

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
<b>Application Number</b>	15/09243/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Heale Farm Middle Woodford Salisbury SP4 6NU
<b>Proposal</b>	Erection of four dwellings (Use Class C3), with garaging, retention and restoration of existing granary, access, landscaping and associated works.
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr G N C Rasch
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	WOODFORD
<b>Electoral Division</b>	BOURNE AND WOODFORD VALLEY
<b>Grid Ref</b>	412537 136660
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Georgina Wright

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Hewitt has called the application to committee for the following reasons:

- Visual impact on the surrounding area
- Relationship to adjoining properties

#### 1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission should be **REFUSED**

#### 2. Report Summary

The main issues which are considered to be material in the determination of this application are listed below:

- Principle of development
- Character of the area
- Heritage
- Residential amenity/living conditions
- Highway safety/parking
- Ecology
- Flooding & Drainage
- S106/CIL

The application has generated Support from Woodford Parish Council and 3 letters of representation.

#### 3. Site Description

The site is situated in the countryside as defined by the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS). It is on the edge of the small hamlet of properties that are collectively known as Upper Woodford, which is also within designated countryside, unlike the other Woodfords (Middle and Lower) which are defined as Small Villages by WCS policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy), CP2 (Delivery Strategy) and CP4

(Amesbury Community Area). To the north and south, the site abuts residential properties and their associated amenity & parking provision. Heale Farm House (to the immediate north of the site, is a Grade II listed building. The neighbouring properties to the south (37 and 38 Upper Woodford) are also Grade II listed buildings.

The River Avon and its associated tributaries are situated to the east of the site. These are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); a Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and a Special Protection Area (SPA). The whole site is also within an area of high ecological value. The River and part of the eastern edge of the site are also within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

The site currently consists of a farmyard made up of a complex of agricultural barns and storage sheds. The largest is an open sided vehicle storage barn which frames the southern edge of the farm yard. Along the road side a further open sided storage barn abuts a historical Cobb wall which defines this western boundary. Along the river edge of the site two further open sided barns (a hay barn and storage barn) exist; and in the centre of the yard there is a small, former granary building which is considered to be curtilage listed. The buildings are still in use but the site and buildings are allegedly no longer suitable for modern agricultural activities and the applicant instead intends to relocate the farming enterprise elsewhere in the village (to the site on Chine Road which has recently received planning permission for the erection of new agricultural barns under Ref: 14/12078/FUL). The site is lower than the main road which runs through the hamlet from Middle Woodford to Amesbury, with access being served directly off the main road on the site's western boundary.

#### 4. Planning History

Application Ref	Proposal	Decision
14/12069/FUL	Erection of four detached dwellings (Use Class C3), with garaging, retention and restoration of existing granary, access, landscaping and associated works. Withdrawn	Withdrawn

This application was withdrawn because it was heading for refusal. The reasons that it was heading for refusal were because the development was considered to be contrary to the newly adopted policy because the site is situated in the countryside and there was no justification for the new unsustainable residential development that was proposed; and the proposed development was shown to be wholly within flood zones 2 and 3 and there was no evidence provided to justify such development or to confirm that it would meet the Sequential Test for flooding as set out in the NPPF.

#### 5. The Proposal

This is a full application proposing the demolition of all of the buildings within the existing farm yard (apart from the Cobb wall defining the western edge of the site and the curtilage listed former granary building, which sits centrally within the

site). A four unit residential housing scheme has then been prepared as part of a proposal to comprehensively redevelop the site. The existing farmyard uses are to be moved to the new Chine Road farm yard. The four dwellings are proposed in order to not only provide an appropriate reuse of this redundant site but are also required in order to fund the relocation and development of the new farm yard at the Chine Road site.

The detailed proposals consist of a pair of semi-detached three bedroom dwellings (plots 3 & 4) that are to be located within the north eastern part of the site. These dwellings are to be of brick and flint construction. They are to be served by detached double garages with storage above and associated gardens leading up to the river boundary of the site.

