

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report No.

Date of Meeting	4 th April 2012		
Application Number	11/04173/FUL		
Site Address	Mount Scylla Farm, North Wraxall, Ford, Chippenham, Wilts. SN14 8RR		
Proposal	Closure of Existing Vehicular Access and Raising of Roadside Walling, Creation of New Access Arrangement and Drive Together with Renovation and Adaptation of Existing Domestic Outbuildings and Removal of 3no. Detached Buildings		
Applicant	Mr and Mrs King		
Town/Parish Council	North Wraxall		
Electoral Division	By Brook	Unitary Member	Cllr Jane Scott
Grid Ref	383634 174641		
Type of application	Ful		
Case Officer	Mrs Emma Pickard	01249 706 637	Emma.pickard@wiltshire.gov.uk

This application has been referred to the Northern Area Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Jane Scott to consider the affect on the local environment.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission is REFUSED.

2. Main Issues

The impact of development on;

- highway safety;
- the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
- development plan policies C3, HE1, NE4, H8.

North Wraxall Parish Council raise no objections to the application.

3. Site Description

Mount Scylla Farm occupies an elevated site on the north side of the road from Ford to Colerne. The dwelling is to the west of the village of Ford and is within the open countryside.

To the west of the farmhouse are a number of agricultural outbuildings. Two of these buildings, a large lambing shed with attached garage building at a lower level and roadside frontage building (old farm stores), are identified as being in the residential curtilage of the dwelling following the grant of a certificate of lawfulness in 2009.

The existing vehicular access to the site is within a 30mph limit but has poor visibility in both directions.

The site slopes steeply and overlooks the Ford valley. The dwelling is within a Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4. Relevant Planning History		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
09.02050.CLE	Use of Yard and Access for Domestic Purpose Including the Parking and Turning of Cars, Together with the Ancillary Domestic Use of the Adjacent Outbuildings.	Permission

5. Proposal

The works involve removal of two of the four outbuildings on the site. The existing yard will be levelled and the roadside wall will be raised and a pedestrian access and bin store will be constructed on the road frontage

The existing garage/store/lambing shed will be converted to create a large games room and store on the upper level and garaging/store to the lower level.

In order to gain a safer access to the property, the proposal also includes the construction of a 210 metre long driveway and new vehicular access. . The driveway will run to the west of the dwelling on the line of an existing field access, and through the fields to the west. The track will be cut into the hillside to provide a level surface and will be finished with a macadam and bonded gravel surface. An existing stone retaining wall will be removed to provide a new entrance with stone walls and entrance gates set back from the highway.

6. Consultations

North Wraxall Parish Council supports the application.

Wilts and Swindon Biological Records Centre commented there are bat and badger records in the vicinity.

Council's ecologist confirms that a bat and badger survey will not be required.

Highways comments on the proposed access are as follows;

'The proposed access further up the C road is located in a position on the road afforded a better level of visibility (than the existing access). I am willing to accept the agent's presumptions with regards to the available visibility. Though in both directions the measurements are sub-standard I am happy that the splays offer better visibility than that is achievable at the existing.'

I note that there are level differences between the carriageway and the proposed access track. It is usual practice to request the access should be not more than 1 in 15 over the first 5-10m and I would require this to be engineered into the new access. I am happy to offer no highway objection subject to condition.'

Highways were also asked to provide a view on the potential for improvements at the existing access, particularly in view of the fact that this application proposes works to this area which would remove a roadside building and some of the grass bank to the west of the existing vehicular access. Highways commented further that: *'whilst visibility at the existing access is very poor, there is scope for improvement with all the land in question being under the control of the applicant.'*

Although the wall to the east is a retaining structure there appears to be no reason why it cannot be set back behind a visibility splay. The removal of the old farm stores building will enable the bank to be regarded to the west to give a significant increase in available visibility, probably in line with manual for streets guidance.

Based on the information supplied it is probable that 2m x 43 x splays could be provided in each direction and highways would accept splay to a point 1m into the carriageway if necessary

7. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation. No representations have been received.

