

SUPPORTING PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Proposed Permission in Principle Application

Former Rushton Inn, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire Moorlands

For the erection of up to five dwellings on previously developed land

1.0 Executive Summary

This Supporting Planning Assessment has been prepared in support of a proposed Permission in Principle (“PiP”) application relating to the former Rushton Inn, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire Moorlands.

The application seeks Permission in Principle for the redevelopment of the site for up to five dwellings on previously developed land.

The site comprises a long-standing vacant former public house and associated land extending to approximately 0.37 hectares (0.91 acres). The property occupies a prominent roadside position on the A523 Macclesfield Road and benefits from an established vehicular access, substantial hardstanding, and a built form which has historically accommodated commercial and residential uses.

The proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable form of rural redevelopment which:

- Re-uses previously developed land;
- Secures the regeneration of a redundant and deteriorating site;
- Delivers modest housing growth within a sustainable rural location;
- Preserves the openness and character of the surrounding area;
- Utilises an established access arrangement;
- Reflects national policy support for brownfield and grey belt redevelopment; and
- Aligns with the strategic objectives of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

The scope of assessment at Permission in Principle stage is limited to the consideration of:

1. Location;
2. Land use; and
3. Amount of development.

Detailed technical matters including layout, appearance, landscaping, drainage, highways design, ecology and residential amenity are reserved for subsequent Technical Details Consent.

Having regard to the Development Plan and material planning considerations, it is concluded that the site is suitable in principle for residential redevelopment and that the proposed development accords with the presumption in favour of sustainable development established within the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”).

2.0 Introduction

This Planning Assessment has been prepared on behalf of the applicant in support of a proposed Permission in Principle application relating to land at the former Rushton Inn, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire Moorlands.

The application seeks Permission in Principle for the erection of up to five dwellings.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Describe the site and its surroundings;
- Outline the proposed development;
- Identify the relevant planning policy framework;
- Assess the proposal against national and local planning policy;
- Demonstrate the suitability of the site for residential development in principle; and
- Confirm that the proposal represents sustainable development.

This document should be read alongside the submitted application form, location plan and indicative development drawings.

3.0 Site Description and Context

3.1 Site Location

The application site comprises the former Rushton Inn located on the A523 Macclesfield Road at Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire Moorlands.

The property occupies a highly visible roadside position between Leek and Macclesfield and lies immediately adjacent to existing residential development and established ribbon development along the A523 corridor.

The site extends to approximately 0.37 hectares (0.91 acres) and includes:

- The former public house building;
- Associated parking and hardstanding;
- Ancillary land;
- Existing vehicular access arrangements; and
- Areas of unmanaged landscaping and scrub.

Marketing particulars for the property identify the site as a former public house with substantial internal floorspace, former dining areas, kitchen facilities, residential accommodation and extensive parking. The property has remained vacant for a prolonged period and is now in need of comprehensive renovation and redevelopment.

The sales particulars further confirm that the site has historically accommodated a mixed commercial and residential use and benefits from direct access from the A523.

3.2 Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of:

- Residential dwellings;
- Rural roadside development;

- Agricultural land;
- Woodland planting; and
- Scattered rural businesses.

The site sits within an established developed frontage and does not represent isolated countryside development.

The immediate context includes existing built form, established access infrastructure and domestic development patterns which collectively create a clear developed character along this section of the highway.

The site is sustainably connected to nearby settlements including Rushton Spencer, Leek, Congleton and Macclesfield.

4.0 Relevant Planning History and Site Background

The site has historically operated as a public house and associated residential premises. The Rushton Inn has been vacant for a considerable period and no longer contributes positively to the local economy or streetscene.

The continued deterioration of the site has resulted in:

- Visual harm;
- Underutilisation of a previously developed parcel of land;
- Loss of active frontage; and
- A declining condition of the existing structures.

The redevelopment of the site for a modest residential scheme presents an opportunity to secure the long-term regeneration of the land and provide a positive enhancement to the local environment.

The existing lawful built form, hardstanding and access arrangements are material considerations in assessing the principle of redevelopment.

5.0 The Proposed Development

The application seeks Permission in Principle for the erection of up to five dwellings. At this stage, only the principle of development is sought.

The proposal establishes:

- The suitability of the site for residential development;
- The acceptability of residential land use; and
- The broad quantum of development.

No approval is sought at this stage for:

- Detailed layout;
- Appearance;
- Scale;
- Landscaping;
- Drainage;

- Highway design;
- Ecology mitigation; or
- Detailed architectural treatment.

These matters will be considered through a subsequent Technical Details Consent application.

Indicative development concepts demonstrate that the site is capable of comfortably accommodating up to five dwellings whilst retaining appropriate spacing, parking, landscaping and access arrangements.

The proposed scale of development is intentionally modest and reflective of the site context.

6.0 Permission in Principle Applications

Permission in Principle (“PiP”) was introduced through the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017.

The process separates the consideration of the fundamental principles of development from detailed technical matters.

PiP applications are assessed solely against:

1. Location;
2. Land use; and
3. Amount of development.

All other matters are reserved for Technical Details Consent.