Plot 1 is to consist of a two storey detached, 5 bedroom dwelling which is to be located in the south western part of the site. This dwelling is to be of brick and flint construction with a clay tile roof and this dwelling is to benefit from a large detached double garage and store with an attic/storage room in the roof. This plot will also benefit from extensive gardens.

A further 5 bedroom detached dwelling is proposed on Plot 2 adjacent to the access and centrally within the site. This dwelling is to be served by a very large detached, 4 berth garage/carport and store again with an attic/storage in the roof. This outbuilding is to be situated immediately adjacent to the roadside Cobb wall. This plot also benefits from the former granary building which is to be retained and used as ancillary accommodation for the new dwelling (with an open room at ground floor and a bedroom and bathroom proposed within the roof). The new dwelling on this plot is to be of brick and render construction with a clay tile roof. An extensive wrap around garden to serve this property is also identified

All four dwellings are to be served off a new driveway leading from the existing access onto the main road to the west. Unlike the previously withdrawn scheme, the only elements of the current residential scheme that are to be located within the Flood Zones are the detached garage/store serving Plot 3 and part of the former granary building which is to be converted into ancillary accommodation to serve Plot 2. None of the principal dwellings are proposed within either of the zones.

As part of the proposals, the applicant has also confirmed that two new public footpaths/pavements are to be provided along the main road leading through the hamlet. The first is to lead from the site in a northerly direction towards the centre of Upper Woodford. The second is to link the site to the existing footpath that leads from Heale House to the centre of the small village of Middle Woodford to the south of the site. These are to be provided to enable the future residents of the site to walk to the few facilities that exist in Upper Woodford (namely consisting of a public house); and to enable the entire community of Upper Woodford to walk to the wider facilities that exist in Middle Woodford (including the church, school and recreation ground), and are thus provided to make the proposals more sustainable despite their countryside location.

The application is supported by a Design, Access & Sustainability Statement; a Flood Risk Assessment; a Planning Statement; an Extended Phase 1 Habitat & Bat Survey; and a Heritage Statement. Confidential financial information has also been submitted which sets out a viability justification for the proposed development of the site with four dwellings.

## **6. Local Planning Policy**

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

*National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)*

*The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act)*

*The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (The Habitat Regs)*

*Salisbury District Local Plan policies (Saved by Wiltshire Core Strategy):*

C18 – Wildlife & Natural Features

R2 – Recreational Open Space in New Development

*Wiltshire Core Strategy:*

CP1 (Settlement Strategy)

CP2 (Delivery Strategy)

CP3 (Infrastructure Requirements)

CP4 (Amesbury Community Area)

CP41 (Sustainable Construction & Low Carbon Energy)

CP43 (Providing Affordable Housing)

CP44 (Rural Exception Sites)

CP45 (Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs)

CP48 (Supporting Rural Life)

CP50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

CP57 (Ensuring High Quality Design & Space Shaping)

CP58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment)

CP60 (Sustainable Transport)

CP61 (Transport & Development)

CP62 (Development Impacts on the Transport Network)

CP64 (Demand Management)

CP67 (Flood Risk)

CP68 (Water Resources)

CP69 (Protection of the River Avon SAC)

## **7. Summary of consultation responses**

**Woodford Parish Council:** Support

- Since the previous Application for this site (14/12069/FUL) was withdrawn the Parish Council has been in dialogue with the Applicant in order to satisfy some concerns felt by PC members and the community about the original application.
- The issues that have been addressed by this application include: 1) Density and style of housing; 2) Flood and groundwater risk; 3) Benefits to the community.
- The number of houses on the site has remained the same at 4, but now comprises two detached and two semi-detached properties (instead of four large detached) addressing the wish that some lower cost properties should be provided on this site.

