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*letter submitted via The Planning Portal*  
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### **FAO: The Planning Officer**

I am writing to provide a justification for the revised design proposals submitted as part of a new householder planning permission at **Mole End Cottage, Main Street, Wendlebury, OX25 2PS**.

Secondly, this letter addresses the concerns described within the Officers Report for the refused application **22/01049/F**. It is important to put on record that contrary to Local and National Planning guidance, the Officer did not contact the Applicant or Agent throughout the determination period, to take a proactive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

I am of the view that this decision has been made without full possession of the facts and a considerable degree of subjectivity, lacking in robust evidence against the proposals.

### **Design and impact on character of the area**

The increased size of the original proposals are noted as a 'bulky and discordant addition' to the existing dwelling. I note that due to the age of the property, the livable area is currently 9m<sup>2</sup> less than the minimum gross area for a 1-bedroom 2-storey dwelling, as set out in 'Technical housing standards,' published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in March 2015. The property is simply too small for modern standards of living and requires a substantial extension to render it functional.

The note regarding the 'unusual, kinked footprint' should be seen in light of the village setting. The images below show the 1919-20 map of Wendlebury, where it is clear that the urban grain of properties in this village includes both acute and obtuse angles, particularly as the road gradually turns out of the village (see Figures 1 and 2). There is no strong geometry that would suggest that this extension needs to be at a right angle to the existing dwelling. The purpose of utilising the site extents was to provide additional distance to the Alchester Cottage boundary, both for the applicant and neighbour's amenity.

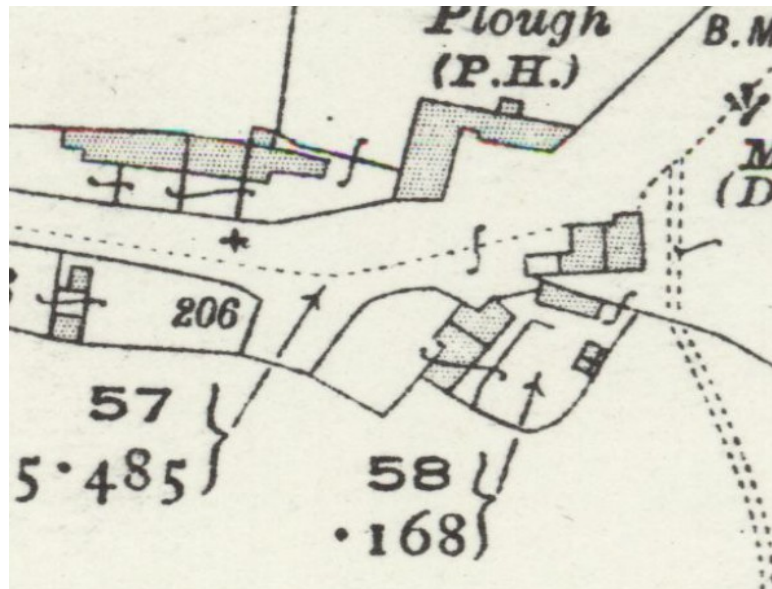
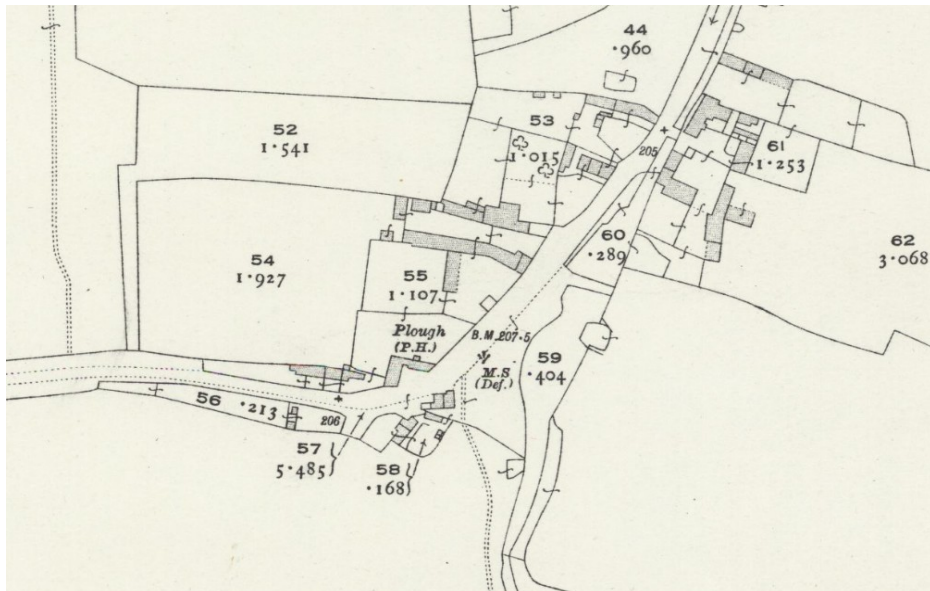


Figure 1 and 2 – 1919-20 map of Wendlebury - oldmapsonline.org

An example of how this approach works successfully, both on an acute angle and as a focal point at a junction is shown below (see Figures 3 and 4). This is a recent building within a Conservation setting, where the Local Planning Authority have embraced a complementary modern design, with a fenestration similar to that originally proposed.





