

## REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Application Number</b>	E/2012/0362/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	1 Church Street, Little Bedwyn, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 3JQ
<b>Proposal</b>	Erection of new dwelling; demolition of existing office (resubmission of E/2011/1569/FUL).
<b>Applicant</b>	The Hon Mr Spencer Canning
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	LITTLE BEDWYN
<b>Grid Ref</b>	429038 166096
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Peter Horton

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called to committee by the Division Member, Cllr. Wheeler.

### 1. Purpose of Report

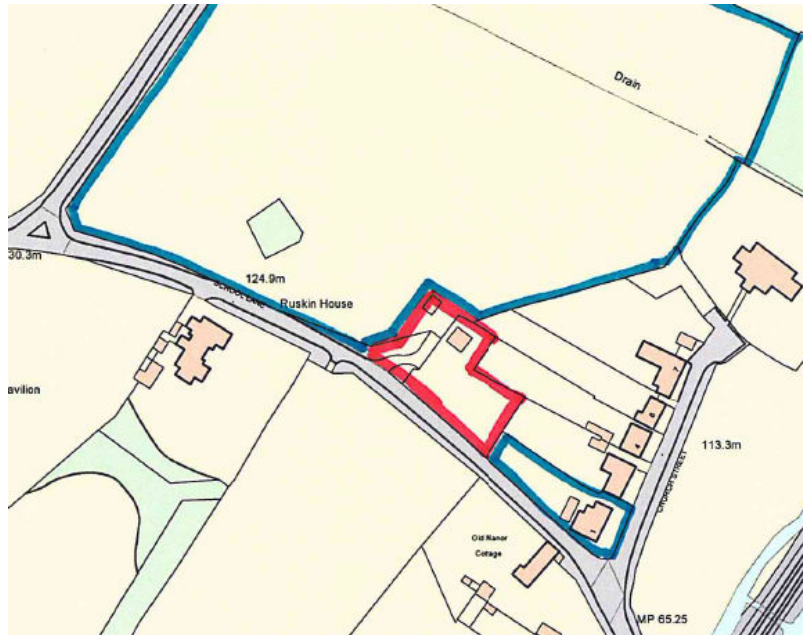
To consider the recommendation that the application be refused on the grounds that the site lies in the countryside beyond the built-up limits of the village and that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on both the character and appearance of the conservation area and of the wider landscape.

### 2. Report Summary

The main issues to consider are: (a) whether the principle of residential development on the site is acceptable, and; (b) whether the proposal would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of Little Bedwyn Conservation Area and whether the proposal would be detrimental to the scenic quality of this part of the AONB.

### 3. Site Description

The application site is located approximately 200m to the north of the centre of Little Bedwyn, on the northern side of School Lane. This unclassified road links the village with the C201 Great Bedwyn to Froxfield road. The site occupies land which is raised above the level of School Lane by approximately 2m. The site comprises part of the rear garden of No. 1 Church Street, to its south east: not the original historic part of its garden, but additional garden that was created at some time in the past. The site is occupied by a former double garage with steeply pitched roof, converted to an office in recent years, plus a substantial parking area to the front of it. However, the greater part of the site is maintained as garden. Open fields border the site on the north west and north east. To the south east, the rear gardens of a number of dwellings on Church Street stretch uphill to meet the site, and to the south west (across School Lane) an open paddock separates the former School House building and the Old Vicarage from the village. The site is served by an inclining, gravelled access at its north western edge.



#### **4. Planning History**

Planning permission was refused for a bungalow on the site in 1987 (K/10237 refers).

Planning permission was given for the garage on the site in 1988 (K/11903 refers).

Planning permission was refused twice in 1991 for the conversion of the garage to a dwelling (K/17003 & K/17657 refer). The latter proposal was dismissed on appeal in 1992.

In 1996 the Kennet Local Plan Inspector found against a proposal to incorporate the site within the Little Bedwyn Village Policy Area. He found “no clear evidence to support the assertion that the site has always been regarded as part of the village”, and “no clear case for changing the Village Policy Area which, rightly in my view, follows a line immediately to the rear of the properties in Church Street”.

Planning permission was refused for a detached bungalow on the site in 2000 (K/39909 refers). The proposal was dismissed on appeal in 2001.

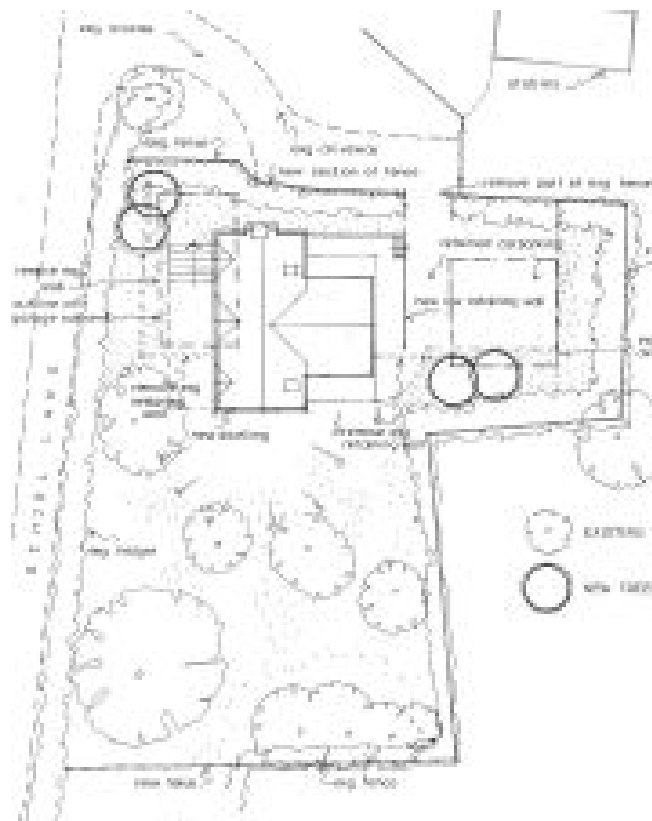
At some stage the garage was converted to an office.

