

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	19 June 2013		
Application Number	N/13/00755/FUL		
Site Address	Land Adj. 2 Box Cottages, Sutton Benger, SN15 4RD		
Proposal	Erection of Dwelling		
Applicant	Mr B Weetch		
Town/Parish Council	Sutton Benger Parish Council		
Electoral Division	Kington	Unitary Member	Cllr Howard Greenman
Grid Ref	394152 178539		
Type of application	Full		
Case Officer	Chris Marsh	01249 706657	chris.marsh@wiltshire.gov.uk

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called in by Cllr Greenman, in order to consider the impact of the dwelling on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character and appearance of the area.

1. Purpose of Report

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

No comments have been received from Sutton Benger Parish Council in respect of this application, which has attracted 4no. objections from neighbours and local residents.

2. Main Issues

The main issues in considering the application are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area and Conservation Area
- Impact on the privacy and amenity of existing neighbours and potential occupants
- Impact on highway safety
- S106 contributions

3. Site Description

The application relates to a backland plot located at the western end of the village of Sutton Benger, lying between a pair of distinctive Victorian cottages and the agricultural land further to the West. The site is set back some 32m from the highway, with a loose stone access track running northwards from its splayed access and terminating in a turning head at the southwest corner of the plot. The development framework boundary, as set out in the adopted Local Plan, bisects the site in line with the western boundary of no.2 Box Cottages, extending northward as far as the wall of the Grade II-listed French Gardens to the rear of the site. The site is within a Conservation Area.

The site itself is currently bounded by a stone wall to the rear, behind which runs a strip of land associated with a nearby property, 'Appletrees', and is otherwise bounded by a post-and-rail fence. The land is covered by grass, with some evidence of previous digging of foundations.

4. Relevant Planning History		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
07/00550/FUL	Single Storey Dwelling	Permitted
06/02579/FUL	Erection of Dwelling (amended description)	Withdrawn
03/00581/COU	Change of use to provide access to residential property (side of 2 Box Cottages)	Permitted
01/00645/OUT	Proposed Erection of Dwelling and Garage	Refused – Appeal dismissed
00/02149/FUL	New Agricultural Access to Replace Existing and Improvement to Agricultural Access	Permitted

5. Proposal

It is proposed to erect a detached two-storey, three/four-bedroom dwelling, with a single-storey projecting wing, detached garage and associated amenity space. The building is to be sited in the northeastern corner of the site, close to the boundary of the rear garden to no.4 Box Cottages, with its main two-storey section laid out on an east-west axis hard against the rear boundary of the site. This principal element is to be 14.2m in length, with a ridge height of 6.7m and eaves at 3.8m dropping to 1.7m as a porch at the southwest corner. A single-storey element is to project southward by 5m from the building's eastern end to provide a large ground floor living area. The remaining accommodation is to comprise a large open-plan kitchen/dining area with separate study/bedroom, utility, pantry, WC and hallway at ground floor level, with a further three bedrooms, one with ensuite and dressing room, and main bathroom above.

Externally, the building is to be finished in natural Cotswold stone, with reconstituted stone slates used for the roof covering, the main section of width is to be interspersed with conservation-type rooflights. A pair of triple-width casement windows are to be set in line with the rear build line at upper floor level in order to provide natural light and additional space to bedrooms 2 and 3, with each set into a pent-roof dormer measuring 1.8m in width. The ground floor is to feature full-height timber framed glazing along its central South-facing section and in the West gable end (which is to feature a Juliette balcony above, and West elevation of the projecting wing. Further high-level single pane windows are to be sited along the northern wall. A stone chimney stack is to be positioned on the eastern edge of the projecting roof.

Furthermore, a modest detached garage is to be situated in the southwest corner of the site, constructed from matching materials and with internal dimensions of 4.0 x 5.0m.

6. Consultations

No comments have been received from Sutton Benger Parish Council

Highways – no objection, subject to conditions

Conservation – objections on grounds of scale, massing and design

7. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice, press advert and neighbour consultation.

