

DRAFT

Design Advice

Application Number 15/01693/F
Applicant's Name Mr and Mrs G Besterman
Application Type Full
Location Muddle Barn Farm Colony Road Sibford Gower Banbury OX15 5RY
Case Officer Nathanael Stock

Demolition of an existing dwelling and a range of large scale equestrian buildings and the erection of a replacement dwelling including associated works and landscaping (resubmission of 14/02157/F)

1. In principle, we are not against development on this site to replace the modern bungalow but the current proposals do not meet the very high test criteria for a rural exception site. The proposals were discussed at the Design and Conservation Team Meeting today and there is concern that if the current proposal receives planning permission we are saying it is exceptional and we foresee problems down the line for other sites.

Excellence does not mean a design has to be extreme or ostentatious but it should be respectful of the site and its setting. In this instance, a 'less is more' approach would be more appropriate, whilst still upholding the principles of design excellence.

2. There would appear to be two options:

Option A: A pavilion which sits on its own cf. Bletchington Park or with Palladian wings cf. Kirtlington Park on a smaller scale. There are other juxtapositions of main houses with wings cf. Aynho and Cottisford.



There may be precedents in the district in the form of polite rectories which sometimes had adjacent rectory farms.

Option B: 18thC Farmhouse/less formal rectories with full gable with chimneys, double piled with ancillary service wing (examples of various farmhouses below not extensive).



This appears to be the way the amended drawings are going but the proposals show hipped ends to the gables which are not typical in the north of the district.

The design of the building still needs to meet the high test criteria set for the site.

Original Scheme Sep 2015

Context:

- A large Georgian-style house is proposed with a side orangery-style kitchen extension and a courtyard comprising a wall with railings, a 2-storey wing and a single storey wing which have a larger footprint than the proposed house.
- An existing modern stable outbuilding is proposed to be refurbished.
- The existing modern farmhouse and some outbuildings are proposed to be demolished.
- New Barn Farm lies immediately to the east of the site and is to be retained.
- The status of New Barn Farm will be diminished by the proposed 'big house', however, it is not unknown to have a working home farm in close proximity to a country pile.
- The existing modern house is proposed to be removed. It does not respect the character of the area or field pattern.

The Site:

- The site is prominent, positioned near the top of a ridge, it can be seen from a variety of roads, footpaths as well as in views towards and out of the conservation areas and area of high landscape value.
- Item 9.12 of the Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal recognises as a threat '*works to buildings and curtilages including means of enclosure that are visible in long distance views across the valley and disrupt the traditional organic relationship of buildings with the land.*'
- The impact of any development on the setting of the Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Areas, the CDC Area of High Landscape Value and the adjacent Area of High Landscape Value needs to be fully considered.

Revised scheme

**A double piled house with hipped ends
Chimneys set in roof
Centred orangery style kitchen
Wing coming off the orangery
The orientation now respects the field pattern**

NPPF 6 delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

'55. ...Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

The exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should:

- *be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;*
- *Reflect the highest standards in architecture;*
- *Significantly enhance its immediate setting; and*
- *Be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.'*

- The principle of replacing an existing dwelling on this site would appear to be acceptable if the proposed development is of exceptional quality and truly outstanding.
- The development needs to be of the highest standards in architecture.
- The proposal needs to significantly enhance its immediate setting.
- The development needs to be sensitive to the character of the local area, including materials, details, appropriate scale and massing, form, solid to void ratio in accordance with Cherwell Local Plan Policies ESD15, NPPF par 55.



The architects are capable of good modern design and received an RIBA Award for work within Cherwell District; they were also joint winners of the Georgian Group New Building in the Classical Tradition Award in 2014.