*Figures 3 and 4 – Example of modern, new build stone property in Clifton Village, Bristol google.com/maps*

The reference to the choice of 'red brick as a construction material where the predominant material ... is natural stone' shows a lack of consideration to the wider village context. The elevations proposed were a high-quality, decorative addition to the property, in Flemish bond brickwork combining red and buff brick. This style matches the rear elevation of the property and is sympathetic to the character of the area. The use of red brick continues the nature of interspersed brick and stone properties throughout the village setting (see Figures 5, 6 and 7).



*Figures 5, 6 and 7 – Properties along Wendlebury Road and Oxford Road, Wendlebury*

To state this is 'poorly designed' when a considerable amount of thought has been given to achieving a high-quality design is very disappointing.

### **Residential amenity**

The Officers Report accepts that there is no overshadowing or loss of daylight. It is also recognised that the proposals have obscurely glazed windows at first floor level, which was captured in the design as part of a revision to the submitted plans. This was in response to the neighbouring objection. It was submitted with the aim of alleviating these concerns in a proactive manner. The Officer did not request any changes to be made. It should be noted that obscurely glazed windows on first floor extensions are implemented widely across the UK. It is a fact that there is no direct overlooking to Alchester Cottage due to the obscure glazing.

Subjective judgement has been used to state that 'intrusive features' result in a loss of privacy to the neighbouring dwelling. If clarification had been sought on this issue during the determination period, it could have been explained that arched window head is at 1.05m above ground (below eye level), and the roof light is above 1.7m, only allowing views to the sky. In a cross-sectional view, the larger, arched window would be obscured from eye level within the neighbours garden due to it's relative height to the boundary fence.

### **Highways safety**

The last point is in relation to the additional bedroom created as part of the proposals. Had this been discussed with the Agent, it could have been explained that the creation of a second bedroom is not an essential part of the Applicant's brief. The Applicants are nearing retirement age and does not intend to have other family members living at the property with them.

Notwithstanding this, drawing AP04 'Parking Plan' was submitted to Cherwell District Council to clarify the size of the land which the Applicant has a right of use over. It clearly shows two cars can park on this land. Dwellings of two bedrooms only require two parking spaces, so I am unsure why there is an issue around perceived increase in parking. There was no proposed increase in parking as part of the proposals.

I also note that the Highways Officer objected on the basis of this land wrongly being considered to be under the neighbours ownership. The objection states '...should the agreement change with the neighbouring property, the house could be left without any off-street parking.' It is particularly disappointing that both an assumption and supposition have been used in making this objection, which has had a material impact on the decision. The Applicant has since received an apology from the Highways Officer for this.

To the best of my knowledge, the current and previous owners of Mole End Cottage have enjoyed use of this area of parking for the past 10 years, and the area is not under the ownership of the neighbours.

The Statement of Engagement in the Decision Notice concludes that amendments or additional information would not overcome Cherwell's concerns. It is extremely unfortunate that this decision was made given the above justifications. The application was determined 22 working days after the application expiry date and no extension of time was requested by the Officer.

## Revised Proposals

It has always been the Applicant's desire to create a proposal that is acceptable to both neighbours and the Local Planning Authority. The original design proposed high-quality materials and was well-intentioned.

The revised plans aim to directly address the reasons for refusal, to create a more acceptable revised scheme. The following points should be considered in the assessment of this application:

1. The proposed massing has been reduced in height from 6.5m to the ridge, to 6.1m to the ridge.
2. The massing of the two storey extension is now perpendicular to the main dwelling. The two storey element still sits outside of a 45 degree line taken from the mid-point of the nearest neighbouring window.
3. The proposed materials are more traditional in approach, utilising Cotswold stone with red brick quoins on the street scene, to match the existing property. All window glazing and lintel styles now match the existing property.
4. All first floor windows facing south or south-west towards Alchester Cottage have been removed. Conservation rooflights are now proposed to the first floor room, facing north towards the street scene.
5. The second bedroom has been removed from the proposals. The applicants intend to use the space within the eaves of the first floor roof as a study space.
6. Additional information has been provided to state how surface water run-off will be managed.

I trust we have interpreted the concerns correctly and addressed them within the revised proposals. We hope to hear from you should there be additional concerns to address.

Yours faithfully

Danny Harris *RIBA*

Agent, on behalf of the Applicant, Mr Derek Dudley