

Mr. G. Forrest
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

20/07/2021

Dear Mr. Forrest,

PLANNING APPLICATION REF. 21/02231/F

SITE ADDRESS: THE STABLES, COLLEGE FARM, MAIN STREET, WENDLEBURY, BICESTER, OX25 2PR

We have been appointed on by Mr. & Mrs. McDonagh of The Old Dairy, Main Street, Wendlebury, Oxfordshire, OX25 2PR to prepare a consultation response to the above application, for which you are the case officer. Our clients have several concerns relating to the proposals, which, when assessed as a whole, should constitute refusal of the application.

Our client's property sits directly to the west of the development site, adjacent to the access road.

Neighbour's Living Conditions

The proposal would extend the existing single storey building to create a two storey property that would be excessively tall. It would be clearly visible from the houses at The Old Dairy and The Old Granary, as well as from within the gardens. There is approximately a 2m drop in ground level between the site and the properties to the west. The significant scale of the proposals, combined with the fall away in ground levels, would result in an overbearing presence that would create a loss of outlook and increased sense of enclosure.

The officer report for the original planning application for the stable building (ref. 14/00426/F) was clear in its comments regarding the height of the proposals. The report states:

"Representations have been received raising concerns about loss of light and over-domination. However, given the height of the proposed building (3.2m to ridge), distance from the neighbouring boundary... and existing screening, it is considered that the proposal would not cause detriment in this way."

Given the significant increase in height (up to 7.5m at the highest point), the assessment of the current proposals must find that there would now be harm as a result of the extended aspect of the building. Furthermore, there is no mention of the drop in ground level between the properties in the previous assessment of the impact on neighbour's living conditions, something which may have been overlooked – the “acceptable” height of 3.2m actually appears as 5.2m when viewed from The Old Dairy, resulting in the new extended section appearing at 9.5m in height. The scale and position of the 4.5m high car port would further add to the sense of enclosure, especially given the change in levels between the sites.

Below are several photos that demonstrate the existing situation, viewing the site from within the garden of The Old Dairy. The existing single storey building is clearly visible and dominant in the views, already causing some harm to the living conditions of the immediate neighbours. An additional storey, even set back from this boundary, would exacerbate the current situation and be an entirely unacceptable addition in this location. In addition, the trees on the boundary do not provide year-round screening, as shown in the photos.



Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy ESD 13 of the Cherwell Local Plan seeks to respect and enhance local landscape character. It states that proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside
- Be inconsistent with local character
- Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features.

The site is on the edge of the village of Wendlebury, with open countryside extending out to the east and south. The existing building is of only a single storey, 3.2m at its highest point. The introduction of a second storey, raising the highest point to 7.5m, would result in a significantly larger building that would appear obtrusive within the rural setting. It would cause significant visual intrusion into the open countryside, especially when the change in levels to the rest of the village to the west is considered.

It appears that during the original application, amendments were submitted to reduce the height of the building by 2.6m, to its current height at 3.2m. We can assume therefore, that the Council found a height of 5.8m inappropriate in this location, and requested amendments to the scheme. Given this, an increase in height to 7.5m must be unacceptable in this location. The car port would introduce a large building (4.5m high at the ridge) into an open area of countryside, which would cause further harm to the open aspect of this rural area.

The excessive height of the extended building would result in it being more prominent in its setting, becoming inconsistent with the local rural character of the immediate vicinity. The introduction of a large car port set quite far away from the building would exacerbate this further and represent a creep of development into the countryside beyond the boundary edge of the settlement. The modern design of the extension, creating a sloped roof up to the highest point would exacerbate the impact of the proposal, harming the setting of the settlement as a whole.

Impact on the Listed Building

Policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan seeks to conserve, sustain and enhance designated heritage assets, ensuring new development is sensitively sited and integrated.

The Stables, directly to the north west of the barn/stable building, is Grade II Listed. The previous approval identified that the removal of the farm buildings adjacent to the Listed Building would improve the setting of the Listed Building, and that the height of the new building would ensure that there would be no harm to the Listed

Building. The current proposals include a large car port (just over 4.5m in height) directly to the rear of the Listed Building, where the buildings that were demolished as part of the original application sat. Re-introducing built form in this location would have a direct impact on the setting of the Listed Building, undoing the previous enhancement of the significance of the heritage asset, and resulting in harm to the setting of the Listed Building, thereby failing to conserve, sustain or enhance the heritage asset.

Although the extension to the stable/barn building is set away from the Listed Building, the significant increase in height will have an impact on the setting of the building, which combined with the impact of the car port, would be unacceptable.

Land Use

The Cherwell Local Plan, in Policy Villages 1, categorises villages into three categories, allowing certain types of development in each. Wendlebury falls within Category C, allowing infilling and conversions in appropriate locations only.

The proposals seek to create a new separate residential property through the conversion and extension of an existing stable building that is ancillary to the main residential use at The Stables. The current stable/barn building was given permission in 2014 based on its appropriate rural use amongst other aspects. It is highly unlikely that permission for a house would have been forthcoming given the rural location outside of the village envelope – it certainly would not have represented infilling or conversion.

This application has now been made to extend and convert the building into a house, which appears to be an attempt to circumvent planning policy. This is not an appropriate location for a residential property, and if there were no building there currently would be completely unacceptable when applying the policies of the Local Plan. Should this application be approved, then there would undoubtedly be other properties in Wendlebury and beyond that would gain permission for an ancillary building before applying a few years later to extend and convert to a house, thereby circumventing planning policy to restrict development in villages to appropriate infilling and conversion.

Drainage and Sewage

Although the site itself is not within a Flood Zone, much of the village of Wendlebury is covered by either Flood Zone 2 or 3. There are significant issues relating to water runoff and drainage in this area. The owners of the adjacent property, The Old Dairy, have recently had to carry out extensive groundworks to deal with water runoff from the site as existing, which has got considerably worse since the current building was constructed. These works included new drains in the garden and a

retaining wall designed by a structural engineer that can hold back the weight of the water. Further development, such as the additional storey, would only exacerbate the current situation, especially in periods of high rainfall, and runoff water could reach the house, causing significant damage.

The sewage infrastructure in Wendlebury is already struggling, with multiple examples of burst pipes and Thames Water having to pump foul sewage from the village. This has occurred at least 6 times in the last year. An additional house will only result in this becoming worse.

Other Matters

Wendlebury is a small village, with no shop or school. An additional house in this location would be entirely reliant on private transport, most likely a car. This is not sustainable, and would certainly not encourage the use of public transport, walking or cycling. It is not an appropriate location for additional residential development.

Whilst we understand that each application must be determined on its own merits, we are concerned that if this application is approved, further applications will be forthcoming for a stable block elsewhere on the site as this application would remove the stabling. This would result in further development creep into the countryside, failing to conserve the setting of the village.

Conclusion

The proposal would result in an extended building that would cause significant harm to the living conditions of the immediate neighbours due to its excessive height, scale and position. Furthermore, it would be an inappropriate addition to the rural landscape that would appear intrusive and be inconsistent with local character, as well as resulting in harm to the setting of a Grade II Listed Building. Finally, the application represents an attempt to circumvent the planning policies set out in the Cherwell Local Plan to create a residential property in an inappropriate location within a village that sites within Category C of the Local Plan.

We respectfully request that this application is refused for the above reasons.

Yours sincerely



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