

PLANNING STATEMENT

**PROPOSAL : PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE APPLICATION FOR UP
TO 7 DWELLINGS**

**ADDRESS : LAND ADJACENT TO THORNCROFT FARM,
BLACKSHAW MOOR, LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST13 8TR**

APPLICANT : MR & MRS K PHILLIPS

DATE : JUNE 2026 JOB No. : 2026-3053

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a Permission in Principle (PIP) application for residential development on land adjacent to Thorncroft Farm, Blackshaw Moor on behalf of Mr & Mrs K Phillips and seeks permission for the erection of up to 7 residential dwellings (use Class C3). All other matters, including layout, scale, appearance, landscaping drainage, ecology and means of access are expressly reserved for consideration at the subsequent Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage, should permission in principle be granted.

1.2 This statement analyses the site and the proposals and demonstrates that the site is suitable for residential development in principle having regard to the limited scope of assessment at this stage, the policy context, both nationally and locally, within which the proposals are made and relevant appeal decisions and material considerations.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site comprises of a broadly rectangular parcel of land which extends to some 0.4536 hectares. Forming part of a larger agricultural field it lies on the southern side of Blackshaw Lane to the east of Thorncroft Farm. The site, which is served by an existing agricultural field access in the north eastern corner, is bound on three sides by existing mature hedgerows and falls away very gradually from the main Buxton Road in an east to west direction. The Severn Trent Water Treatment facility for Blackshaw Moor lies to the south south east of the site with the Three Horseshoes public house and its associated parking areas lying directly opposite on the northern side of Blackshaw Lane. Beyond this lies the main settlement of Blackshaw Moor with dwellings laid out predominately on the eastern side of the main A53 Buxton Road but with some scattered dwellings on the western side too. Sporadic dwellings are spattered along both sides of Blackshaw Lane to the west of the site with open fields immediately to the south.

2.2 For the purposes of the development plan the application site lies within open countryside approximately 180m east of Blackshaw Moor which is designated as a smaller village within the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. It does not form part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt although Blackshaw Lane forms the administrative boundary between Staffordshire Moorlands and the Peak District National Park which lies to the north. There are no listed buildings within or close to the application site and the land does not form part of a Conservation Area.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 The application seeks Permission in Principle for residential development of up to 7 dwellings. The plot which extends to some 0.4536 hectares is 42 metres deep with a roadside frontage of 108 metres. It is anticipated that the development would be laid out in a linear form of ribbon development with each dwelling have a plot size circa 15.5 wide x 42m deep.

3.2 In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order, the application specifies

- Land Use: Residential (Use Class C3)
- Amount of development: A single dwelling

3.3 Determination of an application for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. This is known as Stage 1. No approval is sought at this stage for layout,

scale, appearance, access details or landscaping. These matters will be fully addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage (Stage 2).

3.4 A grant of permission in principle (stage 1) is not within the scope of biodiversity net gain as it is not a grant of planning permission. However, the subsequent technical details consent (stage 2) as a grant of planning permission, would be subject to the biodiversity net gain condition.

4.0 POLICY

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2024. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered as a material consideration and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

4.3 The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It goes on to seek to significantly boost the supply of new housing throughout the country and sets out requirements for Local Authorities to maintain a five year deliverable supply of housing at all times. It also sets out guidance inter alia in respect of making effective use of previously developed land, securing high quality design and assessing impacts on highway safety. The content of this document has been taken into account in the preparation of this application and the most relevant sections of the NPPF are considered to be:-

- 1 Introduction paragraphs 1-14
- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 4 Decision making
- 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well designed places
- 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.4 The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of Local Plan which was adopted in September 2020. The main policies of relevance to the determination of this application are as follows:-

- SS1 (Development Principles);
- SS3 (Future Provision and Distribution of Development);
- SS9 (Smaller Villages Area Strategy);
- H1 (New Housing Development);
- DC1 (Design Considerations);
- DC3 (Landscape and Settlement Setting),
- NE1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources),
- NE2 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows) and
- T1 (Development and Sustainable Transport).

