

REPORT TO THE SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	05 th January 2011		
Application Number	S/2011/1494		
Site Address	Lower Mere Park Farm, Mere Park, Mere, Warminster, BA12 6AD		
Proposal	Erection of a replacement dwelling and the re-establishment of Dairy Cottage as two separate dwellings		
Applicant	Mr & Mrs Armishaw		
City/Town/Parish Council	Mere Parish Council		
Electoral Division	Mere	Unitary Member	Cllr George Jeans
Grid Ref	384511 129198		
Type of Application	FULL		
Case Officer	Charlie Bruce-White		

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Jeans has called in the application due to public interest.

1. Purpose of report

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Case Officer that planning permission be REFUSED for the reasons detailed below.

2. Report Summary

The main issues in the consideration of this application are as follows:

1. The principle of development;
2. Assessment of policy H30 criteria;
3. Archaeology;
4. Listed building setting;
5. Ecology;
6. Proposals related to Dairy Cottage

The application is supported by Mere Parish Council

3. Site Description

The site relates to Lower Mere Park Farm, situated within an isolated rural location approximately 2 miles to the south-east of Mere. The site includes a farmhouse, adjacent farm yard broadly enclosed by a courtyard of outbuildings including a grade II listed barn, a cottage (Dairy Cottage), an access track approximately 400 metres long, and a modern agricultural barn and slurry lagoon situated a short distance to the east of the farmyard. The farm buildings are currently redundant and the farmhouse has recently suffered extensive fire damage, and is no longer in a habitable state. The site is within open countryside and the Special Landscape Area.

4. Relevant Planning History

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
11/0068	Steel framed barn for animal forage and implements and new access/hardstanding	NO OBJ 04.03.11
11/0879	Re-routing of farm track for easier access across farmland.	NO OBJ 13.07.11
11/1228	Alterations and extensions to Dairy Cottage with access and parking from new track to north.	AC 06.10.11
11/1285	Prior notification for the demolition of the main farmhouse and outbuildings excluding the listed barn.	NO OBJ 27.09.11

5. Proposal

It is proposed to demolish the farmhouse and several outbuildings and to erect a replacement dwelling and new outbuildings laid out in a courtyard around the former farmyard. The modern agricultural barn to the east would be demolished, and a walled garden formed, and the slurry lagoon remodelled as a pond. Dairy Cottage would be extended and altered to provide a pair of cottages. There would also be landscaping of the site, including the reconfiguration of the access track.

6. Planning Policy

Local Plan policies: G1, G2, H30, H31, D3, CN5, C2, C6, C12

Central government planning policy: PPS1, PPS3, PPS5, PPS7, PPS9, PPG13, PPS25

Other material guidance: Salisbury Design Guide: *Creating Places*

7. Consultations

Parish Council

Support

Archaeology

The site is of archaeological interest and a decision cannot be made until the results of a pre-development archaeological field evaluation have been received.

Conservation Officer

No objection on the basis of the amended plans removing the link extension to the listed barn.

Ecologist

No objection subject to conditions regarding bat mitigation.

Highways Officer

No objection

Environment Agency

No objection subject to conditions requiring i) the flood mitigation measures contained within the Flood Risk Assessment to be carried out; and ii) water efficiencies measures to be implemented within the new dwelling.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice and neighbour consultation.

No letters of representation were received.

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 The principle of development

Local plan policy H30 states that the replacement of an existing dwelling in the countryside will be permitted provide that:

- (i) the proposed replacement dwelling is not significantly larger and has no greater impact than the existing dwelling;
- (ii) the design of the new dwelling is of a high standard and appropriate to the rural surroundings;
- (iii) the siting of the replacement dwelling is closely related to that of the existing;
- (iv) current parking and access standards can be met; and
- (v) the existing dwelling has not been abandoned.

Whilst the proposal would not strictly comply with criteria (v) due to its fire damaged state, it is considered that a pragmatic approach should be adopted in such instances, and the proposal is considered in accordance with the other criteria of policy H30.

9.2 Assessment of policy H30 criteria

The main element of the proposed replacement dwelling would be approximately 12 metres in height and 24 metres in length, compared with approximately 9 metres and 17.5 metres respectively for the existing dwelling. In addition, the proposed dwelling would have a reasonably large two storey side extension, further increasing its scale beyond the existing dwelling. In Officers' view this increased scale would constitute a replacement dwelling that is significantly larger, thus failing to accord with the first criteria of policy H30.

The second criteria of policy H30 requires that the design of the new dwelling is of a high standard and is appropriate to the rural surroundings. Whilst the proposed dwelling could generally be considered as being of a high standard of design as a standalone building, Officers are not convinced that the design produced is appropriate to the rural character of the Mere locality. The Government policy on design contained within PPS1 states that local authorities should “seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design”. The Salisbury Design Guide *Creating Places* advises that applicants will be expected to justify the quality of their scheme through the submission of a design statement which explains how the design chosen is appropriate to its context (Objective 4). The applicant’s submitted Design & Access Statement merely states that “an understated Edwardian style was adopted as being the most appropriate for the site and the one most favoured by the client”. No analysis of the local context or vernacular has been submitted, such as how the design has been informed by detail which typifies local buildings, as required by Objective 16 of *Creating Places*.

