
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 October 2025

by **D M Love BA(Hons) PGCert MRTPI PISEP**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/W/25/3371465

Shrub Cottage, Denstone Lane, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4DE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Randell against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref is SMD/2025/0200.
 - The development proposed is a single self-build dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site would be a suitable location for housing, having regard to development plan policies for housing in the countryside, and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The site compromises the extensive rear garden area of Shrub Cottage in a rural location. A small portion of the site is occupied by an existing shed, but the majority is undeveloped domestic grassland that slopes up from the existing house. The proposal would remove the outbuilding and develop the grassy garden space with a two-storey property.
4. Whilst the site is not far from the village of Alton, the wider area is unmistakably rural with an open landscape which is lightly settled and mainly agricultural in nature. There are scattered properties throughout the area, predominantly farms set some distance back from the main road.

Whether the site is a suitable location for housing

5. Policy SS1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 (Local Plan) requires that proposals for development be considered in the context of the spatial strategy for the area, which seeks to concentrate most new development to existing built-up areas. The aim is to foster a sustainable pattern of development which supports the regeneration of towns and helps maintain services and facilities, ensuring the needs of rural areas are met whilst protecting the character of the area.

6. Local Plan Policy SS10 sets out the strategy for Other Rural Areas, including the open countryside, and so is also relevant. To ensure that the character and role of the countryside is not undermined, Part 1 of Policy SS10 restricts new housing in the countryside except in specific circumstances. This includes development which has an essential need to be located there. There is no suggestion that the appeal proposal would meet such a need, so it does not comply with this aspect of policy.
7. Policy SS10 also allows for the replacement of an existing rural building, but when read alongside Part 5c) of Local Plan Policy H1, it is clear that this applies to proposals involving replacement dwellings. In this case, the proposed house would not be a replacement dwelling as it would be constructed on a site that contains a domestic outbuilding. It would not, therefore, comply with this aspect of the policy.
8. Subsection 3 of Local Plan Policy H1 seeks high quality, sustainable housing and notes that assessment of proposals will take account of location. In this case, whilst the site is close to Alton, it does not have a close relationship with the settlement, being separated by open countryside. The proposal would not meet the requirements for limited infill outside of development boundaries set out in subsection 4 of Policy H1.
9. Alton offers a limited range of services which include a convenience store, primary school, pubs and a bus service to further services. Whilst facilities in Alton are within reasonable walking distance of the appeal site, the most direct route is along Denstone Lane, which has no footpath and is unlit. Furthermore, the appeal site is outwith the 30mph zone so traffic could be travelling fast. The nearest bus stop is some 300m away, which again would require walking along Denstone Lane. Access to the wider footpath network is limited and not lit.
10. Overall, I do not find that access to Alton or the bus service to be an attractive or safe route for pedestrians, and there are no dedicated cycling facilities. It is likely that the majority of trips, both to Alton and larger towns and employment facilities beyond, would be undertaken by private car. Given the remote location and lack of alternative transport modes I do not consider the proposal to be in a sustainable location.
11. The proposal is outside any recognised settlement in the Local Plan and there is no demonstrable need for the proposal to be in this location as per the criteria in Policy H1. Equally, the proposal would be heavily reliant on private vehicular use, and I do not consider it to be in a sustainable location due to the lack of readily available alternative transport options. The proposal is not in a suitable location for housing and would conflict with Local Plan Policies SS1, SS10 and H1.

Character and Appearance

12. The site is set behind Shrub Cottage which is set back from the main road. The existing outbuilding on the site is not readily appreciated from public views and only occupies a small portion of the site.
13. In contract, the proposed dwelling is a large two-storey property with significant elements of glazing. The scale of the property would compete with the existing Shrub Cottage in terms of size and volume. When viewed from the road the new

dwelling would not be complementary to the existing property, representing a more dominant intrusion into the area.

14. Equally, the replacement of the existing outbuilding with a property of such size would represent a disproportionate replacement introducing a significantly larger new element of built development to an otherwise sparsely developed rural area.
15. Even though the amount of lighting in the proposed house would likely be similar to that of other properties, the volume of glazing would mean that in dark conditions, internal light would illuminate the building when views from the surrounding area. This would increase its visibility within the wider landscape, in an inherently dark area, eroding the undeveloped character of the area.
16. I conclude that the proposal would cause an adverse effect to the character and appearance of the area. As it would fail to respect the site and its surroundings, it would conflict with Local Plan Policy DC1.

Other Matters

17. The proposal is intended to be custom/ self-built for the appellant to live in. Subject to being secured through an appropriate mechanism, this could be a benefit of the scheme, which could contribute to the Council's statutory duty to provide for this form of development. However, no legal agreement has been provided as part of the appeal, and the condition suggested by the Council would be difficult to enforce. Therefore, I give limited weight to the benefits associated with self-build in this appeal.
18. The Council advises that it cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Whilst it has not confirmed the figure of 2.95-years suggested by the appellant, the Council has acknowledged that the undersupply is significant. In these circumstances paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must be considered. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies on the NPPF taken as a whole. The site is not within a protected area.

Planning Balance

19. I recognise the potential benefits of the proposal of adding an additional property to the housing market. There would also be limited social and economic benefits associated with the proposal. However, an additional unit would make little difference to the overall supply of housing, and the support one extra household would provide to the local economy would also be small.
20. Set against these minor benefits, I have found that the construction of a new home in this location would cause harm to the spatial strategy for the area. There would also be harm to the character and appearance of the area as identified above.
21. Taken together, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

22. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the NPPF, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

D M Love

INSPECTOR