

APPLICATION NO.	11/02765/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	Other
REGISTERED	22 November 2011
PARISH	Blewbury
WARD MEMBER	Janet Shelley
APPLICANT	Mr V Woods
SITE	Ashdown House Bessels Way Blewbury Oxfordshire OX11 9NP
PROPOSAL	Retrospective application for two lighting columns to entrance
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	453677 185820
OFFICER	David Burson

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ashdown House is a large detached property situated on the east side of Bessels Way, Blewbury. The dwelling stands just outside the main built up area of the village, which lies to the west of Bessels Way. The site is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.2 The property is set 40 metres back from the main road, within a generous plot with a driveway leading up to the dwelling. The property is well screened from the main road by a mature mixed hedgerow and features a number of low bollard lights that line the driveway. There is no street lighting along this section of Bessels Way.

1.3 The application has been referred to planning committee as Blewbury Parish Council objects.

1.4 A site location plan and block plan are **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks retrospective permission to retain two lighting columns erected on either side of the access to the dwelling. Each column is three metres high and features four lanterns, one mounted on top of the column and three set around the central lantern.

2.2 The columns are located adjacent to the access entrance into Ashdown House, in front of the gates which are set well back from the road. The lantern lenses facing the road have been blacked out and, as a result, the lights illuminate the access to the driveway but do not illuminate the road or either side of the access.

2.3 Photographs of the lights taken during the hours of darkness will be available at the meeting.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Blewbury Parish Council objects. The lights are considered intrusive, disturbing to neighbours, and a distraction to road users. The parish council's full comments are **attached** at appendix 2.

- 3.2 Seven letters of objection have been received from local residents. The grounds of objection can be summarised as follows:
1. The lighting is unnecessary, spoils the outlook onto unlit farmland and dominates the area
 2. Nuisance to neighbouring residents
 3. Contrary to the need to retain dark skies
 4. Out of character with the rural area
 5. Constant use of lighting is a waste of energy
 6. A distraction to drivers
 7. The columns out of place in the streetscene
 8. Contrary to the purposes of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 9. To allow the lighting would set a precedent for the village

3.3 Environmental Health: No objection

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 **11/01518/FUL:** A retrospective planning application for two lighting columns at the entrance was refused on 26 August 2011 for the following reason:-
“The use and operation of the lights during the evening would result in loss of amenity to occupiers of surrounding residential properties due to the intensity of the light glow that occurs in the use of the lights. This effect would harm the amenity of the local residents contrary to policy DC9 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011”.

4.2 **10/00295/FUL:** Erection of new 3-bay garage and conversion of existing integral garage into residential use – permitted in April 2010.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 *Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies:*

DC1 – Design

DC5 – Impact on highway safety

DC9 – Impact of development on neighbouring properties and the wider environment

NE6 – Impact on the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main considerations in this application are:

1. Visual impact of the columns
2. Impact of the lighting on the area and the AONB
3. Impact of the lighting on the amenity of neighbours
4. Impact of the lighting on highway safety

6.2 **Visual impact of the columns**

The two lighting columns stand in line with the mature hedgerow and tree line that form the front boundary of Ashdown House. The columns stand forward of the gates to the dwelling which are comprised of black metal railings and are visible from the road. The columns and lanterns have a mock Victorian appearance and are painted black with brass coloured hoods. The front and side facing lenses of the lanterns are painted with black out paint.

6.3 The columns are well screened by the existing hedgerow on the approaches along Bessels Way. Whilst the columns are readily visible from Bessels Way in direct views into the site, in this context the columns are set against the existing gates and lighting bollards within the site. The visual impact of the columns, therefore, is considered acceptable within the context of policy DC1.

6.4 **Impact of the lighting on the character of the area and the AONB**

Light emission is the principal objection from the parish council and local residents. On this matter, however, the council's environmental health team has raised no

objection.

