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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	11/00370/FUL
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL
<b>REGISTERED</b>	21 March 2011
<b>PARISH</b>	Baulking
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Yvonne Constance
<b>APPLICANT</b>	The Lonsdale Estate
<b>SITE</b>	Hyde Farm, Baulking, Faringdon, SN7 7QE
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Erection of new country house and staff accommodation with stables and outbuildings, tennis court, swimming pool, PV energy generation area, formal landscaped gardens and new access drive.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	431778 191362
<b>OFFICER</b>	STUART WALKER

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for a large new dwelling with ancillary staff accommodation, stables, outbuildings, tennis court, swimming pool, gardens, new access drive and a photovoltaic (PV) energy area.
- 1.2 Although the proposed development is contrary to normal planning policies, it is sought to be justified as an exception development under the provisions of paragraph 11 of PPS7, “Sustainable Development in Rural Areas”.
- 1.3 The site is located on farmland to the north east of Baulking, and is accessed via the existing farm complex from Baulking Green, an historic grazing common. The site lies within the open countryside, locally designated as Lowland Vale. There are several public footpaths adjoining the site and the village conservation area abuts the south west corner of the application site. A site location plan is attached at appendix 1.
- 1.4 The application comes to committee at the request of Councillor Yvonne Constance.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposed house has been designed as a substantial contemporary country house standing in its own grounds, isolated from the village. It would be accessed via a long drive through an old orchard, around a small lake and up to a moat, with a pedestrian bridge linking to the main entrance. A small group of buildings comprising garaging, stables and staff accommodation is proposed to the south of the main house. To the west, a tennis court, swimming pool, and an array of PV panels are proposed. The remainder of the site would be set out as formal gardens, with orchard planting, swales, and tree planting.
- 2.2 The proposed house is arranged over three floors plus a basement, and has been designed in a U-shaped plan, consisting of a central courtyard with the front entrance set between the winged extensions. The design is contemporary with a material palette of modular straw bale cells overlaid with lime render and larch boarding and a cedar shingle pitched roof. The development is proposed to be zero carbon, achieving level 6 of the code for sustainable homes. A high percentage of the construction material (straw) would be sourced from the farm itself.

2.3 The applicant has provided a detailed design and access statement, a planning statement, a flood risk assessment, a conservation area appraisal, and a sustainability statement. Copies of these documents are available to view on the council's website. A copy of the plans showing the elevations and design of the buildings are attached at appendix 2.

### 3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Baulking Parish Meeting: objection. "Although the Parish is not opposed to the principle of new housing development in Baulking, along the lines that has occurred i.e. small barn conversions, the parish is opposed to this application for the following reasons: the scale, location and design is not in keeping with any aspects of the community and parishioners fear that the development will not only cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area but also cause harm to the social fabric and life of the village. The proposal is not consistent with current planning policy. If it is to be regarded as a PPS7 development, it is not sufficiently isolated to meet the criteria for this as it is within the confines of the village."

3.2 County Engineer: objection. "The existing site has an agricultural use situated at the end of a narrow lane and would generate no or little traffic movements as it is part of a farm but has no buildings. The condition of the lane is substandard and the location is considered to be unsustainable. Staff and residents of the proposed dwelling would be car dependent due to the isolated nature of the site. There is a lack of sustainable modes of travel, i.e. lack of a frequent bus service. There are no shops within the village, therefore residents and staff would be forced to travel by private car to access such services. The proposed use of the site as a large dwelling with associated staff accommodation would generate significantly higher movements than the current use in the absence of alternative modes of travel. Therefore, I recommend refusal of this proposal as it is contrary to PPG13 and policy DC5 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan."

3.3 Drainage Engineer: no objections, subject to conditions.

3.4 Environment Agency: no objections, subject to conditions.

3.5 Conservation Officer: objection. "I am concerned that the proposal will have an impact on the setting of the conservation area, particularly when viewed from the countryside. This issue is not addressed in any of the supporting documents."

3.6 Landscape Officer: objection. "The proposed development would have considerable visual effects due to its scale and location on both the setting of Baulking Conservation Area and on the existing long and open views across the landscape particularly those obtained from the footpath network in the local area. Recommend refusal of this proposal as it is contrary to policy NE9 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan."

3.7 Countryside Officer: objection. Full comments are attached in appendix 3.

3.8 Architects Panel: "Although the design is well considered, it is not exceptional."

3.9 Ramblers Association: "This proposed development will impinge on a number of rights of way. The applicant states that no rights of way will be affected or diverted. I trust the integrity of the rights of way will not be compromised by this proposal and that unencumbered access to the paths will be maintained should this application be approved."

- 3.10 Three letters of objection have been received from local residents, which are summarised as follows:
- The whole concept is out of keeping with the existing village.
  - Its close proximity does not comply with PPS7's 'isolation' concept.
  - There is no justification for the separate stable block and garaging when existing farm buildings could be used.
  - The proposal will dominate the end of the village green and will be unsympathetic to the character of the village.
  - A new house could be better located on the existing farm complex at Hyde Farm rather than in the open countryside.

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 None

#### 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

##### 5.1 *Government Policy*

PPS7, "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas", states that the focus for most additional housing in rural areas should be on existing towns and identified service centres, and that new house building (including single dwellings) in the countryside, away from established settlements or areas allocated for housing in development plans should be strictly controlled (paragraph 9). Isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification before planning permission is granted (paragraph 10).