'Crucis Park in Gloucestershire replaces a 1960s house at the centre of a large estate, creating a focal point worthy of the setting. Built of locally-quarried stone with Clipsham stone dressings, it is a subtle and fluid evocation of classical principles. *(Yiangou Architects for a private client)*

There are aspects of the design which are of concern:

- a. Orientation
- b. Architectural Style
- c. Scale, massing and juxtaposition of the three key elements of house, kitchen and courtyard
- d. Proportions, rhythm and solid/void ratio of the main house
- e. Dormers and their relationship to the principal elevations and the conflict with the chimney stacks
- f. Scale, height, design and articulation of the courtyard buildings

a. Orientation:

- The development will have an impact on views from many properties both near and far and it is critical the orientation is well considered; especially in light of the CDC area of high landscape value and setting of the conservation areas. The landscape analysis with the

The comments on orientation have been taken on board in the revised design; it would be useful to see the buildings in photo-landscape context once a design which meets the high test criteria has been agreed.

proposed house photo montages are discussed below.

- Houses in this rural area tend to follow cardinal points, or have a strong relationship to post enclosure field boundaries; this includes Muddle Barn Farm. In more complex landscape forms they adapt to the site.

The orientation of the proposed new house does not follow the field pattern. The contours on the application site do not appear to be insurmountable to support the change in orientation.

An enclosure map may show an earlier field pattern which could help to justify the disregard for the existing field pattern.

- The existing modern house looks alien both in design and orientation. It is set on NE/SW/SE/NW axes and this should not be followed without good justification. There is no objection to the removal of the modern house or to the other outbuildings.

b. Architectural Style

- Georgian/Regency is a very broad term and with any style of architecture there are both good and bad examples; historically and in modern reproductions.
- To design a Georgian house successfully, the proportions, rhythm of solid to void and detail need to be handled with great care.
- In Cherwell District there has been a strong vernacular architectural tradition which was overlooked when the more fashionable Georgian pattern book styles were introduced to many of the parishes. The Georgian style was often adapted and included a higher proportion of solid (wall) to void (openings). In some instances buildings were re-fronted. The design of the proposed new house needs to respond to local interpretations of the Georgian style if 'Georgian-Regency' is the chosen style. It would perhaps be useful for the Applicant to look at some listed properties in the District alongside some of the conservation appraisals.
- Local stone was used predominantly (or local red brick) the use of materials that tie with the locality is encouraged.
- The plan, sections and elevations should be strongly interrelated so the building has integrity. Positions of chimneys and windows are very much related to the plan and elevation – if something is adjusted in elevation to benefit the elevation this will have a knock on effect on the plan. The elevations will have more of an effect on the landscape views and these should generate the plan.
- The roofs and tall chimneys make the scale of the building quite dominant in the landscape. The detail of the roof with its flat top will result in an odd detail.
- Dormers were occasionally included as part of original Georgian designs, sometimes hidden behind parapets; but

The submitted design retains the side orangery extension with service wing linkage which was highlighted as an awkward junction previously.

The deep plan retains a flat top rather than a lead roof with parapet or double pile gable arrangement. The hipped double pile is not encouraged.

Large farmhouses in the district are often irregular. Large rectories in the district were often more formal.

Positioning dormers over the windows below has been taken on board.

often added later. The relationship of roof dormers tend to relate to the principal elevations below eaves if they are part of the original design i.e. normally centred on windows.

Can the Applicant look into moving the position of the dormers to relate to the elevation below eaves and also avoid them clashing with the chimneys thus avoiding large lead flashings?

c. Scale, massing and juxtaposition of the three key elements of house, kitchen and courtyard

Overall plan arrangement:

- A proposed house of such scale is likely to confuse the understanding of historic land ownership in the area.
- Designing believable organically grown extensions as part of a single application is difficult.
- The general form of the proposed kitchen extension and junction of the courtyard outbuildings needs further thought as the juxtaposition is cumbersome.
- There are a number of historic precedents where courtyard buildings lead off the corner of the main house, or are built off a dividing garden wall, sometimes service wings are built off the rear wall of the main house. The proposed kitchen extension link with hip-roofed wing is awkward and should be rethought. The Applicant should check the relationship at the corner as it seems to change slightly on the first and second floor plans.
- There should be a stronger hierarchy between the main house and the courtyard. The proposal includes a very sizeable courtyard, the footprint of which is greater than the main house. Areas of this first floor are not yet allocated a use which suggests the plan area could be reined in.
- The height of the courtyard ridge compared with the eaves of the main house is odd in elevation, the earlier version with parapet disguised this. The relationship would be better if the courtyard buildings were subservient to the main house.
- The ridge heights are tall for a subsidiary set of courtyard outbuildings. South east and north west elevations: is there a need for such a high roof on the wing which has no upper floor, it seems to be driven by the depth of the open shed for the cars. The north-east wing is narrower in plan depth but 2-storeys in height. The ridges of the two wings are very similar and the first floor plan should really show the attic plan in the north-west.
- The studio appears to be double storey with a run of glazing – although the Historic England publication 'Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings'

The juxtaposition between the outbuildings and the main house remains cumbersome.

If the house is designed as a Georgian pavilion then there are precedents which could be adapted to a smaller scale.

Kirtlington Park has flanking walls linking to pavilions. There could be a physical corridor w all link to the kitchen/dining extension. The wall of the wing could extend to meet this link or the kitchen/dining extension . A lean-to on this wall could then link to the pantry/utility/ WC. This would make it less dominant and help the junction between the buildings. The wing would then be set back from the main building.

Examples of different junctions between a main house and wings can be seen at Aynho Park (massing) or Cottisford House which has a corner link. There may be good examples of Georgian rectories in the district which could help to guide the design of the link.

The alternative would be for a more vernacular double piled traditional double gable with gable chimneys. These often had stepped down side extensions off which wings would extend as an L-shape or C-shape.

The revised design of the courtyard wings is now more informal but still

(<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conversion-of-traditional-farm-buildings/>) suggests this can look better than individual rooflights of north light, it is not considered appropriate here, given the views of this roof from the north east. If a north studio light is required this could take the form of a traditional lean-to glazed greenhouse against a tall wall, or some other more formal lantern precedent may be found in books on stable blocks etc.

- There is a 'cottage' element with dormers which looks alien within the north east wing. First floor attics sometimes included groom's accommodation in lofts etc, again local precedent may help to guide the design. The Historic England publication 'Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings' fig 59 shows a pleasing arrangement of fenestration with loft door gable by the same architect, however, the elevations of the proposed courtyard buildings in this scheme do not achieve the same success and need further work. This includes the main gable elevations, the door with side windows and its relationship to the pantry and WC windows is odd coupled with the junction of eaves, and gutter between wing and kitchen. The small window next to the kitchen extension would sit better with more solid wall around it. Door and window arrangements should be based on a local historic precedent. The rhythm of the fenestration would work better if it looked more like service buildings/coach house/stables/ dairy etc.
- What brick is envisaged? None of the renderings show this.
- The chimneys to the outbuildings are more prominent than one might expect on outbuildings.
- The orangery-style kitchen extension is very much an add-on and would look better centred on the north-west elevation of the main house. A subservient link to the single storey wing could make the junction between the kitchen and the northwest wing of the courtyard less awkward. The hipped roof beyond the conservatory
- The relationship of the eaves of the kitchen extension to the string course of the main house looks very similar and needs to be stronger. There is a drafting error: the south west elevation shows the lantern above the parapet but this is not shown on the north west elevation. The lantern light would be better hidden behind a parapet.
- The articulation and detail of the courtyard buildings needs further development. Next to a formal house, a more formal arrangement might be expected; or if of a more vernacular form, the placement and design of the fenestration should be based on good examples within

with high roofs which makes them too prominent behind the main elevation. The service wing can easily be seen above the side orangery style kitchen/breakfast extension which has flat parapet and low glazing. A higher parapet may help to hide the wing behind.

The ridge light run on the outbuilding is not encouraged.

the district.

- The archway would look better centred on the centreline of the entrance to the courtyard.

