

REPORT OUTLINE FOR AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES **Report No.**

Date of Meeting	12 th November 2020
Application Number	19/11985/FUL
Site Address	Land at Bonham Farm, Bonham Lane, Stourton, BA12 6PX
Proposal	Construction of 4 no affordable dwellings comprising 2 x two bed house and 2 x three bed houses with associated access and parking area.
Applicant	Stourhead (Western) Estate
Town/Parish Council	Stourton with Gasper Parish Council
Electoral Division	Mere, Cllr George Jeans
Grid Ref	
Type of application	Full
Case Officer	Mrs. Becky Jones

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Cllr Jeans has called the application to committee to be determined if recommended for refusal by officers, on the following grounds:

- to consider the need for the local housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission should be REFUSED for the reasons detailed below.

2. Report Summary

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

1. Principle of development and whether the development meets the policy criteria for an exceptions site
2. Affordable housing provision and Wiltshire Council's allocations policy
3. Impact on the settings of heritage assets and the character and appearance of the area
4. Landscape setting and the character of the AONB
5. Impact on residential amenity
6. Impact on the local road network, highway safety and rights of way
7. Ecology, archaeology and non mains drainage
8. Site at Brook Cottages in Gasper and application 13/00636/FUL

The application generated 1 letter of support from Stourton and Gasper Parish Council on the grounds that the dwellings would be available to rent at an affordable price for local people in perpetuity, 14 letters of support and two letters of objection.

3. Site Description

The site comprises a field for agricultural grazing (there is no site history for change of use to pony paddock), situated on the east side of a trackway serving Bonham Farm. The farm

buildings are located to the east, opposite the site. An area of woodland forms the west boundary to the site and is designated as National Trust land.

The application site is located within close proximity (and within the setting of) the **Grade II*** listed Bonham House and Bonham Cottage (formerly listed as Bonham House and Chapel of St Benedict) and **Grade II** listed Bonham Farmhouse. A Grade II listed wall lies to the south of Bonham House.

The site, farm and its associated buildings lie within the countryside of the AONB. The site has a non agricultural Agricultural Land Classification and is within Flood Zone 1 within the River Stour catchment. Bonham Lane is an adopted, unclassified road. A public footpath STGA 7 runs along the access lane.



The applicant is proposing to erect four dwellings with access and parking for 12 cars on the site.

4. Planning History

It is not considered that there is any planning history for the site which is of relevance to this application. However, Members' attention is drawn to a previous application at Gasper (Brook Cottages) for four affordable dwellings, which was approved subject to a legal agreement by the planning committee under 13/00636/FUL. This is discussed further below.



Brook Cottages scheme 13/00636/FUL Gasper

5. The Proposal

The proposal is to construct 4 no affordable dwellings comprising 2 x two bed house and 2 x three bed houses with associated access and parking area for 12 cars. In justifying the proposal, the applicants submitted Planning Statement indicates that:

“The Housing Need Survey identified a specific need for 5 subsidised rented houses. Whilst it lists these as 3 X One bedroom homes (1 X bungalow/ground floor accommodation), 1 X Two bedroom home and 1 X Three bedroom home the report notes that the recommendations for the number of bedrooms are made in line with the “family size” criteria implemented as part of the housing benefit changes introduced by the 2012 Welfare Reform Act. As a consequence, what is stated is generally lower than the accommodation sought by those answering the survey.

The survey actually identified a predominant need for two bedroom properties with the most sought after type of home being bungalows and terraced accommodation.

As a consequence, (and there are also reasons why this type of development is most appropriate in terms of the site, location and context) it is proposed to construct a barn style terrace of 4 dwellings. 2 of the 4 dwellings are single storey and the other 2 (in the central half of the building) include bedroom accommodation at first floor level”.

6. Planning Policy

The following planning policies are considered to be relevant to the determination of this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) and National Planning Practice Guidance NPPG

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) adopted Jan 2015:

- CP1: Settlement Strategy
- CP2: Delivery Strategy,
- CP17: Mere Community Area
- CP44: Rural exception sites
- CP48: Supporting Rural Life
- CP51: Landscape
- CP57: Design
- CP58: Conserving the Historic Environment
- CP60: Sustainable Transport

- CP61: Transport and Development

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, Circular 06/2005

EC Habitats Directive when as prescribed by Regulation 3(4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan Car Parking Strategy:

PS6 Residential parking standards

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66: Special considerations affecting planning functions

7. Consultations

Housing Team – objection, proposal is contrary to CP44

Conservation - Objection on grounds of impact on setting of Grade II* listed buildings, at higher end of less than substantial scale.