In addition, the very fact that the design of the dwelling has the appearance of a grand country house, particularly its principal elevation, contributes to its greater impact within the countryside which policy H30 seeks to avoid. Whilst the application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which concludes that the views of the proposed development would be limited, the explanatory text of policy H30 makes it clear that “the fact that a house on a particular site would be unobtrusive is not considered sufficient justification for a substantial increase in size as the cumulative impact of proposals, if not carefully controlled, would lead to the long-term erosion of the character of the District’s countryside”.

In relation to the third criteria of policy H30, whilst it is noted that the siting of the dwelling would be further to the east than existing, it would have a substantially overlapping footprint so as to be construed as ‘closely related’. As for the fourth criteria, there would be ample parking, and access to the highway would remain unaltered.

9.3 Archaeology

The Council’s Archaeologist states that:

This site is of archaeological interest. The farm sits within the medieval Mere Park. There seems to be good evidence that this park was used for breeding horses as much as hunting/deer. I don’t have a reference to Lower Park Farm being specifically used for that purpose, but WAM does say that Higher Mere Park Farm is on the site of the original moated lodge, whilst Lower Mere Park is on the site of the original lodge’s replacement (Called New House). The latter was built in 1726.

Given the above, I consider that there is the potential for significant archaeological remains to be present on the site, albeit they may have been damaged or disturbed by later use. In light of this, and in line with PPS5 (2010), I

would recommend that an archaeological field evaluation is carried out prior to the determination of the application. This information should reveal the impact of the proposed development on any buried archaeology, and such works should be conducted by a professional, qualified archaeologist.

No decision on approval of this scheme should be made until the results of the field evaluation have been made known. If the results are positive, it may be necessary for me to recommend further excavation as an appropriate planning condition to be carried out prior to development. The costs of the archaeological works will of course fall to the applicant.

At the time of writing, the archaeological field evaluation had been undertaken, and the report awaited. An update will be given at the committee meeting on its results and implications.

9.4 Listed building setting

The council's Ecologist states that:

The protected species report (Chalkhill, March 2011) demonstrated that bats (probably brown long-eared) were roosting in one of the top loft rooms of the farmhouse. No emergence survey had been undertaken to establish access points or the significance of the roost. Further survey and a licence were recommended if the farmhouse were demolished. None of the other buildings, the cattle sheds, milking parlour, barn with hayloft contained evidence of bats. The grade 2 listed building had evidence of bats (droppings) but is unaffected by the current application.

Since the Chalkhill survey was carried out, the farmhouse roof has been destroyed by fire. The farmhouse does not currently support a bat roost, nor is it likely that bats will return while the roof is so damaged. On this basis a licence will not be required to demolish the remainder of the building – the Habitats Regulations will not be breached.

Nevertheless, the farmhouse has been used by bats until recently and it is reasonable to expect mitigation for the loss of the roost. Drawing 11/1648/110B (Relph Ross Partnership) shows a bat roost incorporated into the top of the roof of the proposed replacement farmhouse. This appears to have a ceiling to apex height of 2m which is adequate for a brown long-eared roost. Further details will be required to demonstrate the design and access arrangements for the new roost. Although the damaged farmhouse currently has no potential for bats, its replacement should seek to replace the brown long-eared bat which has been lost. There will be no need for further surveys or a Natural England licence.

The application can be approved subject to the conditions as follows:

- *A permanent roost and access for brown long-eared bats will be proved for the duration of the development in the loft space of the replacement dwelling in accordance with Relph Ross Partnership drawing 11/1648/110B*

- *No works shall commence until details have been submitted to and approved by the council demonstrating how the loft space in drawing 11/1648/110B will be designed to accommodate bats, including details of access points and design of the roof void. The development will be completed in accordance with the approved details.*

9.6 Proposals related to Dairy Cottage

The proposals also include the subdivision of Dairy Cottage to form a pair of cottages. Whilst the creation of additional dwellings within isolated countryside locations are generally to be resisted. It is significant that the development as a whole would not result in a net increase in the total number of dwellings on the site. This is because the farmhouse was occupied as two dwellings and the proposal to replace it would be as one dwelling.

In terms of other matters, the external alterations and extensions to Dairy Cottage remain as per a previous scheme to renovate the property as a single dwelling (S/2011/1228), and the Environment Agency raise no objection in flood risk terms subject to a condition requiring the implementation of flood mitigation measures.

10. Conclusion

By virtue of its excessive scale, the proposed replacement dwelling would be contrary to development plan policy which seeks to limit the impact of new development within the countryside. Furthermore, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed design would be appropriate to its local context and promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, and therefore the proposal would be contrary to development plan policy which seeks to ensure that the design of new development is appropriate to its rural surroundings.

11. Recommendation

Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reason:

By virtue of its excessive scale, the proposed replacement dwelling would be contrary to development plan policy which seeks to limit the impact of new development within the countryside. Furthermore, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed design would be appropriate to its local context and promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, and therefore the proposal would be contrary to development plan policy which seeks to ensure that the design of new development is appropriate to its rural surroundings. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policy H30 of the Salisbury District Local Plan and draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy, and the design advice contained within PPS1 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance *Creating Places*.