Floor Plan

- The proposed lounge is an oddly shaped room but no comments on main house other than the knock on effect there may be from suggestions for the elevations and configuration of kitchen/courtyard buildings.

Roof plan of main house – is shown on the site plan

- The proposed dormers do not relate to what is below and some clash with the large chimneys which would need large flashing details.
- It is not clear how the ridge detail is proposed to be handled with the central flat roof that is shown on the roof plan. This could be visually quite prominent.
- RWGs need to be shown in elevation.

North East Elevation

- Refer to comments on courtyard buildings above.
- Query if chimney form is aesthetically correct in relation to roof hips.
- Move the dormers over the windows on the elevation below.
- The thin windows look mean and highlight an oddity in the rhythm, proportion of the elevation.
- The proportions, rhythm and solid/void ratio are not fully resolved.

South East Elevation

- Remove the central dormer to the south east elevation
- Query if chimney form is aesthetically correct in relation to roof hips.

South west Elevation

- Remove the dormers to the north west and south east elevations – the stair could be lit by a lantern light allowing the dormer on the north east elevation to light the bedroom.
- Move the dormers over the windows on the elevation below.
- Query if chimney form is aesthetically correct in relation to roof hips.
- Tall hipped roof behind kitchen appears to steep and dominant – see comments on this juxtaposition of building above.
- The height of the glazed doors in the kitchen look overly tall and there is not enough solid wall between the top of the openings and the start of the parapet.
- The relationship of the kitchen parapet to the string of the main house is awkward.
- The width of the bay needs careful handling as part of the whole elevation – rhythm/solid/void/proportion.

North west elevation.

- Remove the central dormer to the north west elevation

- the stair could be lit by a lantern light allowing the dormer on the north east elevation to light the bedroom.
- Query if chimney form is aesthetically correct in relation to roof hips.
- NB. Any amendments to elevations will have a knock on effect on the plan form
- Refer to comments on courtyard buildings above.

The landscape report and the images of the proposed development:

See separate comments on orientation.

- Figure 10: Tree planting to the north may help to soften views as there is a break in the line of trees.
- Figures 11, 18 and 19: The roof of the 2-storey courtyard is overly dominant in height compared to New Barn Farm and the large chimneys are too grand for the elevational treatment.
The courtyard looks to be in stone rather than the brick described in the 2014 D&A Statement?
- Figure 12: The chimneys should not break the tree line, the tree line needs to continue to provide a soft horizon line in this view. The height of the chimneys needs to be tested in views and elevation. NB. Tree planting to the north may help to soften views in figures 10/15/16.
- Figure 13: As Figure 12 comments and the section on orientation.
- Figure 14: The horizon line should be softened.
- Figure 15: the house will be very prominent in this view, further planting may help to further integrate this large building with the landscape so that it is less dominant within its setting which is next to an area of high landscape value and the setting of the nearby conservation areas. The chimneys are also quite imposing in the views. The horizon line should be softened.
- Figures 16: as comments for Fig 15.
- Figure 20: The views of the building need further softening to the front to break down its very large scale and at the back to soften the skyline.
- Materials, samples, details will need to be conditioned once a suitable design is agreed.

Policies:

NPPF:

The Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 20 July 2015)

ESD13...

ESD15:

'New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting,

layout and high quality design' and 'Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting.' It also states 'Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings.' 'Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette.' 'Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.'

B.268 'The appearance of new development and its relationship with its surrounding built and natural environment has a significant effect on the character and appearance of an area. Securing new development that can positively contribute to the character of its local environment is therefore of key importance.'

B.269...

Local Plan H17 retained?

Similar scale, NB. the applicant is using the parameters of permitted development to the existing modern house for comparison with the proposed dwelling.

Officer

Joyce Christie

Date

25.11.2015 and 10.12.2015

Revised scheme comments 09.02.2016

Other Information

It must be stressed that these comments cannot constitute a formal determination under the 'Town and Country Planning Act 1990', or the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990' and that it contains only informal, officer advice, which cannot prejudice any subsequent decision of the Local Planning Authority.