

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V1751/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	14.8.2013
PARISH	SPARSHOLT
WARD MEMBER(S)	Yvonne Constance
APPLICANT	G Williams
SITE	Blackberry Cottage Westcot Lane Sparsholt Wantage, OX12 9PZ
PROPOSAL	Proposed dwelling
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	434051/188294
OFFICER	Charlotte Brewerton

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application has been called to planning committee by the Ward Councillor Yvonne Constance who is in support of the planning application.
- 1.2 The application site, situated to the north of Westcot Village but within the village of Sparsholt, categorised as one of Vale's smallest villages and hamlets, is currently flat garden land situated to the north of Blackberry Cottage, a semi detached, two storey dwelling. The site is elongated, laid to lawn with a number of small orchard trees upon it. A well maintained hedgerow runs along the west of the site with open countryside to the east.
- 1.3 Access to the site is via Westcot Lane which is narrow with sporadic housing along it. Mature hedges boarder each side of the lane with open countryside beyond. The nearest dwellings are the semi detached pair to the south, Blackberry Cottage and Meadow Cottage. Westcot Lane leads to Broadleaze Farm to the north of the application site.
- 1.4 Plans dating from 1877 and 1910 apparently show that a farm workers cottage previously stood on this site. These plans have not been submitted.
- 1.5 Planning permission for a single dwelling and garage on this site was previously refused in 1972 (P72/V0153).
- 1.6 The application site is not located within a Conservation Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or within the curtilage of a listed building. A site location plan can be seen **attached** at Appendix A.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for a new dwelling. The proposed dwelling would be a detached, two storey, 4 bed property, measuring 9.5m wide, 7.8m deep and 8m in height. An attached study and garage with master bedroom at first floor would be located on the south elevation, stepping down from the main ridge line and back from the front of the dwelling, and would measure 5.9m wide, 6.7m deep and 6.5m in height. A new access leading onto Westcot Lane would be incorporated and materials are to be similar to those used on Blackberry Cottage. Proposed plans can be seen **attached** at Appendix B.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) – Objection:** This is a single-track with few passing opportunities (verge damage was apparent during my site visit), limited forward visibility around tight bends, no provision for pedestrians, and no street lighting. The lane is also a no-through route with no turning head facility to assist with the turning of vehicles. Any increase in vehicle movements along this lane will increase the risk associated with its use. The site is located outside of the main built up areas of the village of Sparsholt, and the small hamlet of Westcot. Only very limited public transport links are available nearby and their use requires walking along narrow country lanes as described above. There are few facilities near to the site and occupiers of the proposed property will inevitably be dependant on the private car for journeys to employment, schools and supermarkets. In summary approval of this application will give rise to an increase in vehicular movements on a substandard lane to the detriment of highway safety and convenience of all users of the public highway. The site location is also considered unsustainable and dependency on the car will be high. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.
- 3.2 **Sparsholt Parish Council – Objection:** At a meeting of the Sparsholt Parish Council on Thursday 19th September 2013 at Sparsholt the Council, by a majority of 2 to 1, resolved to object to this development on policy grounds. The Council did not consider that a single additional house on Westcot Lane would cause any material increase in traffic warranting a refusal of planning permission. Similarly the Parish Council did not consider that the proposed access on to Westcot Lane, even if sub-standard, would cause a hazard taking into account minimal traffic flow. In addition, the Parish Council was satisfied that the modern foul sewerage system could be designed and installed to meet all requisite Building Regulation Standards, and that while the house might be visible across the fields, it would not be particularly intrusive in the landscape. The Parish Council also recognised that the site was not agricultural land but domestic garden land where formerly there had been a brick building, probably an agricultural dwelling. However, the site was an unsustainable location in open countryside where residential development was not permitted by Policy GS2 of the saved Vale of the White Horse Local Plan 2011 and NPPF paragraph 55. Accordingly, planning permission ought to be refused.
- 3.3 **Neighbour Support (6)** – live in the house next but one to the proposed development and we support this application. Occupiers of the new property would have to pass our house to reach theirs. We do not think this would cause any significant increase to the traffic on the lane. The Development site is a very large and secluded plot of land and it is unlikely that the new house would be viewed by any of the neighbours, certainly would not cause any obstruction of existing views. The design appears to be in keeping with the neighbouring properties and of a size suitable for the plot of land available.
- 3.4 We have no objections to this development. We live immediately next door to the applicants (Blackberry Cottage) and will be the closest other dwelling to the proposed new build. We do not believe that it will cause us any problems from a traffic or nuisance point of view. The plans appear in keeping with the area. We have seen Barry Jones suggestion of incorporating a bio-disc sewage system for this development and immediate neighbours. We would be fully supportive of such an initiative.
- 3.5 I support this application. Apart from a small increase in traffic, I cannot see that this new house would be anything other than a benefit to the parish. The Williams' garden is perfectly suited to this purpose, being elongated along the side of the road.