Historic England - Particularly concerned about the potential impact of the proposed scheme on the Grade II* listed building. This scheme to introduce a modern development of 4 dwellings to the west of the Bonham Farm complex will cause considerable harm to the overall heritage significance of Bonham House (previously the Chapel of St Benedict). See below.

Public protection – no adverse comments

Highways – objection on grounds of unsuitability of the local highway network and sustainability

Archaeology – no objection subject to condition for written programme of archaeological investigation

Drainage – no comments

Ecology – No objection subject to conditions for biodiversity net gain, which could include provision of bat and bird boxes on the new dwellings and that any external lighting is angled downwards and not illuminate any boundary vegetation.

AONB Partnership - various issues still to be addressed.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice and neighbour consultation.

14 letters of support received on the following grounds:

- Affordable and accessible homes for rent are required for local community and local workers
- Design is extremely sympathetic to Bonham, and they will be set lower than the current buildings so their impact would be small and screened by woodland belt.
- Site is well hidden and sympathetic to environment.
- Replaces local housing that has been lost, benefits to local community. Affordable homes are needed

2 letters of objection received on the following grounds:

- Adverse impact on setting of listed buildings, impact on historic character of the hamlet
- Adverse impact on setting of AONB, adjacent to public footpaths
- Proposed buildings are two storey, unsympathetic design
- Materials out of keeping with character in Bonham (eg slate and vertical wall cladding)

- Light pollution and impact of light and noise on protected species
- Traffic and impact on Bonham land and the access lane. Parking over-provision. Wood work business has been refused due to traffic impact. No quantitative study undertaken.
- Impact of non mains drainage
- Impact on archaeology
- Question affordability as those on housing benefit are ineligible

9. Planning Considerations

Planning permission is required for the development. The applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004). The NPPF is also a significant material consideration and due weight should be given to the relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency of the framework.

9.1. Principle of development and whether the development meets the policy criteria for an exceptions site

Bonham and the site lies outside any adopted settlement boundary, within the countryside.

Policy CP2 states that other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within the Plan, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development. Para 4.25 of the policy does however include 'exception policies' which seek to respond to local circumstance and national policy. This includes "Rural Exception sites", which is covered by policy CP44.

Core Policy 44 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy is the relevant policy for the consideration of rural exception sites. This states that:

At settlements defined as Local Service Centres, Large and Small Villages (Core Policy 1), and those not identified within the settlement strategy, a proactive approach to the provision of affordable housing will be sought in conjunction with Parish Councils and working with local communities and other parties. This exception to policy allows housing for local need to be permitted, solely for affordable housing, provided that:

- i. The proposal has clear support from the local community***
- ii. The housing is being delivered to meet an identified and genuine local need***
- iii. The proposal is within, adjoining or well related to the existing settlement***
- iv. Environmental and landscape considerations will not be compromised***
- v. The proposal consists of 10 dwellings or fewer***
- vi. Employment and services are accessible from the site***
- vii. Its scale and type is appropriate to the nature of the settlement and will respect the character and setting of that settlement and***
- viii. The affordable housing provided under this policy will always be available for defined local needs, both initially and on subsequent change of occupant.***

The proposal before Members therefore needs to be tested against the above criteria.

As summarised elsewhere in this report, the proposal has been subject of several letters of support from local people, and the Parish Council. It has however also been the subject of

objections regards the likely impacts of the development. Members will need to consider whether this level of support is enough to meet criterion i) above.

The proposal site forms part of the open countryside which forms part of the hamlet known as Bonham. It is considered that the proposal site does not adjoin the development limits of a Local Service Centre or Large Village where employment and services are easily accessible. It is also considered that the proposal site is not adjacent to the existing built area of a Small Village where employment and services are easily accessible.

The proposal site, by reason of its location, which is remote from services and employment, does not represent a suitable exception site. Consequently, the principle of developing the proposal site as a rural exception site is not accepted. In officers' opinion, the scheme does not meet the requirements of CP44 criterion (iii) and (vi) above. In officers' opinion, this is not a sustainable development.

Regards the other above criterion, the report below assesses how the development meets the various policy requirements.