- The layout has been altered in order to satisfy requirements relating to the 1:100 and 1:1000 flood risk lines.
- The Parish Council have previously expressed concerns about rising groundwater, but understand from the Applicant that piling and block and beam construction and not strip trench foundations will be used reducing the risk that the underground flow of groundwater towards lower ground and the river Avon will be impeded.
- Despite the fact that this site is designated Open Countryside for the purposes of the new Wiltshire Core Strategy and that the Parish Council do not regard this site as qualifying as infill development, the PC believe that the redevelopment of this site would be a considerable visual improvement to this part of the Woodford Valley.
- The PC have sought to ensure that community benefit will flow from this development in particular wishing to help improve the links between Upper and Middle Woodford, which would be secured in the creation of a tarmac paved footpath around the dangerous bend to the South of the Development and a path to the North of the site
- One point which was made in our response to the previous withdrawn Application, related to the linking of this Application with the now granted barn development in Chine Road. As the Pegasus Planning Statement makes a strong point of the financial link between the two developments in order for the site to be considered as an 'exception site' we had expected a little more financial justification to be presented than the brief Gasson Associates report. This however is a matter for the Planning Office's consideration.
- On the basis that the above details are included in the final development and provided there are no unforeseen issues that affect neighbouring properties the Parish Council give full support to this Application.

**Conservation:** No Objection subject to conditions

- I have no objections to the revised scheme.
- It retains the important historic elements on site, notably the granary and roadside cob wall.
- I am broadly happy with the proposed use of the granary, but will need to see much more detail regarding the internal works and new windows as it's a (curtilage) listed building – it should not be presumed that this must become fully building regs compliant.
- Details of the new developments will be necessary by condition – sample brick/flint panels
- I will not be happy with flint block in such close proximity to a traditionally built (and listed) flint property.
- Also eaves, windows, rainwater etc. And a method statement regarding retaining the cob wall and incorporating it etc will be required by condition

**Highways:** No Objection subject to conditions and S106

- It is considered that the development proposed will not have any significant impact on highway safety and I therefore recommend that no highway objection be raised to it subject to conditions to do with the access, visibility and the new footpaths

- Both a S106 and S278 Agreement would also be the appropriate method to secure the new footways.

**Ecology:** Holding Objection

- The application is supported by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat and Bat Survey (Sedgehill Ecology, Sept 2014).
- There are a number of issues outstanding.
- I suggest that most of these can be resolved by conditioning a Construction Environment Management Plan to be submitted before works commence on site.
- However before the application is determined, details should be provided of mitigation for bats in the Granary. These details should then be conditioned.

**Housing:** No Objection

- The previous FUL application (14/12069/FUL), relating to the same development has subsequently been withdrawn.
- I note that Upper Woodford is not categorised within the Settlement Strategy, set out in Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, and therefore is countryside.
- Subsequently, Upper Woodford does not have a settlement boundary, and the proposed development may therefore be contrary to planning policy/Core Policy 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.
- It appears that the proposals are not presented as a rural exception site, which would provide 100% affordable housing, to meet an identified need and brought forward via Core Policy 44 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy – Rural Exception Sites.
- However, if through the planning process this site is considered suitable for the proposed residential development, as it falls under the threshold of 5 dwellings, there would be no requirement to seek an Affordable Housing provision in line with Core Policy 43.

**Drainage:** Objection

- Lack of submitted information on foul drainage disposal system – noted that proposal is for a treatment plant but no location for such a plant on submitted drgs (mentioned in FRA but no location given)
- potential issues depending on type and need for standoff distances from proposed/existing properties), will need to be outside of FRZ 2/3 (thus layout may need to change to accommodate plant and any EA conditions if formal discharge consent is required)
- lack of information on need for formal EA discharge consent
- lack of information on discharge arrangements for effluent
- Lack of information on stormwater discharge arrangements – noted potential solutions but current layout has buildings within 8m of the top of bank of the watercourse which will require a separate drainage application under council's drainage by law
- it is extremely unlikely that such an application would be approved with buildings within the 8m distance thus would require a change to the current submitted layout

- FRA shows the current location of gulley and outfall which takes flow from the highway which enters the site but also shows new dwellings over the route of that pipe thus causing future access/replacement issues – no information on potential alteration of this system
- There are ground water issues in the area thus any stormwater drainage disposal arrangement will need take account of these to ensure no increase in flood risk to site or surrounding area
- emerging council ground water strategy calls for at least 1m between the top ground water level and the underside of any soakaway system – current application has not demonstrated this in submission
- Currently there is a lack of information to show that the application site can be adequately drained in relation to foul drainage (and risk of flooding/pollution) and storm drainage

**Landscape:** No Comment

- Given its small scale this wouldn't normally be a development that Landscape would return comments on.

