

Date of Meeting	4 th August 2011
Application Number	E/11/0721/FUL
Site Address	Whatcombes, The Street, Conock, Devizes, SN10 3QQ.
Proposal	Replacement dwelling and garage and enlargement of garden. (resubmission of E/10/1313/FUL)
Applicant	Mr Anthony Hues
Town/Parish Council	CHIRTON
Grid Ref	406785 157214
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Rachel Yeomans

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been brought to Committee at the request of Division Member, Cllr Brigadier Hall.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the recommendation that planning permission be refused.

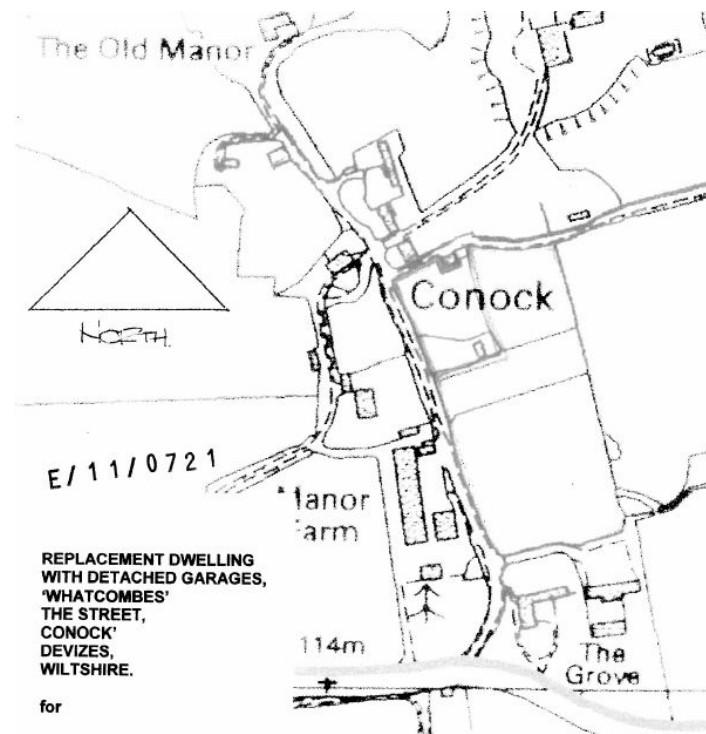
2. REPORT SUMMARY

The main issues in this case are:

- a) Principle of development and the 'fallback' situation
- b) Impact upon the listed Historic Park and Garden
- c) Design and visual impact

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to a property known as 'Whatcombe's Cottage' in Conock. Proceed south west from Devizes on the A342 towards Rushall. After passing turnings for Urchfont on the right hand side, proceed for approximately ¼ mile and take the left turning signed Conock. The application site can be found a few hundred yards on the right hand side, opposite Manor Farm. Access to the site is via an existing driveway.



4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

E/10/1313/FUL – Replacement dwelling and garage and enlargement of garden.

This application was withdrawn on 9th November 2010 following officer concerns regarding the scale and design of the proposed buildings and the extent of the garden enlargement.

E/11/0390/FUL – Replacement dwelling and garage and enlargement of garden.

Planning permission was granted on 20th May 2011 following extensive pre-application negotiations to achieve a dwelling of more suitable scale, aspect, traditional proportions and more sympathetic design. The applicant's requirements for living space, garden room and farm office, car port structure and extended garden were taken into account and suggestions made as to how these could be accommodated whilst achieving a scale and design of dwelling which did not jar with its sensitive surroundings. Even though it was considered that the final design was not especially reflective of the local vernacular, it was nevertheless deemed inoffensive and its impact was not considered to result in significant harm so as to warrant refusal of planning permission (subject to the carefully negotiated details).

A change to the footprint was also permitted in order to enable the applicant to remain in occupation in the existing property until the new one was constructed. It was made clear to the agent and applicant at this time that this previous scheme was considered the very maximum scale of dwelling that was achievable under policy HC25 which requires that replacement dwellings in the countryside are not 'significantly larger' than existing. In the case of this previous application, it was considered that the impact of the dwelling could just about be justified in the context of this policy, backed up by the particular circumstances of the applicant.

