applies. This allows for development or redevelopment appropriate to the Spatial Strategy and character of the settlement. Policy SS8 does not explicitly refer to the provision of tourist accommodation but includes the following which hold some relevance to this proposal, in particular:

- The settlements shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres;
- Enabling small-scale new employment development;
- Ensure that new development reflects and enhances each village's special character and heritage with priority to the reuse and regeneration of existing redundant, underused or surplus sites; ensuring that development is of a suitable scale in relation to the role and function of the villages as set out in the Spatial Strategy;
- Protecting and enhancing the setting and historic character of the village, including heritage assets.

A more specific policy consideration for tourism is given under LP Policy E4. This states that:

New tourism and cultural development which complements the distinctive character and quality of the District will be supported having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS 5 to SS 10 and Churnet Valley Strategy Policy SS 11.

There is a requirement that new tourism / visitor accommodation should be in a location with good 'connectivity' with other tourist destinations and amenities, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling or be in locations in or close to settlements where local services, facilities and public transport are available. Given the proximity to Alton Towers and the larger village location both of these are met in this case.

Perhaps reflecting the existing heavy impact from Alton Towers on the village, there is no particular added support from the Churnet Valley Master Plan for tourism provision within the village as the focus in the Masterplan is placed (no doubt very deliberately) on the Alton Towers Resort itself. Nevertheless LP Churnet Valley Strategy policy SS11 encompasses Alton. This expects both that development be in accordance with the Masterplan and that support be given to short stay and long stay visitor accommodation. Within the Masterplan /SS11 area the policy is that:

Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area. Strong sustainable development and environmental management principles should also be demonstrated.

As a modest scheme for a two bedroomed / four-person unit in a larger village location it can again be concluded based on its sustainability (and subject to design and

heritage considerations) that as with E4 (1) (A) and (B) there is compatibility with the Churnet Valley Masterplan, if not express support from it within the village.

Conclusion with regard to the principle

In conclusion to this section the development proposed can be supported as being acceptable in principle. The main considerations to follow are then the linked matters of design and heritage; vehicles and parking (highways); living conditions for neighbours.

Design and Heritage

The issues have been very well set out in the consultation response of the Council's Conservation Officer and read in conjunction with the site and proposal descriptions given at the head of this report there is no need to rehearse the details again here save to conclude that this is a well-conceived scheme, shown to be appropriate and compatible with the Conservation Area heritage of its surroundings and with the Listed Building setting.

Parking is suitably provided for in an enclosed court yard with little or no impact on the outward characteristics of the street scene.

There has been some discussion between the case officer and Conservation Officer as to the details that are being recommended for condition.

Drainage

The agent has confirmed by e-mail that the Severn Trent Water requested pre-commencement condition is accepted.

Amenity

The development would present a 'blank' elevation to the adjacent neighbour's side-garden space and side elevation at no.6 Castle Hill Road. In physical scale the development is taller than the existing structure as a result of the pitched roof ridge. However, because the development would stand to the east it is reasonable to conclude that at 4.3m to the ridge it would not be overbearing or otherwise problematic to the neighbour's enjoying of their garden and dwelling.

The provision of outdoor space for the proposed holiday let would not be an essential requirement. However, it is noted that there is evidently an intention that visitors should have access to use the rear lawn area that is not included in the application land. Whilst this of itself is not necessarily of concern and indeed would seem desirable in terms of the visiting users of the accommodation it does raise a potential consideration with regard to impacts on the neighbours at no. 6 as the lawn runs behind that property.

Highway Safety

Based on the response of the Highways Authority the scheme does not conflict with highway safety and includes adequate off-street parking.

As a relatively well placed rural village which continues to be served by some bus services and has several pubs, a convenience store and a separate post office / newsagent's, GP surgery and village hall all within a 500m radius the location is sustainable in transport terms.

Protected Species

Following receipt of the Ecology survey report commissioned by the applicant and based on its findings it can be accepted that the building holds negligible opportunity for bat presence. Suitably worded condition / informative should be attached in event of permission.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In consideration of all of the above the application can be recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **Approve subject to conditions**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 06.03.2026

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council