9.2 The provision of affordable housing and Wiltshire Council's allocations policy

Criterion ii) of CP44 indicates that any application on an exception site should demonstrate that the affordable housing is being delivered to meet an identified and genuine local need.

The Parish Housing Needs Survey covering the area of the site (dating from 2018), and the survey's recommendations concentrate on households unable to afford accommodation on the open market.

The Survey indicates the following minimum need over three years (from 2018) for new affordable housing development in the parish, based on the responses to the survey:

Subsidised rented housing 10

- 3x one bedroom homes (1x bungalow/ground floor accommodation)
- 1x two bedroom home
- 1x three bedroom home

Shared ownership / discount market homes 11

- 1 x two bedroom home

Sheltered housing for older people

- None

It is important to note that as the survey points out, the recommendations describe a snapshot of the need for affordable housing at the time the survey was conducted and do not take account of future changes in need, for example arising from the changing housing needs of employees of local businesses. The recommendations may not represent the parish's full housing need as responses were not received from every household, for example households which are on the Housing Register may have not completed a questionnaire. In order to fully assess the housing need in the parish, the recommendations need to be considered alongside evidence provided by Wiltshire Council's Housing Register, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and the advice of allocation staff who manage the Register.

In general terms, it appears from the Survey that there is a certain level of need within the area of the site for affordable housing provision.

However, the proposed scheme needs to satisfy the requirements for Affordable Housing for Rent, as set out in the NPPF. This states that affordable housing is defined as:

“Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers)”.

However, the scheme also needs to comply with the following definition from the NPPF:

*a) **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).*

The Council’s Housing officer has **objected** to this proposal on the basis that:

- *the proposed site is located outside of, and away from, the existing built area of Stourton, which is identified as a ‘Small Village’ in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It does not therefore appear to meet criteria (iii) of CP44.*
- *The applicant proposes to retain Nomination Rights to the units which will be managed by a private landlord. This is contrary to the definition of ‘Affordable housing for Rent’ in Annex 2 of the NPPF which requires that the landlord is a Registered Provider.*
- *The proposed allocations criteria provided (attached) are not in accordance with the adopted Wiltshire Council Allocations Policy.*

Whilst the applicant has provided additional information stating that the tenure will be ‘Build to Rent’ and therefore does not need to be transferred to an RP, no evidence has been provided as to how the proposed units meet the requirements of Build to Rent set out in the PPG such as: longer tenancies of 3 years or more, inclusion of a clawback mechanism in the S106, and in-perpetuity requirements.

The PPG states that ‘Build to Rent is a distinct asset class within the private rented sector’ and whilst the NPPF and PPG don’t set out a minimum number of units for Build to Rent schemes, it is generally considered that these are large scale schemes. The units proposed therefore do not appear to be in the nature of Build to Rent units and we do not consider that Build to Rent is an appropriate tenure for a Rural Exception Site.

Therefore, although the proposed housing may be being offered as an affordable rent scheme, it is considered that the proposal does not satisfy the requirements of either the NPPF or CP44 and would not function as affordable housing under these definitions. Build to Rent is characteristically provided on large, urban schemes and is not considered a suitable means of provision for small exceptions sites.

Members will need to be mindful that application 13/00636/FUL (at Brook Cottages, Gasper to the west of this current application site) was considered by the Southern Area Planning Committee on the 3rd of July 2014. At that meeting, against officer advice, Members resolved to grant planning permission for that development subject to the imposition of planning conditions and the applicant entering into a legal agreement concerning the allocation of the

housing and a financial contribution towards public open space. It was further agreed that a draft Section 106 agreement and a draft set of conditions should be considered by a future Planning Committee before the Local Planning Authority issued a decision.

The completed legal agreement is attached at **Appendix 1** for consideration. Should Members decide to approve this current application, it is likely that a similarly worded Agreement will be needed.

However, in officers opinion, the considerations for this application at Bonham Farm are materially different to Brook Cottages in three ways:

1. The definition of affordable housing has changed since 2013 and is now provided by the 2019 NPPF. The Housing officer is concerned that Build to Rent schemes are an unsuitable mechanism for small rural exceptions sites.
2. The Brook Cottages scheme attracted a highway *sustainability* objection. The Bonham Farm proposal has generated a highway *sustainability* and **safety** objection as the highways officer considers that the local road network is unsuitable as a means of access to serve the development (This matter is explored elsewhere in this report).
3. Brook Cottage was a Grade II listed building opposite the affordable housing scheme. The Bonham Farm scheme is considered to adversely affect the setting and significance of a Grade II* listed building and has generated conservation objections and concerns from Historic England. (This matter is explored elsewhere in this report).