- 5.2 Paragraph 11 of PPS7 states: "Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example, in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area."
- 5.3 Many country towns and villages are of considerable historic and architectural value, or make an important contribution to local countryside character. Planning authorities should ensure that development respects and, where possible, enhances these particular qualities. It should also contribute to a sense of local identity and regional diversity and be of an appropriate design and scale for its location, having regard to the policies on design contained in PPS1, "Delivering Sustainable Development".
- 5.4 PPS1 states that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people and that design which is inappropriate in its context or fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted (paragraph 34).
- 5.5 PPS3, "Housing", reiterates the design advice in PPS1 and states at paragraph 16 that when assessing design quality, matters to consider are the extent to which the development: a) is well laid out; b) is well integrated with, and complements neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access; c) creates, or enhances, a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity.
- 5.6 PPS9, "Biodiversity and Geological Conservation", confirms the key principle that the aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological

conservation interests. Where significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated or compensated for, planning permission should be refused (paragraph 1).

- 5.7 PPG13, “Transport”, is also relevant and seeks to promote more sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel, especially by car.
- 5.8 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011*  
Policy GS2 states that outside the built-up areas of settlements, new building will not be permitted unless it is on land which has been identified for development in the local plan or is in accordance with other specific policies.
- 5.9 The village of Baulking is considered to be a smaller village within the hierarchy of settlements within the district and falls under Policy H13 in relation to new housing development. This policy only allows the provision of one or two dwellings within the built up area of the village.
- 5.10 Policy HE1 seeks to restrict development that may have an adverse impact on a conservation area. It states that development will only be permitted if it will not harm views within or out of the conservation area.
- 5.11 Policy NE4 (sites of nature conservation value) states that new development likely to harm a site of nature conservation importance will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site and adequate compensatory habitats will be provided.
- 5.12 Policy NE9 deals with development within the Lowland Vale, a locally designated area of high landscape value. It states that development will not be permitted if it would have an adverse impact on the landscape, particularly on long open views within or across the area.
- 5.13 Policies DC1, DC5, DC6, DC8, DC9 (quality of new development) are also relevant and seek to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design / landscaping; does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours; suitable social and physical infrastructure exists for the development, or will be provided; and the development is acceptable in terms of highway safety.

## 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 It is clear the site lies in the open countryside and, as such, the proposed development is contrary to a number of policies in the adopted local plan. The main issue to consider in this case, therefore, is whether or not, having regard to paragraph 11 of PPS7, there is sufficient justification to override the general presumption against new dwellings in the open countryside.
- 6.2 To achieve permission for an exception development under PPS7, there are a number of important tests that must be met. In essence these are: exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design; truly outstanding and groundbreaking design; helps to raise standards by example; highest standards of contemporary architecture; enhances its immediate setting; and sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- 6.3 The applicant considers the creation of a sustainable homes code level 6 dwelling would meet these tests. However, whilst a zero carbon dwelling could be classified as innovative, the proposal itself is not considered to be of such exceptional design quality to justify a departure from established planning policy.

- 6.4 The growing of straw from surrounding fields and the on-site manufacture of the associated modular blocks is not ground breaking as envisaged by PPS7. Local vernacular buildings have often used materials close to hand, for example. The modular cell construction has also been designed for use in a wide range of buildings, as stated in the literature accompanying the application. The method of construction, therefore, cannot be considered unique. Furthermore, with the product being widely available, it does not help to raise standards in terms of construction.
- 6.5 The proposal is not considered to enhance its immediate surroundings. The site is currently in arable use. The proposed development would considerably change the existing appearance of the open countryside, removing hedgerows and introducing a formal and forced landscape setting in an otherwise natural landscape. Despite assurances from the applicant that the buildings would not be seen in the wider landscape, the height and massing of the buildings would be visible in wider views. The proposal would also have an impact on the setting of the conservation area, particularly when viewed from public rights of way in the open countryside, looking back towards the village.
- 6.6 The design of the buildings would also not result in an exceptional piece of architecture that reflects highest standards. The Architects Panel says the design is “not exceptional”. In addition, the associated outbuildings and structures, tennis court and domestic paraphernalia located adjacent to footpath routes to Baulking would be harmful to the character of the area, and are seen as unnecessary additions that detract from the overall design concept of the proposal. No justification has been given for the need for staff accommodation, or why existing buildings within the redundant farm complex could not be used for stabling / garaging.
- 6.7 The design of the proposal, therefore, is not considered to meet the strict tests of paragraph 11 of PPS7, and so the application is recommended for refusal.
- 6.8 Concern has been expressed by the countryside officer over the lack of habitat surveys, and the potential for protected species to be harmed. An additional reason for refusal is therefore suggested to address this issue.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal is considered to be an unsustainable form of development, where no special justification has been advanced to set aside current housing policy. As such, it is contrary to various policies in the adopted local plan, and to current government planning guidance. There are not considered to be any other material considerations that would warrant departing from the development plan.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **It is recommended that planning permission be refused for the following reasons:**

**1. The proposed dwelling by reason of its location within the open countryside with no functional or social need for such a rural location represents an unsustainable and inappropriate form of development that undermines the fundamental principle that the countryside should be protected for its own sake. Furthermore, the proposal constitutes an unacceptable form of development that is harmful to the Lowland Vale and the setting of the village conservation area. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policies GS2, H13, HE1 and NE9 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan.**

**2. It is not considered that the design and nature of the proposed dwelling reaches the exceptional standards to be truly outstanding or ground breaking required to justify a departure from the general policies of restraint for new dwellings in the open countryside. The proposal, therefore, cannot be justified under paragraph 11 of PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas', and so is contrary to Policy GS2 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan.**

**3. It has not been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the proposed development can be accommodated on the site without detriment to protected species. Therefore, the development is contrary to Policy NE4 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan and to the advice in PPS9, "Biodiversity and Geological Conservation"**

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