For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

4.5 The following documents are also strong material considerations in the determination of this application:

- The National Planning Policy Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- The Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD (2018)
- SMDC Housing Land Supply Statement (2023)
- SMDC Annual Monitoring Report (2024-2025)
- SMDC Quantifying the Economic Benefits of Growth Report
- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

4.6 In terms of Supplementary Planning Guidance the Council's adopted Design Principles and Space About Dwellings publications are also important in the consideration of this application.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Planning Practice Guidance confirms that the scope of Permission in Principle applications is limited to location, land use & amount of development. Issues relevant to these “in principle” matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. All other matters are expressly reserved.

5.2 Where permission in principle is granted by application, the default duration of that permission is granted by application, the default duration of that permission is 3 years. Local Planning Authorities must specify the location of the site, the type of development and provide an indication of the amount of development the site has permission in principle for. The amount of residential development must be expressed as a range, indicating the minimum and maximum net number of dwellings (i.e. taking into account any existing dwellings on the site) which are, in principle, permitted. It is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle, and its terms may only include the site location, the type of development and amount of development.

Land Use

5.3 In its general approach the Council expects the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. When considering development proposals the Council will in accordance with policy SS1 take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. This means that planning applications that accord with the policies in Local Plan shall be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 Policy SS2 of the adopted development plan directs development to those locations or settlements where it is deemed most suitable, largely based on the availability and provision of various services. As part of this, the adopted development boundaries define towns, rural area larger villages, rural area small villages and other rural areas and are the spatial representation of the District's overarching development strategy.

5.5 Policy SS9 of the Local Plan seeks to allow an appropriate level of sensitive development within smaller villages. Blackshaw Moor is one of the identified smaller villages listed under the policy, which do not have defined development boundaries. Appropriate development within these smaller villages will be supported so long as the development enhances community vitality or meets a social or economic need. All new development is also required to reflect and enhance each village's special character and heritage by protecting and enhancing the setting and historic character of the village, including heritage assets.

5.6 Local Plan Housing Policy H1 4) b) states that outside of development boundaries, limited infill residential development of an appropriate scale and character will be supported subject to certain criteria being met. These include the development being well related to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village, not creating or extending ribbon development or lead to sporadic development, not leading to a prominent intrusion into the countryside and not having a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

5.7 In addition Local Plan design and landscape character policies 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; and, to protect and, where possible, enhance the setting of settlements by 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.

5.8 Whilst the main nucleus of Blackshaw Moor village is set out within a linear arrangement predominately on the eastern side of the A53 it is clear that elements and facilities serving the village such as the public house and the water treatment works lie on a spur off Blackshaw Moor Lane. Similarly further development can be found on Thorncliffe Lane, another spur which this time extends from the village to the east. Hence the village is considered to have a looser and more disjointed arrangement which radiates out from the A53. It is anticipated that development of the application site would comprise of a linear form of development with dwellings set close to the roadside to reflect and reflect the grain and surrounding pattern of development.

5.9 Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that development should provide a safe and suitable access for all users with paragraph 116 stating that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. This guidance is reflected in policy Local Plan Policies DC1 and T1 which requires, amongst other matters, for development to provide for a safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

5.10 At Permission in Principle stage, it is sufficient to establish that safe and suitable access is achievable in principle. Detailed highway design and visibility splays can be appropriately secured and assessed at Technical Details Consent stage. Having regard to the site frontage which extends to some 108m and the alignment of the road which is straight and has clear and unobstructed visibility in both directions it is considered that a safe and sufficient access could be provided to serve the dwellings proposed. Overall access does not present and in principle issues with the location of the proposed development and can be satisfactorily addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage.

5.11 In terms of sustainability Blackshaw Moor benefits from a primary school and public house and has a bus stop on either side of the A53. The application site is a short walk to the bus stop in the village and can easily be accessed via a range of other transport modes without reliance on the private car. The application site is therefore considered to be sustainable and the provision of a dedicated bus route a few metres from the site means that access to larger settlements such as Buxton, Leek and further beyond is both a realistic and achievable proposition which would amount to genuine choices of mode for a range of trips associated with the proposed development. Whilst it is accepted that there is currently no dedicated pavement to the main A53 the applicant would be prepared to provide a footway, if necessary across the frontage of the site, thereby increasing safe passage to the main road. A footway is currently provided across part of the adjacent Severn Trent Water site and there would therefore only be a very short section of road which would need to be accessed by the verge. Furthermore, whilst it is noted that Blackshaw Lane has no speed restriction, other than that set nationally at 60mph the fact of the matter is that vehicles quite simply are not travelling at speed along this section of the road as they are either accelerating away from the junction which at that point is restricted to 40mph or decelerating on the approach to the junction.