**Public Open Space:** No Comment

**Environment Agency:** No Comments Received

**8. Publicity**

This application was advertised through the use of a site notice, press notice and letters of consultation.

3 letters of support were received from the residents of 40a & 42 Upper Woodford; and Flint House, Middle Woodford. The following comments were made:

- The proposed footpath connection to Middle Woodford will be a real community benefit and help encourage walking to the local shop and village facilities
- Hope the new footpath connection will be designed to maintain the rural character of the road
- Footpath leading north is pointless and is on the wrong side of the road
- As the level of traffic using this road is steadily increasing it would make more sense to introduce traffic calming measures along the valley road rather than a footpath
- Support the development as when the farmyard moves to the Chine Road site we wouldn't want the current site to fall into disrepair
- Dereliction of this site would lead to an unsightly and entirely out of keeping site at the entrance to the village as well as increasingly dangerous situation for those who share an access with the site
- The design of the new housing is very sympathetic and the architect and building firm are locally renowned for the quality and standard of their work
- Understand the need to centralise the farming enterprise at the Chine Road
- The farmyard buildings are clearly in need of replacement and seem inadequate for the scale of the farming operation now undertaken
- The houses are now placed to avoid any prospect of flooding

- The proposed landscaping will considerably enhance the aesthetics of the southern end of Upper Woodford

**Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service:** No Objection subject to an informative

## **9. Planning Considerations**

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The main considerations which are material to the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle
- Character & design
- Heritage
- Neighbouring Amenities
- Highway Safety
- Flooding & Drainage
- Ecology
- Other Material Considerations
- S106/CIL

### **9.1 Principle:**

As has been identified above, the site is situated on the edge of the hamlet of Upper Woodford which is not defined as any form of settlement in the newly adopted WCS policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy), CP2 (Delivery Strategy) and CP4 (Amesbury Community Area). In planning terms, the site is therefore located in designated countryside and is in an area that is not considered to be suitable or sustainable for additional residential development. In addition, with the adoption of the WCS earlier in the year, the Local Plan inspector confirmed that the Council currently has a 5 year housing land supply (HLS), as is required by the NPPF.

This proposal involves the development of 4 new dwellings on this site. Each of the homes are to be provided as normal market housing, rather than affordable units or dwellings required in association with an existing agricultural enterprise. They are put forward as a replacement for the existing agricultural buildings that currently stand on the site and a package of benefits has been put forward in justification for the proposed development (which will be discussed in more detail throughout this report).

However, agricultural buildings are specifically excluded from the definition of previously developed land (as defined by the NPPF). Therefore despite the site already having a number of buildings on it; and a comparison of the existing and proposed buildings on the site would see a reduction in the overall footprint, the site is, for the purposes of planning, classified as a Greenfield site. There is therefore no justification for the proposed redevelopment of the site with new residential, market housing and the scheme is contrary to policy in principle.

The Parish Council has however given the scheme its full support considering that the package of public benefits put forward as part of the scheme; and the fact that the development involves two smaller scale family dwellings which are much needed in the village, make this an acceptable exception to policy. However The Woodfords do not benefit from a neighbourhood plan and this site has not been identified in any form of development/policy document. Given that the WCS has only recently been adopted, it is not considered to be appropriate to override adopted policy despite the obvious local support for the scheme.

## **9.2 Character & Design:**

Part of the identified justification for the proposals that is set out in the supporting documentation is that the site is a redundant agricultural farmstead with a number of large agricultural buildings within it that will become scruffy once the farmstead relocates and represent a bit of an eyesore in the landscape. It is also suggested that this situation is likely to get worse as the agricultural function of the site is relocated elsewhere and these buildings are left to deteriorate.

However, whilst the existing buildings are visible from both the immediate street scene and longer distance views from across the river, their situation on declining land mean that they nestle into the landscape and their full scale is not really appreciated from the public domain, until within the site. The existing Cobb wall and the existing Heale Farmhouse also provide further screening of the existing site from the main road. Furthermore such agricultural buildings, and even ones which have ceased to be used and are thus falling into decline, are not unusual in such a countryside location to necessitate their removal. It is not therefore considered that the proposals would represent such an environmental improvement that their removal would justify new residential development in the countryside contrary to adopted policy.