- 3.6 My wife and I support this application. We believe the proposal is a modest dwelling in what is part of a residential garden and will not in any way detract from the environment in which it sits. Given the development is in a residential garden with direct highway access, and not on land currently designated for 'agricultural' use it will set a very limited precedent. The differentiation between land which is a garden i.e domestic/residential use and that which is agricultural is clearly of importance as planning concerns have been raised recently about two properties within the parish over their land usage. In one case a fence has had to be erected to mark the division.
- 3.7 **Neighbour Object (3) (summarised)** – The application site is in Westcot Lane half a mile to the north of the hamlet of Westcot and in 'open countryside'. The proposed development constitutes unsustainable housing development. Building of a new isolated four bedroom house in the countryside directly contrary to the guidance in the NPPF paragraph 55. Recent refusal at Humber Barn (P13/V0337/FUL) and its grounds for refusal apply to this site with equal, if not greater, force to housing development on the Blackberry Cottage application site, which is located half a mile down Westcot Lane to the north of the hamlet in open countryside. Westcot lane does not lead to anywhere except a farm. Disagree that the property will only be seen from Blackberry Cottage when it will be seen from footpath 357/2 to the east. There is an issue with sewage and visibility of the access.
- 3.8 **Neighbour No Strong Views (1)** – I would like the project to proceed but consideration for the bio disc sewage system being installed. The current sewage system in wet weather does not work adequately and it can overflow on to Westcot lane. The new bio disc system should service all existing dwellings as well as the new project. This lane in the past used to be lined with farm workers cottages, this new house would not look out of place.
- 3.9 **Peter Dela – Drainage** – Awaiting consultation response.
- 3.10 **Waste Team** – general advice on where bins storage should be located.
- 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**
- 4.1 [P72/V0153](#) - Refused (13/06/1972)
Site of approx 0.14 acres for the erection of a detached house and garage north end of garden.
- 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**
- 5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;
DC1 - Design
DC5 - Access
DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling
DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses
GS2 - Development in the Countryside
H12 – Development in Smaller Villages
H13 - Development Elsewhere
NE9 – Development in the Lowland Vale
- 5.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**
- 6.1 **Principle of Development**
The main consideration in the determination of this application is the principle of development. The hamlet of Westcot and small village of Sparsholt, in planning policy terms is covered by Policy H13: 'Development Elsewhere' which seeks to safeguard

patterns of development. By having such policies in place the character of scattered settlements and small villages within the Vale can be preserved, with the specific intent to preserve the ... 'sporadic nature..' of such areas from '...ribbon development...'. This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and recognised by the Secretary of State in his decision to retain this policy.