National Planning Practice Guidance confirms that the purpose of PiP is to provide certainty regarding the acceptability of development on a site before significant technical work is undertaken.

The proposed application fully accords with the intended purpose of the PiP process.

The proposal relates to a modest residential redevelopment of a previously developed site and seeks only to establish the principle of housing development.

7.0 Planning Policy Framework

7.1 Statutory Framework

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan relevant to this application comprises:

- The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted September 2020); and
- Any relevant made Neighbourhood Plans.

Material considerations include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- National Planning Practice Guidance; and
- Emerging planning policy.

7.2 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 2020 and provides the strategic planning framework for the District.

The Local Plan identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development and seeks to support housing delivery, regeneration and the sustainable growth of rural communities. Relevant policies include:

Policy SS1 – Development Principles

Policy SS1 supports sustainable development which:

- Makes effective use of land;
- Supports regeneration;
- Protects environmental quality; and
- Delivers sustainable communities.

The redevelopment of a redundant brownfield site for modest residential development aligns directly with these objectives.

Policy SS2 – Settlement Hierarchy

The Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements intended to direct development toward sustainable locations.

The application site occupies a sustainable roadside location with strong physical and functional connections to surrounding settlements and existing development.

Policy SS10 – Other Rural Areas Strategy

Policy SS10 supports development in rural areas where proposals:

- Meet local housing needs;
- Re-use previously developed land;
- Support sustainable rural communities; and
- Respect local character.

The proposal directly accords with these aims through the redevelopment of a vacant and previously developed site.

Policy H1 – New Housing Development

Policy H1 supports housing proposals where development:

- Is sustainable in location;
- Respects local character;
- Provides appropriate infrastructure; and
- Does not result in unacceptable impacts.

The proposal represents a small-scale and policy-compliant housing development.

Policy DC1 – Design Considerations

Whilst detailed design is reserved for future consideration, the site is capable of accommodating a high-quality residential scheme which responds positively to local vernacular and landscape character.

7.3 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Central government policy strongly supports:

- The effective use of land;
- The reuse of brownfield sites;
- Rural housing where sustainable;
- Regeneration of redundant land and buildings; and
- The delivery of housing.

Paragraphs relating to previously developed land and grey belt policy are particularly relevant.

The NPPF recognises that the redevelopment of previously developed land can constitute appropriate development, particularly where proposals do not result in a greater impact on openness than existing development.

The existing site already contains:

- Substantial built form;
- Extensive hardstanding;
- Established access infrastructure; and
- Longstanding lawful development.

The proposed redevelopment for up to five dwellings would not materially increase the developed footprint or create a materially greater impact upon openness. Instead, the proposal would rationalise and enhance the site through comprehensive redevelopment.

The NPPF also places significant emphasis on boosting the supply of housing and supporting sustainable rural communities.

The proposal would contribute modestly but positively toward local housing supply objectives.

8.0 Assessment of the Principle of Development

8.1 Location

The first matter for consideration under a PiP application is location.

The site occupies a sustainable and logical development location due to:

- Its position adjacent to an established highway corridor;

- Existing roadside development patterns;
- Established access infrastructure;
- Proximity to nearby settlements and services;
- Existing built form on the site; and
- Its status as previously developed land.

The proposal does not represent isolated or sporadic encroachment into undeveloped countryside.

Rather, it constitutes the regeneration of an existing developed parcel of land.

The site has historically accommodated a public house and residential accommodation and therefore already forms part of the developed environment.

Its redevelopment would represent a continuation and rationalisation of established land use patterns.

8.2 Land Use

Residential development is an entirely appropriate land use within this location.

The surrounding area already accommodates residential properties and mixed rural uses.

The proposal would not introduce:

- Heavy commercial activity;
- Industrial operations;
- Significant traffic generation beyond historic site activity; or
- Incompatible land uses.

The cessation of the former public house use means that the site no longer contributes actively to the rural economy.

Conversely, redevelopment for housing would:

- Secure beneficial reuse of the land;
- Improve visual appearance;
- Provide investment into the site;
- Deliver new homes; and
- Prevent ongoing deterioration.

The proposed land use is therefore fully compatible with the character and function of the area.

8.3 Amount of Development

The proposal seeks Permission in Principle for up to five dwellings.

This represents a modest and proportionate scale of development having regard to:

- The size of the site;
- Existing developed footprint;
- Existing access arrangements;

- Surrounding development patterns; and
- The rural context.

Indicative development concepts demonstrate that five dwellings can be comfortably accommodated without overdevelopment.

The proposal allows sufficient opportunity for:

- Appropriate spacing;
- Landscaping;
- Parking;
- Residential amenity;
- Biodiversity enhancement; and
- Highway safety.

The scale of development is therefore entirely appropriate.

9.0 Previously Developed Land and Grey Belt Considerations

The site constitutes previously developed land.

The land has historically accommodated:

- A public house;
- Residential accommodation;
- Ancillary operational development;
- Hardstanding; and
- Parking areas.