9.3 Impact on the settings of heritage assets and the character and appearance of the area surrounding the proposal site

The proposed site at Bonham lies within the setting of a Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:
In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The Conservation policies of the local plan and the NPPF seek to ensure that the settings and significance of listed buildings would not be harmed. Core Policy 58 aims to ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life.

In terms of the siting and location of the development, the Conservation officer has strongly objected to the proposal:

Bonham House is an important grade II listed building dating from the 14th century. Bonham Farmhouse is also listed – grade II (late 18th century). Any historic barns may well be curtilage listed. The setting is extremely rural, well-wooded and verdant in character. The site for the proposed housing is a pasture, north-west of the listed buildings.*

As it stands, I would not support the proposals.

The current application is supported by a heritage statement that, yet again, uses the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges to assess significance. I suggest they look at Historic England's

guidance on assessing significance.

Nevertheless, they do acknowledge the **high significance** of Bonham House (reflected in its grade II* status). At 4.3 they note that the remoteness of the chapel (part of the house) enabled it to be a discrete location for the continued observance of the Roman Catholic religion. At 4.4 they say 'it remains a well-preserved building, holds great historic and architectural interest and is of **High Significance**'.

Unfortunately there is no assessment of the contribution the setting makes to its setting – a conspicuous absence from the report.

The report also acknowledges the grade II farmhouse and the authors consider this to be of **Medium Significance**. There is no assessment of the contribution the farm buildings (unlisted) make to the farmhouse, and actually whether, as a group, the mutual functional, physical and historic relationship enhances the interest of the farmhouse and the barns (ie that the value of the group is greater than the individual components – I would argue that this is the case) and again, there is no assessment of the setting of the farmhouse.

In conclusion, para. 189 of the NPPF requires that the applicant should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, '**including any contribution made by their setting**', the latter is missing from the heritage appraisal. Notwithstanding the absence of an assessment of the setting of the designated heritage assets, I consider that the rural undeveloped character of the site contributes to the significance of Bonham House, in view of the fact that its isolated character was an important aspect of its historic interest, allowing it to discretely provide Roman Catholic services for a considerable length of time when generally this was not supported. Furthermore, I consider the rural undeveloped setting to contribute positively to the significance of the farmhouse. As such, I consider the development would cause some harm to the setting of both of these assets. I consider the harm would be at the high end of the 'less than substantial' scale.

Historic England also responded with concerns:

The application sites is located within close proximity, and within the setting of the Grade II* listed Bonham House, Bonham cottage (formerly listed as Bonham House and Chapel of St Benedict) and Grade II listed Bonham Farmhouse. We are particularly concerned about the potential impact of the proposed scheme on the Grade II* listed asset, as outlined below.

Heritage Significance of Bonham House:

Bonham House is Grade II* listed and represents a Roman Catholic Chapel and cottage which date from the 14th century onwards. The buildings have been altered and updated throughout the centuries, including recently when they have been converted to a residential dwelling. The location of the Chapel of St Benedict is particularly relevant to its heritage significance because it historically provided an isolated sanctuary for Catholic worship following the reformation. This isolated location is still very much appreciated today; with the converted chapel and its surrounding farm complex being set amongst open fields.

Impact of the Proposals on the Heritage Asset:

This scheme to introduce a modern development of 4 dwellings to the west of the Bonham Farm complex will cause considerable harm to the overall heritage significance of both Bonham House.

While the applicants Heritage Impact Assessment states that the majority of the asset's significance is related to surviving architectural interest; we would argue its historical value and setting are major contributors to its importance. The isolated setting within which the chapel was established and functioned was integral to its use and survival as a worshipping Roman Catholic Church during the period of upheaval for Roman Catholics in the 16th century. During a period of forced sale of properties by the wider Stourton family as a result of their

allegiance to the Catholic Faith, the purchase by Sir Thomas Stourton of the chapel as a place for discrete worship is an important and perhaps central reason for its survival today. On this basis we disagree with the conclusion that the proposals would have a negligible effect on the setting of the asset or that there would be 'no change to its significance'

The proposals will be detrimental to the setting and experience of Bonham House (previously the Chapel of St Benedict) which was historically important for its isolated, rural and tranquil location. Its survival as a Roman Catholic place of worship during the Civil War and following the establishment of the Protestant Church in England in the 16th Century was closely linked to its discrete location. As stated by the applicants Heritage Impact Statement 'This isolation can still be appreciated as there is little or no intrusion into the rural landscape and the lane on which the asset lies is little used by modern traffic'.