Officers have previously been advised that the applicant farms a significant local holding and owns the farm buildings opposite at 'Manor Farm'. He is keen to accommodate the needs of his family and business which have outgrown the existing dwelling but without moving out of the village because of the need to remain close to the farm buildings/land.

However, it is understood that the applicant is not seeking a farmhouse tied to the farm buildings. The current dwelling is not agriculturally tied but is an open market dwelling.

5. THE PROPOSAL

The application proposes the erection of a replacement dwelling with 3 large bedrooms plus additional guest bed/sit, 2 en-suites and family bathroom to the upper floor, substantial lounge, dining room, separate garden room, snug, large utility room together with separate double car port and attached farm office and stores, and the extension of the domestic curtilage.



EAST (REAR) ELEVATION



NORTH (SIDE) ELEVATION



WEST (FRONT) ELEVATION



SOUTH (SIDE) ELEVATION



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

6. PLANNING POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- Policy HE3 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 which states that *'Historic Parks and Gardens and their settings should be protected from inappropriate development, having regard to the scale and location of any development proposals and their impact on the character and features of these sites'*;
- Government policy contained in Planning Policy Statement 5: 'Planning for the Historic Environment'; and
- Policies HC25 (Replacement of Existing Dwellings), PD1 (Development and Design) and NR7 (Protection of the Landscape) of the adopted Kennet Local Plan 2011.

7. CONSULTATIONS

Parish Council – No objections.

Garden History Society (Statutory Consultee) – recommend refusal of planning permission. Key elements of their response include:

Conock Manor has been identified by English Heritage as a designed landscape of special historic interest in the national context, and has been included on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II*. Government Planning Guidance contained in PPS 5 indicates that the historic environment comprises various intimately linked elements, of which historic designed landscapes such as Conock Manor are a key component.

The current application proposes an increase in the scale of the proposed house and the addition of a garden room thereby significantly increasing the scale and bulk of the dwelling. The Society is concerned that the proposed dwelling would be considerably larger than the existing one, and the one which has recently been granted planning permission, thereby making it very prominent in this historic landscape.

PPS 5 requires that new development should make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment and that any harm which would result to designated heritage assets should be justified in terms of the public benefit. We would advise that the proposed larger dwelling on such a prominent site would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the historic designed landscape.

We would ask that this application be refused on the grounds that the design of the proposed building is inappropriate in terms of design, bulk and scale, and that the development would not preserve or enhance this heritage asset.

Highways – no objection subject to a condition to require any gates to be set back at least 4.5 metres from the carriageway edge and opening inwards only.

Conservation Officer – has provided a clear and detailed response setting out why the application conflicts with legislation and national and local planning policy and recommends that the application should be refused planning permission.

No further representations have been received in respect of this application at the time of writing this report.

8. PUBLICITY

The application has been publicised by way of a site notice erected at the site and by letters sent to adjoining neighbours and the parish council.

9. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

a) Principle of the development

Planning permission has recently been granted for a similar scheme on the same site; the permission remains extant and must therefore be considered as a realistic 'fallback position'. This established the principle of a replacement dwelling on the site of a similar form to that now being proposed albeit of a smaller scale, and a very similar garage / farm office building. It also established the acceptability of the proposed extension of the domestic curtilage, the loss of trees and vegetation (subject to a suitable landscaping scheme) and the access and driveway. In view of the distance to neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the proposals would adversely affect residential amenity.

Consequently, the main issue to be considered is simply the larger scale and resulting design of the amended house in relation to b) and c) set out below.

b) Impact on the Historic Park and Garden, and c) Design and impact on visual amenity

The existing dwelling dates from the mid C20 but is traditionally scaled with a narrow gable span, low eaves and ridge. The mansard roof and gable ends are slate hung, with a brick ridge stack and low walls clad in timber shingles. Although this is not an historic building its scale, proportions and materials create an overall impression which does not challenge the character of surrounding historic development. The mature garden which surrounds the dwelling also makes a contribution to the informal and bucolic character of the area overall and, with the relatively drab coloured materials of the house itself, allows that the building is not especially prominent within its surroundings.