The site therefore falls squarely within the NPPF definition of previously developed land. National policy provides substantial support for the redevelopment of brownfield sites. Furthermore, recent amendments to national planning policy have introduced and strengthened the concept of “grey belt” land.

The site possesses characteristics commonly associated with grey belt land, namely:

- Existing substantial development;
- Reduced contribution to openness;
- Established hardstanding and access infrastructure; and
- Limited intrinsic countryside character.

The redevelopment of this site for up to five dwellings would:

- Regenerate underutilised land;
- Improve visual appearance;
- Deliver sustainable housing; and
- Avoid pressure on undeveloped greenfield sites.

Importantly, redevelopment would not create materially greater harm to openness than the existing lawful built form.

Indeed, a carefully designed residential scheme is likely to result in an overall visual enhancement compared with the deteriorating existing structures.

10.0 Sustainability Appraisal

The proposal represents sustainable development when assessed against the three overarching objectives of the NPPF.

10.1 Economic Objectives

The proposal would:

- Generate employment during construction;
- Support local trades and suppliers;
- Increase local expenditure within nearby settlements;
- Secure investment into a vacant site; and
- Contribute to the local housing market.

10.2 Social Objectives

The proposal would:

- Deliver up to five new homes;
- Assist in addressing housing supply requirements;
- Regenerate a neglected site;
- Improve visual amenity; and
- Support the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

10.3 Environmental Objectives

The proposal would:

- Re-use previously developed land;
- Limit pressure for greenfield development;
- Enable biodiversity enhancement opportunities;
- Facilitate landscape improvements; and
- Allow the replacement of deteriorating structures with energy-efficient housing.

The proposal therefore constitutes sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF.

11.0 Technical Matters

At PiP stage, technical matters are not for formal determination.

Nevertheless, it is evident that there are no overriding constraints which would prevent suitable residential redevelopment.

The site benefits from:

- Existing vehicular access;
- Established utility connections;
- Existing built development;
- Sufficient site area; and

- A configuration capable of accommodating residential development.

Detailed matters including:

- Ecology;
- Drainage;
- Highways;
- Arboriculture;
- Landscaping;
- Residential amenity; and
- Detailed design

can all be appropriately addressed at Technical Details Consent stage.

There is no evidence of any technical issue which would fundamentally undermine the suitability of the site for development in principle.

12.0 Character and Appearance

The redevelopment of the site presents a significant opportunity to enhance the visual quality of the area.

The existing buildings are in deteriorating condition and no longer make a positive contribution to the streetscene.

A carefully designed residential development could:

- Reinforce local vernacular character;
- Improve frontage appearance;
- Introduce high-quality landscaping;
- Enhance boundary treatments; and
- Create an attractive gateway development along the A523 corridor.

The proposal therefore offers the potential for a clear visual enhancement over the current condition of the site.

13.0 Neighbourhood Planning Context

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan confirms that Rushton is one of the neighbourhood areas within the District where neighbourhood planning activity is taking place.

Emerging neighbourhood planning objectives generally seek to:

- Protect rural character;
- Deliver sustainable development;
- Support thriving communities; and
- Ensure development responds appropriately to local context.

The proposal aligns with these broad objectives through the sensitive redevelopment of a redundant previously developed site.

Importantly, the proposal does not seek large-scale expansion into undeveloped countryside but instead focuses upon the regeneration and efficient reuse of existing developed land.

14.0 Planning Balance

The planning balance weighs decisively in favour of the proposal.

The benefits of the development include:

- Regeneration of a vacant and deteriorating site;
- Re-use of previously developed land;
- Delivery of up to five dwellings;
- Support for rural housing supply;
- Visual enhancement;
- Economic investment;
- Efficient use of land;
- Sustainable redevelopment; and
- Utilisation of existing access infrastructure.

No significant adverse impacts have been identified at this stage.

The proposal is modest in scale, policy compliant in principle, and capable of being delivered through a high-quality detailed design process.

Accordingly, the proposal accords with:

- The presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- National policy objectives supporting brownfield redevelopment;
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan objectives; and
- The overall aims of sustainable rural regeneration.

15.0 Conclusion

This Supporting Planning Assessment demonstrates that the former Rushton Inn site is suitable in principle for residential redevelopment.

The proposed development for up to five dwellings:

- Represents the effective re-use of previously developed land;
- Regenerates a long-standing vacant site;
- Delivers modest and proportionate housing growth;
- Reflects the surrounding development pattern;
- Supports sustainable rural communities;
- Aligns with national and local planning policy; and
- Constitutes sustainable development.

The scope of consideration at Permission in Principle stage is limited to:

- Location;
- Land use; and
- Amount of development.

The proposal performs positively against each of these considerations. Detailed technical matters can be appropriately addressed through the subsequent Technical Details Consent process.

Having regard to the Development Plan and all material planning considerations, there are no policy or technical reasons why Permission in Principle should not be granted. The proposal is therefore respectfully recommended for approval.

References

- National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted September 2020)
- Rushton Parish Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Draft (October 2023)
- The Rushton Inn Sales Particulars and Site Information