That aside, it is however noted that the four dwellings that have been proposed are of attractive and traditional vernacular and would be of a good quality finish. It is not therefore disputed that the proposals would result in a development that is in keeping with the character of the area and other dwellings in this hamlet. It is also agreed that the mix of detached and smaller scale semi-detached properties would provide an appropriate mix of development that would meet a local housing need.

## **9.3 Heritage:**

Another argument that has been put forward in justification for the proposals is that they would improve the setting of the adjacent Heale Farmhouse which is a Grade II listed building. It would also provide a suitable and long term reuse for the former granary building, which is curtilage listed, as well as the preservation of the attractive Cobb wall along the road frontage. It is considered that this proposal would represent an improvement for the heritage importance of the site and its surroundings and are as such supported (subject to the detail) by the Council's Conservation Officer.

However, Heale Farmhouse is the former farm house that served the farmstead. The adjacent agricultural buildings and the use of this site is inherent in the importance of the heritage asset and its setting. The redevelopment for an

alternative use is not therefore considered to be essential or necessary and it is not therefore considered that this 'benefit' would outweigh the provisions and restrictions set out in the Development Plan.

#### **9.4 Neighbouring Amenity:**

Likewise, it is also suggested in the supporting documentation that the redevelopment of the site would improve the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties which are currently adjacent to a well-used agricultural farmstead. However as discussed above, the immediately adjacent Heale Farmhouse is the original farmhouse associated with the farm and in that respect the use of the farmstead and this adjacent property are historically linked. Furthermore, the situation for the other surrounding residents is an historical situation that cannot therefore be used to justify a development that is otherwise contrary to policy.

It is not however disputed that the activities associated with a residential development, such as that proposed, would represent an improvement for the residential amenities of the local residents when compared with the activities that are associated with an agricultural/working farm yard.

#### **9.5 Highway Safety:**

A further reason put forward in support of the proposed development is that it would improve highway safety. The existing access to the site is on the entrance to the small hamlet of Upper Woodford and is just after a sharp bend when travelling from the Middle Woodford/Salisbury direction. The access is tight for large modern agricultural machinery/vehicles and therefore the use of the access for such purposes causes a potential hazard for all road users. However again the situation is an historic one and the Highway Authority does not have concerns about the current use of the access. It does however likewise raise no objection to the proposed use of the access to serve four residential dwellings either. However, it is again considered that this change to the type of vehicles using the access would not justify an approval of the scheme.

The level of parking proposed to serve the four dwellings is also considered to be appropriate and meet the relevant parking standards.

As part of the scheme two public footpaths are also proposed which are designed to link the site to the few facilities that are available in Upper Woodford to the north; and to link the site and the Upper Woodford community to the existing footpath network leading into the centre of the larger village of Middle Woodford to the south. Indeed it is the latter footpath (which is a newly proposed addition to this scheme compared to the recently withdrawn scheme) that is put forward as a significant public benefit to justify the overriding of policy. There is also local support as well as the full support of the Parish Council for this element of the scheme and the Highway Authority has also raised no objection to the proposed footpaths. Whilst such sustainability improvements and links to existing services and facilities from the site would be encouraged, they are not considered to justify new development in the countryside which is contrary to policy in principle.

## 9.6 Flooding:

The previously withdrawn scheme was heading for refusal for the reasons of principle (as per this current proposal) and flooding. As has been identified above, part of this site is situated within flood zones 2 and 3 and the previous scheme, also proposing 4 dwellings but of much larger and detached scale, involved a layout that showed 2 of the 4 dwellings being located in the eastern part of the site and thus fully within the Flood Zones.

Paragraphs 100-104 of the NPPF deal with the issue of flooding. They confirm that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (i.e. in Flood Zones 2 and 3), to areas with a lower probability of flooding (i.e. in Flood Zone 1). Paragraph 103 of the NPPF further confirms that *'when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and only consider development appropriate in areas at risk of flooding where, informed by a site-specific flood risk assessment following the Sequential Test, and if required the Exception Test'*.

