

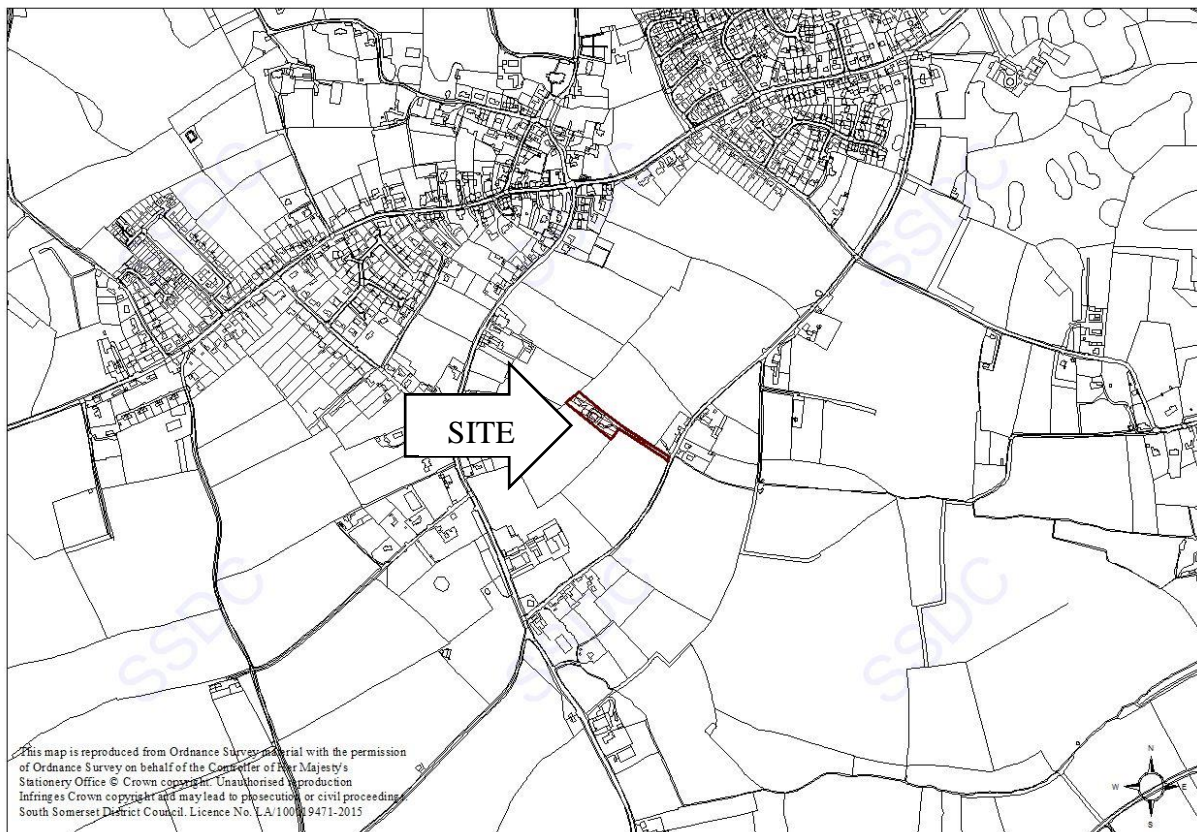
Officer Report On Planning Application: 15/04390/FUL

Proposal :	Proposed conversion and extension of former waterworks depot into residential dwelling including the erection of a double garage (GR 339210/124771).
Site Address:	Former Environment Agency (Depot), Back Lane, Curry Rivel.
Parish:	Curry Rivel
CURRY RIVEL Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr T Osborne
Recommending Case Officer:	Nicholas Head Tel: (01935) 462167 Email: nick.head@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	24th November 2015
Applicant :	Mr J Conway
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Mr Francesco Della Valle, Lake View, The Maltings, Charlton Estate, Shepton Mallet BA4 5QE
Application Type :	Minor Dwellings 1-9 site less than 1ha

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The report is referred to Committee at the request of the Ward Member for a full discussion of the merits of the proposal.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The site is located in open countryside to the south west of the village. It is surrounded on three sides by open fields. It is the north-westernmost portion of land previously used as a waterworks depot. On the site is a brick depot building with a pitched slate roof. The remainder of the depot site, to the south east of the application site, comprises a disused reservoir, and a two-storey brick dwellinghouse. Access to these sites is taken along a private paved driveway off the north west side of Back Lane.

Permission is sought for the conversion and extension of the waterworks depot building to form a dwellinghouse.

