

**SPA/15623/3 and SPA/15623/4-CA – Mr J L S Lonsdale**  
**Demolition of redundant farm buildings and erection of five houses.**  
**Home Farm, West Street, Sparsholt.**

**1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 These applications seek conservation area consent for the demolition of a group of modern agricultural buildings and planning permission for their replacement with 5 detached dwellings.
- 1.2 The site is located in the centre of the village with frontages onto both West Street and Watery Lane, and is within the Sparsholt Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The site benefits from 2 existing access points, one of which is proposed to be re-used as part of the development from Watery Lane, and one is proposed to be moved slightly to serve two new dwellings from West Street.
- 1.4 The existing farm house located on the corner of West Street and Watery Lane will remain, and benefits from its own existing access. The building is not listed, however College Cottage adjacent to the north east boundary of the site is a Grade II listed building.
- 1.5 The site is adjacent to a brook but is not within an area identified as liable to flooding.
- 1.6 The development proposes 2 No. 4 bedroom dwellings fronting onto West Street and 3 No. 5 bedroom dwellings within the rest of the site, two of which front onto Watery Lane.
- 1.7 The application has been amended from the original submission to address issues relating to design raised by Officers and the Consultant Architect.
- 1.8 Extracts from the application plans are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.9 The application comes to Committee as 6 letters of objection have been received from neighbours in relation to the original drawings, and 3 neighbour letters of objection have been received in relation to the amended plans.

**2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 A planning application was submitted in October 1998 for the demolition of the farm buildings and erection of 5 houses. However there is no record of a decision ever having been made.
- 2.2 Applications for planning permission and conservation area consent were withdrawn in August 2005 due to concerns with the design of the proposal, which sought permission for the replacement of the farm buildings with 5 dwellings.
- 2.3 This current scheme is a re-submission of the previously withdrawn proposal.

**3.0 Planning Policies**

- 3.1 Policy H6 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan enables schemes of one or two dwellings within the main built up area of Sparsholt, but not on sites which contribute positively to the character of the settlement.
- 3.2 Sparsholt is not listed in the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan as a suitable village for further development.
- 3.3 Policies D1, D2 and D3 of the adopted Local Plan refer to the design of new development, the impact on neighbouring properties, and access and parking considerations.
- 3.4 Similar Policies in the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan are DC1, DC5 and DC9.

3.5 Policy HE1 of the adopted Local Plan requires new development in Conservation Areas to either preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

3.6 Policy HE1 of the emerging Local Plan covers the same issues.

#### 4.0 **Consultations**

4.1 Sparsholt Parish Council has not commented on either the original plans or the amended scheme to date. Any comments received will be reported orally at the Meeting.

4.2 The County Engineer has raised no objection in principle to both the original and amended drawings, subject to conditions relating to visibility splays and some improvements to the narrowest part of Watery Lane.

4.3 The Council's Conservation Officer had concerns relating to the design of the original plans, however the revised plans have addressed these and now have the support of the Conservation Officer.

4.4 The Architects Panel were not supportive of the original plans stating that "the dwellings are too large, and out of character with village houses... site must be defined – entrance defined by walls and buildings..." In relation to the amended plans they state that it is "generally a good scheme but that the front elevations of plots 1 and 2 are not as good as the rest... can they be more consistent with the other elevations? They should make more of chimneys".

4.5 The Consultant Architect's comments are set out at **Appendix 2**.

4.6 6 letters of objection have been received from neighbouring properties in connection with the original plans raising the following concerns;

- The proposed dwellings are too large and the density too high for the site and the village.
- The proposed development will add to the existing traffic problems in this part of the village, especially as Watery Lane is extremely narrow and cars currently park on the street.
- The current sewerage system is not adequate to cope with the additional dwellings.
- Plot 4 will result in loss of light and privacy to the properties opposite the site.
- The Local Plan classifies Sparsholt as a smaller village and therefore only suitable for 1 or 2 dwellings.
- The appearance of the proposed dwellings is unacceptable including the choice of materials.
- The development will be out of character with the rest of the village.
- Plot 1 would overlook the neighbouring property.

4.7 3 further letters have been received in relation to the amended plans raising the following concerns:

- The development should include the widening of Watery Lane.
- The dwellings have been moved closer to the road which is not in keeping with the other properties in the area. Plot 4 should be moved back in the site.
- It is acknowledged that the design of the proposed dwellings is better, although the "barnification" is not consistent with other properties adjacent to the site. The houses should be cream or whitewashed.
- The buildings so close to the road will lead to the loss of the trees along this frontage.
- One letter acknowledges that the current style is now more in keeping with a former farmyard.