In terms of lighting there is street lighting on the main A53 and it should be noted that the adjacent Three Horseshoes is a country inn which has been significantly extended recently to provide a number of rooms and has significant lighting along Blackshaw Lane.

5.12 In line with local plan policy DC1 and guidance contained within the NPPF development must achieve a satisfactory relationship to any nearby properties such that it does not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, overshadowing, overbearingness, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity.

5.13 The proposal would result in a change of use to residential (Use Class C3) land. Having regard to the location of the site and proximity to neighbouring land uses it is not considered that residential development in this location would give rise to any fundamental amenity issues that could not be resolved at the technical details consent stage.

Amount

5.14 The proposal seeks consent for up to 7 dwellings. The application site has a roadside frontage of 108 metres meaning that each plot, if carved equally would measure 15.5m x 42m. This size of plot is comparable with others in the area and would be sufficient to provide 7 dwellings in principle along with any necessary infrastructure to support it i.e. car and cycle parking provision, turning space, access for emergency and delivery vehicles and refuse storage whilst retaining an open and verdant character.

Other Matters

5.15 Matters regarding ecology biodiversity net gain, arboricultural impacts and flooding issues shall be assessed in detail at the Technical Details Consent stage and lie outside the scope of this application. Notwithstanding this there are not considered to be any environmental constraints that would prevent development being deliverable in principle.

Planning Balance

5.16 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.17 Paragraph 11d of the NPPF, which sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, states that: For decision-taking this means: approving development proposals that accord with an up to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of date, granting permission unless:

- i the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong 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.

5.18 Footnote 8 of the NPPF defines “out-of-date” to include, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply (or four year supply if applicable) or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates the delivery of housing was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

5.19 It is currently the case that the District Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. As there are not any strong reasons for refusing the development in relation to protected areas or assets in the Framework, the tilted balance applies as per paragraph 11d(ii) of the Framework.

5.20 Footnote 9 sets out relevant key paragraphs to refer to in applying the tilted balance. These are paragraphs 66, 84, 91, 110, 115, 129, 135 and 139. Paragraph 66 is not relevant as the proposal does not relate to major development. Paragraph 84 relates to avoiding the development of isolated homes in the countryside. In this case, the site is located in close proximity to Blackshaw Moor – a smaller settlement as defined in Policy S2 of the Local Plan. In this context, it is considered that the proposal would not result in the development of isolated homes in the countryside. Paragraph 91 is not relevant as this is not a town-centre use. Paragraphs 110 and 115 relate to the sustainability of locations on transport grounds, primarily for major or allocated development. In this regard, it is considered that the location is sustainable on transport grounds as set out above. Paragraph 129 requires planning decisions to support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account a range of factors such as need for housing types and associated land availability; market conditions; availability and capacity of infrastructure; desirability of maintaining character; and, the importance of securing well-designed places (paras 135 and 139). The site is greenfield land. As the scheme is for 7 dwellings, there is limited scope to provide a diverse mix of tenures. The site has good opportunities to facilitate access into the market towns of Buxton or Leek subject to technical details. The proposal would result in the placement of 7 dwellings in the countryside. In its surroundings there are a handful of dwellings interspersed with agricultural and commercial uses. The site would be a logical and linear extension of the village along Blackshaw Lane. The proposal would represent the provision of family accommodation since the development of the housing estate. The application is well screened from public vantage points and this means that there are limited public vantage points that would perceive the development. Spatially, the development would result in some encroachment into the countryside however visually the impact on the countryside would be negligible. As such it is considered that the development would maintain the character of the area in principle.

5.21 In conclusion, the proposal would deliver 7 new dwellings in a sustainable location at a time when the District Council's housing supply has following a chronic and prolonged period of undersupply fallen further to just 2.95 years – far below the required 5 years. This provides significant weight in favour of the development. The development would also bring some social and economic benefits by virtue of the construction works and the lifetime of the development, enabling employment and use of services and amenities in the local area.

5.22 The primary adverse impact of the development is in its location which encroaches into the countryside. This weighs against the development, however such weight is ultimately limited given the proximity of the site to the established boundaries of the settlement and the lack of perceivable encroachment from any public views. Overall, it is not considered that there are any adverse impacts of the scheme that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. As such, it is respectfully requested that permission in principle is granted without delay.