- 6.2 Policy H13 only permits new houses outside the built up limits of the towns and villages defined in policies H10-H12 of the Local Plan, provided they are:
 - a) as infilling with no more than one or two small new dwellings within the existing built up area of a settlement or;
 - b) if proved to be essential to meet the needs of an agricultural, equestrian or other rural enterprise genuinely requiring a countryside location.
- 6.3 Having considered the proposal it is the Officer's opinion that the proposed new dwelling is not being provided to meet the needs of a rural enterprise and therefore the application has been judged against part a) above only.
- 6.4 The NPPF clearly states a presumption in favour of sustainable development. However the application site is not located within the main settlement of Westcot but to the north of the main built up limits of the small village, and outside the main built limits of Sparsholt, where development becomes more sporadic and spread out towards open Countryside.
- 6.5 The housing survey within the small parish of Sparsholt, which includes the settlement of Westcot, recognises that the parish is without a shop or a school and employment opportunities and public services are restricted putting emphasis on the use of the private vehicle and out commuting. The hamlet is therefore considered to be remote and unsustainable with the nearest 'larger villages' of Childrey and East Challow being located some 3 and 4 miles away. The site is therefore considered to be in an unsustainable location with further development likely to lead to increased use of the private car. A view that is supported by the Highways Officer.
- 6.6 The location is not considered to be infilling of any type and is more akin to development upon a Greenfield plot within the open countryside. It is noted that there may have once been a farm workers dwelling upon this site however there is currently no building on the site with little visible evidence that there had been a cottage here? 100 years is a considerable amount of time for settlement patterns to change and Policy must respect the existing built form of development and assess these sites on their current merits.
- 6.7 Generally the area is rural in nature with open fields to the east and west of the site. The dwellings known as Blackberry Cottage and Meadow Cottage may once have been farm workers dwellings however they have no relationship with such enterprises now. They have also been significantly extended and altered and are of a considerable size. A new dwelling to the north of these properties would not appear in a similar context to the adjacent built form but would amount to a new detached dwelling of some considerable size given the proposed scale, mass, layout and form, which would give rise to a commuter home in the countryside rather than a small dwelling as policy would deem suitable. Policy NE9 seeks to protect the wider views and enjoyment of the open landscape and views of this new dwelling of some considerable size would This is considered to be contrary to Policy DC1 of the Local Plan.
- 6.8 Furthermore Policy GS2 of the Local Plan states that outside the built up areas of existing settlements new building will not be permitted unless it is on land which has been identified for development in the local plan. Neither Westcot nor Sparsholt have

been identified for specific housing developments. Approval of such development in this small hamlet would almost certainly give rise to applications of similar developments undermining the saved policies of the Local Plan and consistency with the NPPF.

- 6.9 There have been several letters of support and objection to the proposal covering issues of sewage, traffic movements, character and appearance of the development and its impact within the open countryside. These have been considered and whilst I am awaiting an update on the drainage issue, the highways officer is not supportive of the proposed new dwelling in a site that is unsustainable and would put additional pressure on the surrounding highway network.
- 6.10 This application has been also considered in terms of its contribution to the present five year land supply shortfall. The approval of a single dwelling, in an unsustainable location, on a site that has not been identified for housing would not contribute to the overall housing shortfall nor would it accord with the NPPF for sustainable development. For this reason little weight to its contribution to housing supply should be given.
- 6.11 It is therefore considered that the proposed new dwelling would fall outside criteria a) above and does not constitute development that would be 'infilling within the existing built up area of a settlement' contrary to Policy H13 and GS2 of the Local Plan 2011. As such there is an in principle policy objection to such development.
- 6.12 In addition the size of the dwelling its layout, mass, scale, form and impact upon the wider character and surrounding open Countryside within an unsustainable location would all be contrary to Policies DC1, DC5 and NE9 of the Local Plan 2011.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 For all the reasons outlined above the proposed development would be contrary to Policies H13, GS2, DC1, DC5 and NE9 of the Vale of the White Horse Local Plan 2011 therefore it is your Officer's opinion that the application should be refused.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Refusal of planning permission for the following reasons:

- 8.1 1: GENERAL POLICY REFUSAL: That the development is contrary to the Council's general planning policy which requires: i) that so far as possible future development should in the main be concentrated in towns as this is considered in the best interests of the public from the point of view of economy in the provision of services of all kinds and in land use, the preservation of rural amenities because it is only in this way that balanced communities can be achieved ii) That in the rural areas development is only likely to be permitted within the approved limits of development of specified villages and within the village envelope of other villages where such envelope is limited and well defined and where there is no valid planning objection and Westcot or Sparsholt is not a specified village. No agricultural justification has been made for this new dwelling.
- 8.2 2: EXTEND RIBBON DEVELOPMENT : The site is not considered to be a sustainable location being detached from the services and facilities seen within larger villages and the main envelopes of settlements. The potential future occupants are likely to be car dependant. This site therefore does not accord with the definitions of sustainability referred by the NPPF.
- 8.3 3: OUTSIDE LOCAL PLAN PROVISIONS: That the development would be contrary to the provisions of the approved Local Plan in that the site is not within any area allocated for development, the area is not located within the areas specified under

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 30 October 2013

Policy H12 of the local plan. In any event, the application makes a reliable contribution to addressing the five year land supply shortfall the Vale is presently facing.

- 8.4 4: NOT INFILLING: That the proposed development does not constitute infilling in the accepted sense of filling a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. Furthermore that the proposed development would result in the extension of sporadic ribbon development in this area, no frontage exists to 'infill' as such.

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