- 4.8 A further letter has been received from the applicant's agent responding to some of the concerns raised in relation to the width of Watery Lane. The letter states that the applicant is willing to widen the narrowest section of the lane opposite Star Cottages.
- 4.9 Full copies of all representations received are available to view on the file.
- 5.0 **Officer Comments**
- 5.1 The main issues to consider in determining these applications are:
- i) The principle of the proposed development of 5 dwellings within the village of Sparsholt.
  - ii) The impact of the proposed development and its design on the character of the area and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.
  - iii) The impact of the proposed dwellings on the amenities of the neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing and loss of privacy.
  - iv) Whether the access and parking arrangements for the proposed dwellings are sufficient.
  - v) Other issues raised in relation to drainage and the loss of trees.
- 5.2 Policy H6 of the adopted Local Plan permits residential development within the main built up area of the village and on sites which do not contribute positively to the character of the area. The site is currently a former farm yard with a complex of modern farm buildings and covered almost entirely by hard standing. The site is well within the main built up area of the village, and, although prominent in its location, does not in its current form contribute positively to the character of the area. In principle, therefore, the site is considered acceptable for some form of residential development.
- 5.3 Due to the lack of facilities and size of the village, Policy H6 of the adopted Local Plan limits further development to schemes of no more than one or two dwellings, and the emerging Local Plan seeks to prevent any further development unless specially justified. However, it is recognised that this site is currently vacant and very prominent within the village and is capable of accommodating more than one or two dwellings. Rather than being developed in a piecemeal way under separate applications each of 2 dwellings, as would be likely under the adopted Policy, a proposal for 5 dwellings would ensure that the whole site can be developed with some cohesion between the design and layout of the proposed houses, in the interest of enhancing this central part of the conservation area. Your Officers therefore, consider that a scheme of 5 units can be justified in this particular case.
- 5.4 Furthermore, it is recognised that the site currently contains large bulky farm buildings which do not sit comfortably within this village setting. The proposed replacement dwellings attempt to reflect the previous agricultural use by incorporating rural barn type features such as timber boarding, irregular fenestration, and situating the longer lower elevations, particularly of plots 3 and 4, close to the road. Such details are consistent with rural buildings throughout the District. The design has undergone significant amendments since originally submitted and in its current form, Officers consider that the proposal would complement the surrounding area in a village which is characterised by a range of property styles, materials, and ages.
- 5.5 When taking into account the current character of the site and the previous use, your Officers consider that the proposed development, with the right materials, would enhance this part of the Conservation Area, and would result in a more appropriate use for such a prominent site in the centre of the village.
- 5.6 Concern has been raised by some neighbouring properties in relation to the impact of some of the units on residential amenity. Plot 4 is located close to the site boundary providing a frontage to the development and enclosing the access to emulate that of a farm access. Due to the proximity to Star Cottages opposite, the part of the building closest to the road has been

kept at a lower level than the remaining dwellings, measuring 3 metres high to eaves and with a maximum ridge height of 6.3 metres. This elevation has 2 roof lights serving a hallway and a bedroom, at a sufficient height to ensure the properties opposite are not overlooked. The proposed dwelling will also be set at least 13 metres away from the cottages opposite at their nearest point, and is also set slightly at an angle.

- 5.7 Plot 3 is located on the site of an existing barn and is at least 17 metres away from the nearest point of College Cottage, the listed building to the north east of the site. There are dense trees and a stream between the two properties, therefore Officers do not consider that the setting of the listed building nor its residential amenity will be harmed.
- 5.8 Plots 1 and 2 sit between 1 West Street and the existing farm house. These have been amended a number of times during negotiations including moving away from the boundaries with the neighbouring properties, and reducing their span and general bulk. There is one side window that faces each neighbour at first floor level and this is covered by timber louvers so that views towards the neighbour are obscured. These can be conditioned to remain obscured. (See Condition 11 below).
- 5.9 In terms of highway safety, the County Engineer has raised no objections to the scheme in terms of access and parking provision subject to conditions. These include ensuring the provision and maintenance of the required visibility splays and improvements to Watery Lane at its narrowest point. Relevant conditions are recommended below.
- 5.10 Some concern has been raised by neighbouring properties in relation to the loss of trees and adequate drainage for the site. Some trees will be lost at the front of the site to allow for the location of Plot 4. Officers acknowledge that these trees contribute collectively to the current character of the area and assist in screening the existing farm buildings, However, individually they are not significant and are not worthy of a TPO. However, a scheme of planting for the site is recommended by condition to ensure appropriate landscaping of the development. Drainage details are also required to be submitted by a recommended condition below.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL1- Time Limit*
2. *MC2- Submission of Materials (Samples)*
3. *RE2- Restriction on Extension and Alterations to Dwellings*
4. *RE7- Submission of Boundary Details*
5. *RE8 - Submission of Drainage Details (Surface Water and Foul)*
6. *RE17- Removal of Existing Buildings*
7. *RE22 – Floor/Slab Levels*
8. *LS2 – Implementation of Landscaping Scheme to be submitted*
9. *HY9 – Visibility (accesses)*
10. *Notwithstanding the details shown on the submitted plans, a scheme for the widening of Watery Lane along the frontage of Plot 4 shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The approved works shall be carried out prior to the first occupation of the dwellings hereby permitted.*

*11. Prior to the first use or occupation of the development hereby permitted, and at all times thereafter, the proposed first floor windows on the western elevation of Plot 1 and the eastern elevation of Plot 2 shall remain covered by the proposed timber louvres unless an alternative scheme for obscuring vision is submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. Thereafter and notwithstanding the provision of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) no additional windows shall be inserted in the western elevation of Plot 1 or the eastern elevation of Plot 2 of the development hereby approved without the prior grant of planning permission.*

6.2 *It is further recommended that conservation area consent be granted subject to the following condition:*

1. *TL4 Time Limit -Listed Building/Conservation Area Consent*