8. Planning Considerations

Acceptable elements of the proposals

There are no objections to the removal of the existing buildings on site which are not considered to be out of place in this rural setting but are modern and are utilitarian in appearance.

The games room/store will be constructed using timber boarding, rubble stone with ashlar quoin detailing and a slate roof. The current building by virtue of the 2009 permission is within the residential curtilage of the dwelling. The bulk of the new building will be similar to that as existing. It is considered that the character and appearance of the conservation area will be preserved and the natural beauty of the AONB conserved by this part of the development.

Impact on Highway Safety

The Council's Highway Officer has no objection to the formation of the new vehicular access (subject to condition) because it represents an improvement on the existing situation, despite the fact that the access would be below the standard usually required.

However, the highways officer also recognised that significant improvements are possible at the existing vehicular access.

Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and AONB

Whilst it is recognised that the new access would provide a significant improvement to the existing access arrangement, this has to be balanced with any harm that would be caused by the development.

The application suggests that the track will be screened and will blend in to the lower contours of the field. However, the tree line is very sparse in large sections and it is considered that the driveway will be readily visible from the adjacent road from the east and west at various points, particularly so during the winter months.

The driveway would rise immediately from the new access into the field and would be up to a maximum of approximately 6-7 metres above the height of the adjacent highway.

Photographs submitted with the application to demonstrate the visual impact of the development are taken from across the valley and appear to be taken from a lower level than Mount Scylla Farm. Although there will be fewer buildings visible on site it is considered that the assessment does not give a full analysis of the visual impact of the entire proposal. It is not considered that the removal of the farm buildings and subsequent 'tidying up' of the site, would outweigh the harm caused by the construction of the access driveway.

Part of the driveway would be within the Long Dean, Ford, Slaughterford Conservation Area and the entire driveway within the AONB. Officers consider that the introduction of such a long driveway cutting through agricultural land for a length of 210 metres would be extremely harmful to the rural character of the area. The proposal would not, therefore, be in accordance with policy NE4 of the NWLP 2011 which requires development in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to 'conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the area including its open rural character'. It is also considered to be contrary to policy NE15 (The Landscape Character of the Countryside) which requires development to take into account the topography of the area avoiding sensitive skylines and hills, and contrary to policy HE1 (Development in Conservation Areas) which states that development will only be permitted where the proposal will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

In view of the harm considered to be caused to the by the proposed driveway the agent was asked to look at the potential for improvement works at the existing access. However, the applicants are unwilling to change the existing access as they are concerned that this may exacerbate what they say is an existing problem by encouraging passing cars to use it as a refuge, endangering their use of the access. It is considered that this could also happen with the new access.

As part of this application works are proposed at the site of the existing access which includes removal of the old farm stores building and works to remove part of the roadside bank. It is proposed to create a bin store and pedestrian access in this location. It is considered that if the same works along with some additional removal of the bank and works to the retaining wall to the east were undertaken, significant improvements could be made to visibility and highway safety at the existing access which would remove the need for the new access driveway.

9. Conclusion

It is considered that the construction of the proposed access and driveway would be harmful to the natural beauty of the area and would not preserve or enhance the conservation area contrary to Policies C3, NE4, NE15 and HE1 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. Improvements to highway safety and/or the visual appearance of the site are not considered to outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the countryside and the special landscape designation in which the site is located.

10. Recommendation

Planning Permission is REFUSED for the following reason:

1. The proposed new driveway would be harmful to the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty and would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, contrary to policies C3, NE4, NE15 and HE1 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

Informative:

1. This decision relates to documents/plans submitted with the application, listed below.

Plan Ref: 1815- SLP, EP 01, EP 02, ESP, EE01 Rev A, EE02, PSP, PP01, PP02, PE01 REVA, PE02RevB, SK/AR/06, SK/AR/07, SK/AR/08, A3 Access Road Layout Long Section and Cross Section, GA07revC