Four letters of objection received

Summary of key relevant points raised:

- Excessive scale and massing
- Overbearing impact on adjacent properties
- Potential overlooking of neighbouring gardens

8. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The principle of residential development in this location is established in part by majority of the site's inclusion within the development framework boundary for Sutton Benger. A previous application for a single dwelling located on a similar plot (N/07/00550/ FUL refers) was accepted on this basis when permission was granted. Whilst planning permission for this detached single-storey dwelling was granted, this expired at the end of its three-year period, with no conditions having been discharged prior to commencement of groundworks on site.

It is noted that unlike the previously-approved scheme relating to a smaller parcel of land, the site includes a section of adjoining agricultural land to the West, which appears to have been gradually incorporated into the apparent unit. A judgement must therefore be made in the first instance as to whether the change of use of this land and associated new residential development in the open countryside is acceptable in planning terms.

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

The site is located within the Sutton Benger Conservation Area, which extends marginally beyond the development framework boundary at this end of the village, but does not include the independently-listed French Gardens to the North. Any development on this site will be inevitably read in conjunction with the distinctive pairing of Box Cottages, together with the historic boundary of the walled Gardens nearby. The Conservation Area itself contains a diverse mixture of historic fabric, including Victorian houses as well as more traditional cottages and converted barns and stalls.

Throughout the course of negotiation and following the initial pre-application enquiry received in 2012, it has been made clear that a modestly-proportioned 'barn'-type dwelling would be the preferred design approach for this site, potentially offering a significant improvement upon the design character of the previously-approved bungalow. This would lend a subservient appearance consistent with the site's relationship to Box Cottages and the adjacent agricultural land, where such a building might already exist and be capable of conversion. However, it is not considered that this advice has been followed in full in this instance.

The Conservation Officer has raised a number of valid concerns in respect of the scale, massing and detailing of the proposed dwelling, which overlooks the site's context in order to provide more extensive living accommodation, particularly at first floor level. The resulting roof form appears extremely awkward, with a shallow pitch atypical of traditional rural fringe buildings and a large blank void between ground floor glazing and eaves on the principal South elevation. Although small half-roof dormers could be considered a sympathetic design approach to the rear roof plane, those proposed are unfortunately excessively large and prominent so as to compromise the modesty of the building's form further.

Impact on the privacy and amenity of existing neighbours and potential occupants

Consideration has been given to the impact of the proposal upon the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and in particular the adjacent dwellings at nos.2 and 4 Box Cottages and the strip of land associated with 'Appletrees' that runs between the northern site boundary and the French Gardens. Whilst 'clear' glazing is proposed, it is possible to address any potential issues of overlooking by condition, requiring that all windows in the North elevation and the upper floor window to the East are obscure-glazed and fixed shut. This would achieve an adequate level of natural light and general amenity to the proposed accommodation without any views between the dwelling and adjacent domestic curtilage.

It is, however, considered that the current scale of dwelling proposed, with a rear eaves height not short of 3.5m above the adjoining ground level, would have some degree of overbearing effect on the land associated with Appletrees to the North. Whilst it is accepted that any development close

to the boundary, including the bungalow previously approved, will have some impact on the sense of enclosure experienced along that strip of land due to its width and presence of the garden wall to the North, this would be reduced significantly with a correspondingly reduced eaves height. The effect of the building currently proposed would be to obstruct a substantial amount of sunlight, particularly during the winter months, and compromise the enjoyment of the land. Despite the land's distance from Appletrees itself, thereby perhaps indicating a secondary garden use, it is nonetheless considered important to protect what residential amenity is currently afforded.

The East gable end is sited some 1.3m from the boundary with no.4 Box Cottages, from which it will appear as a modest two-storey scale elevation. However, due to its unobtrusive position and amount of amenity space at the neighbouring property, this will not incur the significant loss of amenity by overbearing or overlooking. Likewise, a suitable separation is maintained from the rear of no.2, which engages little with the land to the North.

Impact on highway safety

The access arrangements in place have previously been agreed, securing a suitable junction with the main road for the purposes of serving a single dwelling on site. These existing arrangements also make provision for a loose stone turning head to the immediate South of the plot, such that interaction with the highway can always be achieved in a forward gear.

By incorporating land to the West of the original plot, the proposal makes provision for three on-site parking spaces, excluding the garage building, the internal floor space of which is too small to be taken into consideration in this respect. Two parking bays are to be provided to the North, with additional suitably-surfaced space available to the southeast.