The site occupies an extremely prominent location within the village and the Registered Historic Park and Garden of Conock Manor, being highly visible from the road serving Conock and from public rights of way which extend across the north and to the east of the application site.

The acceptability of the previously negotiated scheme relied heavily upon its scale and design to ensure that the replacement dwelling was not 'significantly larger', as stipulated in policy HC25, did not appear unduly prominent nor had a detrimental impact on the grade II listed Historic Park and Garden, its setting or the visual amenities of the area. Furthermore, the proportions and design details were discussed at length to achieve a high quality design reflective of more traditional properties to result in a design scheme fitting for this sensitive location.

The survey drawing provided shows the footprint of the existing dwelling extends to approximately a 9 metre frontage with a narrow span of c. 6.5 metres. From previous submissions, the existing property measures 7.5 metres to the ridge and the approved design was requested not to exceed this height. A height of 7.8 metres for the previous proposal was accepted on the basis that the slab level would be dug in by 300mm to ensure it appeared no taller in the landscape.

The application under consideration is for a broadly similar design to that previously negotiated and granted planning permission, however with scaled up dimensions and the addition of a garden room. For comparison, the main scale differences can be

summarised as follows; the height of the proposed dwelling is nearly half a metre taller than the approved scheme at 8.25 metres; the span of the dwelling is proposed to increase from 7.0 m to c. 8.090m. The rear wing is also proposed to be increased by over a metre together with an additional garden room measuring some c. 4.7 metres by 4.2 metres in place of the modest lean to previously approved.

The result of these cumulative increases in dimension is a substantial increase in the bulk and massing of the development which result in a design which appears too large for this sensitive and prominent position. The proportions appear 'over-stretched', creating a squat and bulky design when viewed from the side which does not respond to its traditional context but is more symptomatic of modern volume housebuilding. The proportions of the dwelling have been fundamentally altered and the generally vertical emphasis of the original design lost.

The design of the proposed garden room is also at odds with the generally traditional style employed for the remainder of the design concept. This significant structure will be prominent across the fields from public viewpoints and is an incongruous addition to the proposed dwelling.

It is true that upon first sight of the plans, the differences between the approved scheme and the current application are not easily apparent. However, what must be considered is that the cumulative difference in relatively small measurements on a scaled plan can result in significant differences to the overall impact of the as-built scheme, when constructed. The impact of such all-round increases in scale must be carefully considered, especially where scale is such a pertinent issue in this sensitive and visually prominent location. For any site, there will be a limit to the scale of dwelling that can be accommodated which will relate to the constraints of the site. For the forgoing reasons, it is considered that the proposed dwelling has exceeded this limit and results in significant harm.

10. CONCLUSION

The previously approved dwelling was at the absolute margins of what could be considered acceptable in this sensitive location. The significant increase in the proportions of the property would undoubtedly result in a dwelling which cannot be considered to comply with the 'not significantly larger' requirement set out in policy HC25 of the Kennet Local Plan. It would appear unduly prominent, bulky and excessively large in scale in this sensitive location and would therefore be harmful to both the listed Historic Park and Garden and the visual amenities of the area. Furthermore, the design of the proposed garden room is considered an incongruous addition to this style of dwelling set within this historic and traditional setting.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse planning permission for the following reason:

1	The proposed dwelling by reason of its large scale, bulk and poor design in this sensitive and prominent location within a Grade II listed Historic Park and Garden, would be detrimental to the setting of the Historic Park and Garden and result in significant harm to the visual amenities of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to national Planning Policy Statement 5: 'Planning for the Historic Environment', Policy HE3 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 and policies HC25, PD1 and NR7 of the adopted Kennet Local Plan 2011.
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Appendices:

Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:

None

The application file and history files.