HISTORY

15/03046/FUL: Proposed conversion and extension of former waterworks depot into residential dwelling including the erection of a double garage and carport - withdrawn

POLICY

The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) was adopted on the 5th March 2015. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the adopted local plan now forms part of the development plan. As such, decisions on the award of planning permission should be made in accordance with this development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Legislation and national policy are clear that the starting point for decision-making is the development plan, where development that accords with an up-to-date local plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts

should be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028)

SD1	Sustainable Development
SS4	District Wide Housing Provision
SS5	Delivering New Housing Growth
SS6	Infrastructure Delivery
SS7	Phasing of Previously Developed Land
HG2	The Use of Previously Developed Land (PDL) for New Housing Development
HG3	Provision of Affordable Housing
HG4	Provision of Affordable Housing - Sites of 1-5 Dwellings
TA5	Transport Impact of New Development
TA6	Parking Standards
EQ2	General Development
EQ4	Biodiversity
EQ7	Pollution Control

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012):

4. Promoting sustainable transport
6. Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes
7. Requiring good design
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Practice Guidance - Department of Communities and Local Government, 2014.

Policy-related Material Considerations

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy, March 2012 and September 2013.
Somerset County Council Highways Standing Advice, June 2013.

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026)

CONSULTATIONS

Parish Council: No objections.

Highways Authority: Standing Advice applies.

SSDC Highways Consultant: *Traffic impact on Back Lane unlikely to be significant. Consider extent of visibility splays at the site access - acknowledge former use of building but dwelling is likely to increase the use of the access on a daily basis. On-site parking to accord with SPS standards.*

SSDC Landscape Officer: *The site is a singular location, laying between Wiltown and Back lane within open fields to the south of the main village. Whilst the site is host to the functional depot building, it is not a domestic presence, and it is of relatively modest scale. Whilst there is a single residence accessed off the same track as the depot building - 'Springfield', to the southeast - its presence is singular, and set outside the village envelope, and thus does not provide precedent for further development. The character of the application plot is not residential.*

The proposal before us abuts pasture fields on all sides, apart from the narrow boundary with 'Springfield'. It is large scale, and as viewed from Wiltown, will appear incongruous in form and scale, and at variance with its open field surround. Consequently I view the proposal to erode local character and advise a landscape case for refusal.

SSDC Tree Officer: Initial comments (previous application): An objection was raised on the basis that landscape features (trees) would be lost and/or harmed. In particular:

- below-ground services would be likely to harm root systems;
- footprint of development is too close to retained trees for practical retention of trees
- no mitigation is offered for the loss of trees

Recommended revising the proposal, perhaps seeking to retain and manage the existing Willows by a traditional pollarding approach; whilst devising an improved scheme of tree and shrub planting (employing cell-grown and container-grown stock) that would compliment the new dwelling within the surrounding landscape.

In response to the current, amended scheme, regret is expressed that the previous recommendations have not been adopted. The scheme is still considered harmful to established trees on site. No suitable mitigation planting has been proposed. An objection is raised.

SSDC Ecologist: No objection subject to condition relating to bats.

SSDC Environmental Protection Officer: No objection, subject to condition relating to possible contamination.

Wessex Water: No objection is raised. Information is given about future drainage arrangements.

REPRESENTATIONS

Two letters of objection have been received, raising the following main points and referring back to comments offered previously:

- the size, scale and design of the property is totally out of keeping with its surroundings;
- effectively a new dwelling in open countryside;
- future residents would be subject to unacceptable noise from the activities at Old Oak Farm

Two letters of support have been received, raising the following points:

- the site is well suited for residential use, with existing access;
- impact on any neighbours would be minimal;
- a home would be provided for an additional family on brownfield land in a sustainable location.

CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

The site, although adjacent to a single dwellinghouse, is in a countryside locality remote from services and facilities where development is not encouraged. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF advises that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless special circumstances indicate otherwise, such as the re-use of redundant or disused buildings where this would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting. Policy EQ2 of the Local Plan seeks to maintain the District's local distinctiveness, preserving or enhancing its inherent character. The principle of the development would therefore depend upon it being demonstrated that the setting would be enhanced by conversion and re-use of the existing building.

Design, Visual and Landscape Impact

The existing building on the site is a brick structure with slate roof dating back to 1901. It was presumably erected as part of the same development as the two-storey house to the south-east ('The Willows') at the time of the establishment of this waterworks depot. Although a modest structure, it is of sound construction and good quality materials, with a total floor area of 140 sq m, and good internal volumes under a relatively high roof. Importantly, it is well embedded in the setting, with a large amount of established vegetation, and some worthwhile mature trees. In this context, the building is of an appropriate scale and design for its former function. It sits well within the landscape, respecting the open rural setting.