Previously therefore, as part of the proposed residential development was within Flood Zones 2 and 3, the Local Planning Authority had a duty to undertake a Sequential Test to identify if there were alternative sites in areas with a lower probability of flooding. There are no specific guidelines setting out how such a Sequential Test should be undertaken and the Environment Agency has put this duty firmly in the duty of the Local Planning Authority. However as the site is in countryside and the Council has an identified 5 year housing land supply, the proposed development within the flood zones was considered to be unjustified and the previous proposals failed the Sequential Test.

The current scheme however is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and significant changes have occurred to the proposed site layout since the previous scheme was considered. This scheme now proposes all four of the dwellings on parts of the site that are wholly outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3. The only *new* development that is proposed within the Flood Zones (not including the proposed conversion of the former granary building which is excluded from the Sequential Test process because it involves the conversion of an existing building) is a garage/store building serving Plot 3. As the latter does not involve habitable accommodation; does not make any future resident vulnerable of a risk of flooding; and as the scheme ultimately involves the replacement of a number of existing buildings (albeit open sided agricultural buildings), it is considered, using a common sense approach to the process, that the Sequential Test has now been satisfied. The former flooding reason for refusal has therefore been overcome and addressed and no additional reason for refusal is to be attached to this decision on these grounds accordingly. If the application were to be heading for permission, it would however have been pertinent to impose a condition on any such decision restricting the use of the garage/stores to incidental garage/store use only so that such a habitable use of these outbuildings could not be instated in the future.

### **9.7 Drainage:**

The application proposes a package treatment plant to serve the four dwellings and as has already been discussed the site is within Flood Zones 2 & 3. The Council's Drainage Officer is not convinced that the submitted foul and surface water package would be sufficient to drain the site in an effective manner and as it stands is likely to require the layout of the proposed housing development to change. The Council's Drainage officer has therefore objected on these grounds and a further reason for refusal is added to the recommendation accordingly.

### **9.8 Ecology:**

The application involves the demolition of a number of buildings and new development in an area of high ecological value including within a SSSI, SAC and SPA designation. The scheme is therefore accompanied by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat and Bat Survey (Sedgehill Ecology, Sept 2014). The report however identified that there are a number of issues outstanding, which the Council's Ecologist confirms can in the main be resolved by conditioning a Construction Environment Management Plan to be submitted before works commence on site.

However there is currently insufficient information submitted about the proposed mitigation to compensate for the impact from the development for the bats that have been found within the former Granary building. These details need to be provided prior to a positive decision being made on the application. The applicant's agent has been informed accordingly. At the time of writing the report however, and in the absence of any such information, an additional reason for refusal needs to be added to this recommendation on these grounds. This can however easily be addressed and should further information be forthcoming, the Committee will be updated and this reason for refusal will be removed from the recommendation accordingly.

### **9.9 Material Considerations:**

As has been identified throughout this report, the applicant has identified a package of public benefits that they consider to be material to the consideration of this application and which would justify this development as a departure to the newly adopted Development Plan, in this instance. The material considerations that have been identified so far are as follows:

- The provision of a new public footpath linking the site and the small community in Upper Woodford to the centre of Middle Woodford and all of the facilities it has to offer;
- The provision of a new public footpath linking the site to the centre of the small hamlet of Upper Woodford;
- An environmental improvement for the visual amenities of the area as a result of the redevelopment of a redundant agricultural farmstead with an attractive and well designed residential development;
- The provision of a mix of both small and large scale housing to meet a local need;
- The improvement of the setting of a number of important heritage assets;
- The long-term reuse and safeguarding of an important curtilage listed building;
- The retention of an important Cobb wall; and

- The improvement for highway safety as a result of the use of the access for residential vehicles rather than larger, slower farm vehicles/machinery

All of these points, and the weight that can be attached to them, have been addressed in detail throughout this report. However the applicant has also confirmed that this proposal forms part of a larger proposal involving the redevelopment of a new farmstead elsewhere in the village (namely on Chine Road).