The introduction of a number of modern dwellings with their associated car movements, parking, increased people and domestic use would have a detrimental impact on the ability to experience the isolated setting that was so integral to the Chapel's continued use for Roman Catholic worship in the 16th century and therefore survival. It is a physical marker of the Stourton family's connection and commitment to their faith, further reflected in the Chapel's use by families across this part of Wiltshire.

While there is only limited visual connection between the assets (from upstairs windows), setting can be impacted on by anything that negatively impacts on the understanding, experience and appreciation of a place, as outlined in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: Setting of Heritage Assets (2nd Edition, 2017).

Given our view of the importance of setting on the overall significance of Bonham House, we argue that the scheme proposed will cause considerable harm to the overall significance of the asset. Any justification for this location for the required housing in Stourton would need to outweigh this level of harm and Wiltshire Council would need to consider the need give 'great weight' to the asset's conservation (Para. 193, 194 and 196 NPPF).

Recommendation: We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of (LBs) section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The applicant has submitted a supporting letter by AC Archaeology, setting out their response to the conservation objections regarding the setting and significance of the listed buildings. The letter considers that the HE advice has incorrectly defined the extent of the setting of the heritage asset and the level of effect that the proposed development might have on that setting. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the asset has been overstated and that harm to that significance would ensue from permitting the development.

The Conservation officer considered the response as follows:

Historic England and myself are in accordance over the impact of the proposed development on the significance of Bonham Manor, a II building. Rather than us misunderstanding the Historic England guidance, it is AC Archaeology who have failed to properly apply the Setting*

guidance from the outset. Whilst setting is not a significance in its own right, in certain cases it contributes to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

As both Historic England and myself have opined, part of the significance of Bonham Manor is its isolated location which enabled the building to operate as a chapel for Roman Catholic recusants. This isolated setting enables us to continue to appreciate its important historic/social role, thus contributing to its evidential, social and historic significance. I have little doubt that its isolated setting in part explains its high grading ie in the top 7% of listed buildings. Indeed, AC Archaeology accede that the site forms part of the setting of the manor house in their letter:

*'the reference to the contribution that its isolated setting made to its continued use and survival as a site of catholic worship in the 16th century is **not disputed** – but that is no longer the case, and it is its contemporary setting that should be assessed'*

The isolated setting continues to form part of the setting of the manor house today and as such continues to contribute to its significance, ergo, development within its setting will erode an important element of its significance thereby causing harm to the setting. To approve the development would be contrary to paragraph 193 of the NPPF and section 66 of the Planning (LB and CA) Act 1990 which requires that an LPA shall have:

*'**special regard** to the desirability of **preserving** the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.*

In addition, I have stated that I consider that the rural isolated aspect contributes to the significance of the farmhouse, a grade II listed building. There are many appeal decisions which highlight the fact that a rural aspect contributes to the significance of listed farmhouses and that development within their setting, erodes their significance.

To reiterate, both HE and I remain firmly of the view that the proposals amount to harm on the 'less than substantial harm' spectrum and that the harm would be at the higher end of the scale in view of that high grade national designation of Bonham Manor.

The Conservation officer also referred to a recent appeal decision at Corsley House in Warminster. The inspector considered the setting issues and clarified that setting is a wider consideration for decision makers:

*'To this day, Corsley House [a grade II listed building] is **experienced** as inextricably linked with its parkland and wider landscape setting. Therefore, beyond its historic fabric, architectural evolution and historic associations, the significance and special interest of Corsley House are informed by its setting within a historic parkland **and the wider dramatic Wiltshire countryside beyond it**'.*

Therefore, in conclusion, the proposal would be considered harmful to the significance and setting of the listed buildings, contrary to CP58 and the NPPF.

9.4 Landscape setting and the character of the AONB

The site is located with the AONB. It forms an open field adjacent to the listed building and farm complex.