It is considered that a modest scheme of conversion could be devised for this building, and within the context of this well-screened site located in an open landscape. Such a scheme would have to be sensitive to the openness of the wider setting, and the need to maintain and enhance the existing screening provided by trees and shrubs.

However, the current proposal largely overwhelms this building, demolishing some elements and building over and around it. Only small portions of the original building will protrude from the front and rear elevations. A garage outbuilding is proposed for the north-eastern boundary, necessitating the removal of at least one tree. The scale of the development and positioning on site will require removal of much existing vegetation, and, as pointed out by the Tree Officer, would be unsuccessful in retaining any significant screening.

The net visual impact on the setting will be significant. This is a large development in an open landscape. Given its height and bulk, it will be clearly visible from various aspects. It will present an intrusive and incongruous large-scale modern feature in what is currently a low-scale, traditional rural setting beyond the developments of the settlement. The necessity of reducing existing screen vegetation, and the resulting domestic intrusion of the various paraphernalia will emphasise this incongruity.

The Landscape Officer has clearly set out his concerns and recommended refusal of the application, as has the Tree Officer. It is not considered that the proposal would represent an enhancement of the immediate setting, or that it would respect the established rural character of that setting. Furthermore, it is a development on a much larger scale than is appropriate to the building being considered for 're-use' and conversion. It is therefore not considered to accord with the aims of Paragraph 55 of the NPPF or Policy EQ2 of the Local Plan.

Impact on Residential Amenity

The proposed dwellinghouse is sufficiently distant from any neighbouring residential properties

to avoid overlooking or other harmful amenity impacts that would warrant a refusal of the application. An objector has referred to concern about noise created by local farms. It is not considered that there are any farming activities sufficiently close to the site to warrant a refusal on amenity grounds.

Impact on Highway Safety

The existing access down a private drive is used by a single dwelling and was used by the depot. Whilst there could be some increase in usage with this change of use, it is not considered that it is significant on this lesser road with relatively slow moving traffic. Reasonable visibility exists at the junction with Back Lane. Adequate parking and turning space can be achieved on site. It is considered that the proposal is generally in accordance with Standing Advice, and that there is no highway safety reason for refusal of the application.

Five-year Land Supply

The Council is currently unable to demonstrate an adequate five-year supply of housing land as required by the NPPF. Under such circumstances, local plan policies regulating the supply of housing could be considered out of date and there is a presumption in favour of development which is otherwise sustainable. However, the current proposal is being considered under advice within the NPPF - paragraph 55, which would enable to conversion of buildings in the countryside where some enhancement can be demonstrated. As discussed above, the proposal is considered to harm the existing setting, and the proposal involves considerably more development than conversion of a disused building. It is not considered that the contribution towards housing supply which this single dwellinghouse would offer would outweigh the significant harm identified.

Affordable Housing

The proposal to create a new dwelling is subject to the provision of a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing under Policy HG4 of the Local Plan.

Letters of Representation

The comments received from local residents have been considered. They are largely dealt with in the body of the report. The following additional points are made:

- Old Oak Farm is sufficiently distant from the site to cause any demonstrable amenity harm.
- Whilst the advantages of the proposal pointed out by a resident are noted, it is not considered that they singly or together outweigh the considerable harm to the landscape and countryside setting that would result from the proposal.

EIA Regulations

Not relevant.

Conclusion

The proposal is of a design, scale and massing that fails to respect the rural setting or the character of the building being re-used. It is not considered that it represents an enhancement of the immediate setting. On the contrary, it is considered that it represents significant harm to the character and appearance of the local landscape. Whilst no amenity, highway safety or other harm has been identified, it is not considered that the proposal complies with the aims of

the NPPF or the Local Plan, and it is accordingly recommended for refusal.

S.106 AGREEMENT

Should the application be permitted, a contribution should be secured by way of a S106 Agreement towards the provision of affordable housing in terms of Policy HG4 of the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse for the following reason(s)

01. The proposal, by reason of its design, scale and massing, fails to respect the established character and appearance of the local landscape and the immediate setting, and would cause significant harm to this countryside setting, eroding its essential rural character. The identified harm is not considered to be outweighed by the contribution of a single dwellinghouse to the Council's five-year land supply, and the proposal is considered to be contrary to the aims of the NPPF and Policies SD1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.
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