Planning permission was granted earlier in the year for the expansion of the existing farm site at Chine Road (under ref: 14/12078/FUL). It is suggested in the supporting documentation accompanying this application, that the redevelopment of this former farm yard with residential dwellings is required in order to fund the redevelopment of the Chine Road site. The latter will not only be built to meet modern farming methods and to enable the existing farming enterprise to remain competitive and efficient, but will also ensure that the jobs currently generated by the existing farming enterprise currently operating from this site, are retained for the local area. A confidential viability report has been submitted with the application which in summary confirms that with the costs associated with demolition and remediation of the application site and the redevelopment of the Chine Road site, a total of four dwellings would be required on this site in order to provide the necessary funding plus an industry standard level of profit from the whole exercise.

There are variables within the viability report which are considered to be a little excessive for the type of development proposed and indeed the build costs identified per square metre are higher than industry standards, even for a high end specification and good quality end product, such as that proposed (as per Bidwells Building Trends Spring 2015). I do therefore have concerns with some of the conclusions of the viability report and am not convinced that it adequately demonstrates that four dwellings would be required to achieve the end goal.

However this is considered to be a moot point as it is not considered that this would justify the proposed development in the countryside either. In a rural district such as Wiltshire, this type of 'enabling' development could be repeated over and over again with existing farm enterprises deciding to relocate their farm buildings to other locations within their holding in order to benefit from or justify the development of additional housing in the countryside. It is considered that this would set a dangerous precedent which would circumvent the adopted policies that seek to protect the countryside and limit unsustainable forms of development. It is not therefore considered that this argument adds anything in terms of justification for this proposal and is not considered to validate a departure from the Development Plan either.

#### **10. S106 contributions**

The LPA adopted CIL in May 2015 and therefore any new development involving new residential floor space would be subject to CIL. If this application were heading for permission there is no reason put forward which would make this development exempt from CIL.

In addition, as is identified above, the proposals involve two new footpaths linking the site to both the centre of Upper Woodford and Middle Woodford. These are proposed as a direct requirement of this development in order to improve the sustainability of the site. The community benefit of such a scheme has also been put forward as a means to justify the new development in the countryside. Such footpaths would therefore need to be secured by a legal agreement (usually a S106 agreement). In the absence of any such legal agreement, a further reason for refusal must therefore be added to this decision accordingly.

## **11. Conclusion**

Whilst there is no disputing that a comprehensive package of public benefits have been identified as part of these proposals; that the proposals have received public support from the Parish Council and local community; and that such benefits are welcomed and encouraged by the LPA; it is not considered that these are on balance enough to outweigh the objection in principle to the proposed development of unrestricted market housing in the countryside. It is not considered to be sufficient to warrant a departure from the newly adopted Development Plan and as such this application is recommended for refusal accordingly.

## **RECOMMENDATION REFUSE**

- 1) The site is situated in designated countryside and no exceptional circumstances have been identified which would justify the unsustainable development of four unrestricted market dwellings on this site in this location as an exception to adopted policy. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework; and Wiltshire Core Strategy policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy), CP2 (Delivery Strategy), CP4 (Amesbury Community Area), CP44 (Rural Exception Sites) and CP48 (Supporting Rural Life).
- 2) The proposed development fails to make provision to secure the proposed public footpaths identified to improve the sustainability of the site and to justify the development in the countryside. It is therefore considered that the proposals would be contrary to Wiltshire Core Strategy policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy); CP2 (Delivery Strategy); CP4 (Amesbury Community Area); CP57 (Ensuring High Quality Design & Space Shaping); CP60 (Sustainable Transport); and CP61 (Transport & Development);
- 3) Insufficient mitigation measures have been provided to mitigate the potential harm that the development will have for protected species. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010; the National Planning Policy Framework; and Wiltshire Core Strategy policy CP50 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)
- 4) Insufficient information has been submitted to satisfactorily confirm that the site can be adequately drained in relation to foul and storm drainage or that the development would not cause a risk of flooding or pollution. The proposals are

therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework; National Planning Policy Guidance; and Wiltshire Core Strategy policy CP67 (Flood Risk)