- 6.5 The current application follows the refusal of planning permission for retaining the columns in August 2011. That proposal did not include painting the front and side facing lenses of the lanterns with black out paint. The applicant has supplied light readings in support of the current application that demonstrate that at the roadside the lanterns now give a reading of zero lux, whilst at three metres away the reading is 0.5 to 1 lux.
- 6.6 A point of note in considering this application is that the proposal is only for the two lighting columns. A number of bollards with lantern style lights on top presently light the frontage of the dwelling resulting in a considerable glow. The applicant has supplied information to demonstrate the bollards have been a feature on the land in excess of four years, in which case they are a lawful development and the present application must be considered in the context of this existing lighting. With the exception of the lighting at the front of Ashdown House, there is no other lighting on the east side of Bessels Way in the vicinity of the site.
- 6.7 Officers have visited the site after dark to assess the full extent of the light emission. The lamps emit a bright white light which is directed away from the road. The lawful bollards direct light in all directions and include a pair of bollards shining light towards the road which are clearly visible from Bessels Way.
- 6.8 Although the site lies within the AONB appreciation of the natural beauty of the landscape is a more relevant consideration during the day. At night the area is characterised by its darkness due to the absence of street lighting. Whilst no street lighting exists in the vicinity of the site, the front of the property is illuminated by the pre-existing bollard lighting, and the applicant has taken steps to limit any additional light emission from the two new columns. The proposal, therefore, is considered to comply with policy NE6.
- 6.9 In your officers' opinion, the application of blackout paint has mitigated the impact of the lighting compared to the previously refused planning application. Light is solely directed into the site, and a clear separation can be seen between the illuminated access and the unlit road and verge. Visibility of the lighting from the columns is also limited to such a degree that it is only readily visible in the immediate vicinity of the access into the site.
- 6.10 Whilst it is desirable to maintain the darkness characteristic of rural locations and settlement edges, the application property already benefits from external lighting to the house frontage. When set against the light from the pre-existing bollards the light from the two columns has a limited impact on the character of the area and the AONB. The impact of the proposed lighting on the character of the area, therefore, is not considered to be so harmful to justify refusing planning permission. However, it is considered necessary and reasonable to require by condition the blackout treatment of the lights to be maintained in the future. Such a condition would also ensure that if the blackout paint becomes worn or if a lens breaks it would be replaced with a similar blacked out material, as requested by the parish council.
- 6.11 The parish council also requests conditions to limit the bulb wattage of the lights, the hours that the lights are switched on or, alternatively, that they are sensor controlled. However, within the context of the pre-existing bollard lighting which is not subject to such controls, the imposition of these conditions would have a limited effect on the overall light emissions from the property. The suggested conditions, therefore, would have very little benefit and so it would not be reasonable or necessary to impose them.
- 6.12 **Impact of the lighting on the amenity of neighbours**
Policy DC9 of the local plan identifies external lighting as having the potential to have

a harmful impact on neighbours. Objections have been received from a number of local residents on this issue regarding the impact on the amenity of the dwellings on the opposite side of Bessels Way.

6.13 However, the lights the subject of this application direct light solely towards Ashdown House, illuminating its driveway. Within the context of the lawful bollard lighting to the front of Ashdown House, the impact of the proposed lighting on neighbours is not considered to be at all harmful.

6.14 **Impact of the lighting on highway safety**

There is no light spillage onto the public highway, and the black out paint limits any view of the proposed lighting from the road. As such, there is not considered to be any harmful impact on highway safety.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Within the context of the pre-existing bollard lighting to the front of Ashdown House, the proposed lighting is considered acceptable. The lighting is limited, and measures have been put in place to prevent glare and light spillage. The proposal, therefore, does not result in a harmful impact on the character of the area or the AONB, the amenity of neighbouring properties, or highway safety.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **That planning permission be granted subject to the following condition:**

1. Lighting installation (blackout lenses to be retained and maintained)