Core Policy 51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance Wiltshire's distinctive landscape character. Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

The AONB Partnership has not raised an outright objection to the development, but has flagged up a number of concerns. The Partnership considers that *the perceived need for housing in and around this AONB is for affordable housing. The AONB Management Plan echoes that view. There would, however, need to be an enforceable arrangement whereby any development permitted as affordable would be maintained as such in to the future.*

From an AONB perspective the large number of roof lights, ten, is not acceptable in this International Dark Sky Reserve. The potential for light pollution from these roof lights does need to be addressed, preferably by a redesign. The west elevation has significant areas of floor to eaves glass and this does not appear to be a particularly rural character for a location that is particularly rural. Furthermore the scope for light pollution from these large expanses of glass is significant.

The proposal would need to incorporate arrangements for capturing and utilising renewable energy for each of the dwellings. Clearly this development will effectively change the character of the whole of the pony paddock, and not just the area proposed for development, which includes a significant parking area and domestic gardens. Whilst affordable housing could gain support from the AONB Management Plan there are a number of other issues, outlined above, that need addressing before a favourable decision can be contemplated. I note the concerns that your Conservation Officer has and, of course, those need to be taken into account as well.

Given the strong objections voiced by the conservation officer and HE regarding the setting and significance of the listed buildings, officers consider that the development would harm the *locally distinctive character of the settlement and its landscape setting and the landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value and important views and visual amenity*, which would be contrary to the criteria of policy CP51.

9.5 Impact on residential amenity

Given the design of the dwellings, by reason of their size, in terms of their height, width and depth and their positioning in relation to each other and the views which would be possible from the proposed openings, it is considered that appropriate levels of residential amenity would be achievable within the site. The development would not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring dwellings in terms of dominance, overshadowing, overlooking or loss of light. The public protection officer has no adverse comments to make regarding the proposal.

The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Core Policy 57 (vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy

9.6 Impact on highway safety and rights of way

The access track to the site forms a public right of way, footway STGA 7. The comments from the rights of way team are awaited and Members will be updated at the committee meeting. The site is not considered to be well related to any settlements and is not sustainably located in transportation terms. The Council's highways officer commented:

The site is accessed via Bonham Lane via a network of rural roads. I have concerns regarding the restricted width, poor alignment and sub-standard junctions and would consider the road network being unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development.

In addition, the site is located outside of any village policy boundary and I therefore have concerns with regards to the sustainability of the site for residential/ commercial development due to the likely reliance upon the private car for any occupants and their visitors. This proposal is therefore, in my opinion, contrary to Core Policies 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 9, paras 102, 103, 108 & 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, which aim to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car and encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.

The applicant responded that the Highway Authority has raised objection regarding the suitability of the surrounding road network rather than access to the development itself. The Highway Authority was engaged at the pre-application stage and following receipt of this information requests were made on a number of occasions for a meeting with the Highways Officer in order to discuss potential off site (but within the ownership/control of the applicant) highways improvements which could include enhancements to the visibility at nearby junctions and the provision of passing places. Unfortunately there has been no response from the Highway Authority to this offer but there is the potential for significant improvements to be provided and conditioned as part of any approval.

If minded to approve, Members may wish to consider delegating the application back to officers to consider whether any improvements are possible or feasible. However, as the Highways advice appears to relate to the width of the narrow lanes, officers have concerns that a package of highway improvements around the site may result in an urbanisation of the rural character of the area to serve a development which is against policy in principle. Thus, officers have not sought any highway improvements.

Consequently, in the absence of a satisfactory highway recommendation, the application is considered contrary to Core Policies 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 9, paras 102, 103, 108 & 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

9.7 Ecology/archaeology/non mains drainage

The Council's ecologist has commented:

The site proposed for development appears to be paddock with little value to biodiversity, and does not fall within any HRA consultation zones. It also appears that no vegetation/trees/hedgerow will need to be removed as a result of the development. It is assumed that bats use the site for foraging/commuting, but no features exist on site that are suitable for roosting. No ecology survey work is required in the application's support.

The woodland situated approximately 50m west of the site is Ancient Woodland and County Wildlife Site. It is likely to be heavily used by a variety of bat species and other nocturnal species and should remain as a dark area. The proposed housing is located a sufficient distance from this woodland to avoid significant impact on protected species as a result of increased light levels. If bats are roosting in farm buildings on the opposite side of the road, they should not be affected by the introduction of the housing which is set back approx. 15m from the roadside.