S106 contributions

As the site is located outside of the principal urban settlements, Policy H6 of the adopted Local Plan applies to the development. As such, a contribution of £26,000 toward the provision of off-site affordable housing would be required if the application were approved. Likewise, the size of the unit proposed equates to a contribution of £7,407.42 toward public open space under Policy CF3 of the adopted Local Plan. Both would be administered through a Section 106 Agreement.

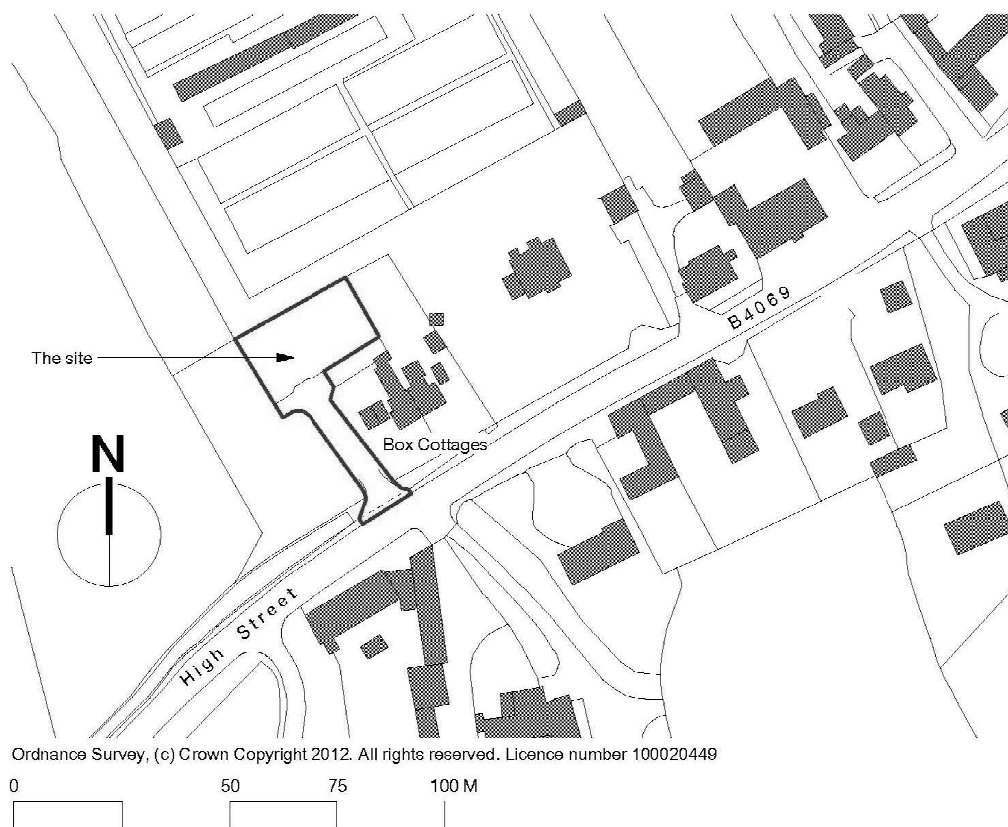
Conclusions

Whilst residential development over a reduced plot area consistent with the adopted framework boundary is considered acceptable in principle, the proposal both transgresses this limitation and, by reason of its scale, massing and design, represents an intrusive and unsympathetic new building in the Conservation Area. The scheme will negatively impact upon the residential amenity of neighbouring properties but more crucially fails to bear any cohesive relationship to its immediate setting or the wider area.

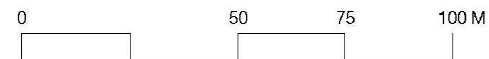
9. Recommendation

Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by reason of its siting, scale, massing and design, represents an unjustified intrusion into the countryside and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the site and its setting in a Conservation Area. The proposal will also negatively impact upon the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and therefore fails to accord with Policies C3, NE15, HE1 and H3 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 and Sections 7, 11 and 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. In the current absence of a Section 106 Legal Agreement in respect of the relevant off-site financial contributions, the proposal also conflicts with Policies H6 and CF3 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.



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Site location plan
Scale 1:1250