Planning permission was granted in 2008 for the demolition of some untidy sheds and the erection of a new tack room and two bay storage unit (K/58098/F refers).

Planning permission was refused for the erection of a dwelling on the site in January 2012 (E/2011/1569/FUL refers). The existing office was to have been demolished.

#### **5. The Proposal**

The application proposes the demolition of the existing office building and the erection of a four bedroomed detached dwelling. It would be constructed of brick, timber boarding and plain clay tiles. It would have a ridge height of 7.0m. Some of the accommodation would be provided in a basement.



## 6. Planning Policy

Kennet Local Plan 2011: Policies HC26, NR6 and PD1

Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy

Wiltshire & Swindon Structure Plan 2016: policy C8

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

## **7. Consultations**

Parish Council: No comments received at the time of preparing this report.

Highway Authority: No objection as an existing access would be used.

County Archaeologist: No comment, as the recent archaeological evaluation found no features of any archaeological significance.

County Ecologist: No objection, as the site is of low ecological interest.

The Council's Landscape Consultant: Recommends refusal. The site is in an elevated location and is widely visible. The proposal will extend the residential development of the village into the countryside and will have a detrimental impact on the landscape and visual qualities of the area.

Conservation Officer: Whilst noting that the size and design of the proposed dwelling has been modified since the last application, and that the design is not particularly objectionable per se, she maintains an "in principle" objection to development away from the main body of the village in an area which previous appeal decisions have identified as being part of the countryside. The proposed dwelling would be out of context with the existing historic buildings in the area and would have an adverse impact on the established character and appearance of the conservation area.

## **8. Publicity**

Letters of support have been received from five local households.

An objection has been received from one local resident. She comments as follows: "Little Bedwyn has had considerable infilling in recent years, and there are no facilities to sustain further development. This application has the potential of opening the door to further inappropriate and damaging development in the village. I thought we were in an AONB and a conservation area. Surely these areas should be preserved"?

## **9. Planning Considerations**

### The Principle of Residential Development on the site:

Proposals for residential development on the site have twice been dismissed on appeal, in 1992 and 2001. The 1992 appeal inspector found that the site "stands well above the older cottages in the valley bottom and in my opinion appears as part of the surrounding countryside rather than as part of the village". He also found the site to be on "high land, up to 3m above School Lane, above and outside the valley setting of the village".

The 2001 inspector found that "the site is above the cottages and houses in the valley bottom and the site appears to be part of the surrounding countryside and not the village". He stated that "the proposal would not fall within any of the categories of development that might be permitted in the countryside, as set out in either the development plan or Government advice". The proposal would "lead to the creation of ribbon development along School Lane".

Since these appeal decisions, the current Kennet Local Plan has been produced, but in policy terms this changes little as policy HC26 maintains the previous strong presumption against new residential development in the countryside. The applicant is not making a case that the dwelling is required for the essential needs of agriculture or other employment essential to the countryside, and hence the application stands to be refused.

National planning policy is set out in the new NPPF. Its paragraph 55 states that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. The proposal does not meet any of the list of potential special circumstances.

### Impact on the character and setting of Little Bedwyn Conservation Area and on the scenic quality of the North Wessex Downs AONB

The site is in an elevated location above the centre of the village and the existing office building is visible from the lanes emanating from the crossroads just north of the site and from the surrounding open countryside. There are also views from the south west when approaching the village from the Great Bedwyn direction.

Although the proposed dwelling would have a ridge height of 0.27m lower than the existing office building, it is an altogether larger building and would have a much more detrimental landscape impact. It would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape of this part of the AONB and also on the character and appearance of the conservation area. It would be out of context with the existing historic buildings in the area and would have an adverse impact on the established character and appearance of the conservation area.

The above concerns were echoed by the previous appeal decisions. The 1992 inspector found that "further development on this land would cause unacceptable visual harm to the setting of the village and the Conservation Area". The 2001 inspector found that even a bungalow on the site "would be perceived as an incursion into the natural beauty of this part of the AONB. It would harm the attractive landscape setting of the valley side above the village". It would also "disrupt the present built boundary of the Conservation Area by extending it further up the valley side".

### **10. Conclusion**

The application site lies in the countryside, where new residential development is unacceptable in principle. The site lies in an elevated position above the centre of the village and would have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape of this part of the AONB and also on the character and appearance of the conservation area. The application stands to be refused.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. The site lies beyond the built-up limits of the village and within the countryside, as acknowledged by two previous appeal decisions when permission was similarly refused for residential development on this site. The proposal does not meet any of the criteria set out in policy HC26 of the Kennet Local Plan 2011 that deals with development in this location and would lead to the creation of an unacceptable ribbon development along School Lane. The proposal is also contrary to national planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The site is located within the Little Bedwyn Conservation Area and within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. National and local planning policy seeks to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape in this location. This proposal would result in the replacement of the existing building with a much larger and bulkier development that because of the conspicuous nature of the site on the hillside, would have a significant adverse impact on the appearance of the landscape and the Conservation Area and would be unacceptably prominent in views from both close to the site and from public roads and rights of way in the vicinity. This would conflict with policies NR6 and PD1 of the Kennet Local Plan and with the Council's statutory duties to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape within the AONB.

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Documents Used in the  
Preparation of this Report:**

None