The proposal will need to demonstrate biodiversity net gain, which could include provision of bat and bird boxes on the new dwellings. I recommend that any external lighting is angled downwards and not illuminate any boundary vegetation.

The AONB partnership have concerns about lighting and a third party has commented that there are, within a few hundred yards of the site, bat, kite, buzzard roosts, badger setts and newt/amphibian migrations.

However, the ecologist has checked the details again and maintains there is insufficient policy justification to require any more information/surveys or changes to the proposal for ecological reasons. Therefore, no objection is raised under CP50 subject to conditions requiring the applicant to provide bat and bird boxes and that lights are angled downwards, away from boundary vegetation.

Archaeology

CP58 seeks to ensure that development *protects, conserves and where possible enhances the historic environment*. An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by the applicant and submitted to the archaeologist. The archaeologist concluded in summary:

"...This report has identified a likely medieval house platform in the north east corner of the site with associated earthworks to the west and south and with evidence for further activity in the south east corner. I would advise that further work is now required in order to further explore the archaeological potential identified by the evaluation and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development upon it, this work to be secured via a condition to be attached to any planning permission issued.

I would therefore withdraw the earlier objection to the application made by my former colleague Martin Brown in January this year. Instead I now support the application, ..subject to the condition ..to enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest.

Consequently, should Members be minded to approve this application, a suitable archaeological condition will be required.

Non Mains Drainage

The applicant is proposing to dispose of surface water to a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and foul sewage to a package treatment plant. Where there is no access to existing mains drainage, a package treatment plant is an acceptable solution under the guidance in the NPPG para 020. This development is within the River Stour catchment area. The drainage team have no comments to make and so standard conditions for drainage would be required.

10. Conclusion

Whilst the provision of affordable housing is welcomed in principle, the proposal site, by reason of its location in the open countryside of the AONB, is remote from services and employment, and does not represent a suitable exception site for residential dwellings. Additionally, the development would cause less than substantial harm at the upper end of the scale to the significance and settings of listed buildings. The local road network is also considered to be unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development. Notwithstanding, it is not considered that the proposal would be likely to result in the provision of affordable housing in the manner intended by National and Local Planning policies. The harm caused by the proposal therefore outweighs any perceived benefits in terms of the provision of affordable housing for local people, and the proposal is therefore contrary to the policies of Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF.

11. RECOMMENDATION

Planning Permission should be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. The application site, is located in the open countryside of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty landscape, where residential development is restricted; is remote from services and employment, and in an area where the local road network is unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development without potentially significant adjustments. Whilst there appears to be some need for affordable homes in the area, no evidence has been provided to explain how the proposed units meet the requirements of Build to Rent, as set out in the NPPG and the NPPF. Notwithstanding, Build to Rent is considered to be an unsuitable tenure for a small rural exceptions site.

The proposal would therefore result in unsustainable residential development in the open countryside of the AONB landscape; have significant highway and visual implications; and would be unlikely to result in the provision of suitable affordable housing. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy CP1, CP2, CP44, CP51, and Annex 2(a) of the NPPF 2019 and the guidance for Build to Rent in the NPPG. The proposal is therefore also contrary to policies CP 60, 61 and 62 and Section 9, paras 102, 103, 108 & 110 of the NPPF 2019, which aim to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car and encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.

2. The development would lie within close proximity of and within the settings of the Grade II* listed Bonham House and Bonham Cottage (formerly listed as Bonham House and Chapel of St Benedict) and Grade II listed Bonham Farmhouse. A Grade II listed wall lies to the south of Bonham House. The historically isolated location continues to form part of the setting of the listed buildings and continues to contribute to their significance. The existing rural aspect also contributes to the significance of the listed farmhouse. Development within the setting of these buildings, and the associated activities, will erode an important element of their historic significance whilst causing harm to their setting. The justification for this location for four affordable homes does not outweigh this level of harm, due to the 'great weight' that must be attached to the assets' conservation. The development would therefore be contrary to Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy CP58, paragraph 19, 194, 196 and 200 of the NPPF 2019 and section 66 of the Planning (LB and CA) Act 1990.

Appendix 1: Legal Agreement for Brook Cottages 13/00636/FUL

Appendix 2: Stourhead (Western) Estate, Allocation Policy for proposed new cottages at Bonham Farm, Stourton dated November 2019 V1.