

LBA/425/1 Mr David Lewis

Proposed alterations and extension to existing bungalow and construction of single garage.

The Orchard, Holborne Hill, Letcombe Bassett, Wantage, Oxon. OX12 9LU

1.0 The Proposal

1.1 This planning application seeks permission for extensions and alterations to a small bungalow in the Letcombe Bassett Conservation Area. The dwelling also lies in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building. The alterations will raise the ridge height by 1.35m.

1.2 Extracts from the application plans are at **Appendix 1**.

1.3 The application comes to Committee as the Parish Council objects to the proposal.

2.0 Planning History

2.1 Planning permission LBA/425-D was granted in 1974 for a bungalow and garage. The garage has never been built.

3.0 Planning Policies

3.1 Policy DC1 of the adopted Local Plan relates to design and the impact of development on the character of the locality.

3.2 Policies D9 and H24 relate to the impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.

3.3 Policy HE1 relates to the impact of development on the established character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

3.4 Policy NE6 relates to the impact of development on the natural beauty of the landscape in the AONB.

4.0 Consultations

4.1 The Conservation Officer has raised no objections to the proposal.

4.2 The County Engineer has raised no objections to the proposal.

4.3 Letcombe Bassett Parish Council comments are at **Appendix 2**. The objections are summarised below:

- Proposed development is too large for the plot
- The development will be visible from the road, whilst documentation suggests it will not
- Design is unsuitable for the village, the Conservation Area and the AONB
- Excavation of the steeply sloping site, to accommodate the proposal, may be unstable and may also affect adjacent trees

- There is no indication of boundary landscaping which the parish would like to see as a condition of any permission
- Overlooking from proposed first floor windows into the properties opposite and loss of privacy and view for all adjacent properties

4.4 11 letters of objection from 10 neighbouring properties have been received. They raise concerns with regard to:

- The increase in size and bulk and the raised roof of the proposal will have a detrimental visual impact due to its prominent position in the village
- The proposal will “dominate and be oppressive to” neighbouring properties and will affect their privacy, particularly the dormer window to the east elevation
- The proposal will spoil the character of the Conservation Area
- The proposal would have a harmful impact on the character of the adjacent Listed Building
- Overdevelopment of the plot may “set a precedent which may be detrimental to the village for future planning applications” and results in a lack of garden area.
- Associated excavation may cause instability and impact on tree roots and could cause flooding to Holborn Farmhouse
- The design does not fit in with the village and should remain a bungalow to retain the “open and spacious character of the village”
- Due to the slightly elevated position of the plot from the roadside, too much hard standing will result in unsightly view of cars from the front
- Loss of views from adjacent properties
- Lack of landscaping details
- Should be retained as a small dwelling so that there is affordable housing in the village to maintain a mixed community
- Concerns over the lack of “clear dimensions” and differing scales on the plans

4.5 Amended plans have been received and re-consulted on. Further letters of objection were received from three neighbouring properties who had already commented. The letters re-iterated the points made previously or by other neighbours.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The main issues to be considered are: impact on the Conservation Area, the setting of a Grade II listed building and the AONB; impact on surrounding properties, particularly Holborn Farmhouse, in terms of overlooking, over dominance and visual impact; and potential overdevelopment of the plot.

5.2 The existing bungalow was permitted and built in the 1970’s. It is a small two bedroom property, which does not match any of the surrounding two storey buildings. There is a Grade II Listed Building (Holborn Farmhouse) to the east and a private road and agricultural land, owned by the applicant, to the north and west. The property sits on a markedly sloping corner plot on the western edge of the village of Letcombe Bassett. The plot slopes downwards from west to east and is consequently significantly higher level than Holborn Farmhouse. The plot also slopes from back to front such that the rear garden is at a higher level and banks towards the rear of the dwelling. The bungalow is also at a higher level than the road and the houses opposite. These varying site levels have a considerable bearing on the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding area.

- 5.3 The front of the property is set well back from the highway, behind a wide grassed verge and low hedge. When approaching the village from the west, the front of the property is quite prominent, but the rear is presently screened by large shrubs and trees on the west boundary. Approaching from the east, the property is not visible when rounding the corner until almost adjacent to the front elevation. This is partly due to the direction of approach, and in part the tall trees in the neighbouring garden to the east.
- 5.4 On the same side of the road to the site, the surrounding buildings are very diverse, with thatched listed building to the east, a modern detached brick house to the west, and a large barn-style house with timber barge boarding at a distance to the north. On the opposite side of the road there are 4 semi-detached houses of no particular architectural merit, which have painted render of various colours.
- 5.5 The proposal has been designed to provide first floor accommodation in the existing part of the dwelling, without raising the eaves height. The ridge height is to be increased by 1.35m with the addition of 3 modest dormer windows to the front elevation. The low eaves and dormers will give a cottage appearance to the dwelling, which is considered to be more in-keeping with the Conservation Area than the current bungalow. The rear garden area will be excavated to accommodate the extensions and garage and as a result, the built form will be partially screened from public view by steep banking.
- 5.6 The design of the extension will match the proposed front of the property, with low eaves and dormer windows, and the ridge line will be 0.3m lower. The garage is very similar to that which was previously approved with the original bungalow in 1974. It has a low pitched roof and is set back in the plot to be less intrusive in the street scene. Amended plans were received which show the retention of planting on the west boundary, and the recommendation includes a condition to provide additional landscaping on the site. Therefore the impact of the proposal on the street scene is not considered to be harmful and would not spoil the existing open and spacious feel to this part of the village. Overall, the design and positioning of the proposed alterations and extensions are considered to be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Neither is the proposal considered to have a detrimental impact on views from the wider area of the AONB or on the setting of the adjacent listed building.
- 5.7 The proposed development has been designed to maintain the space between neighbouring dwellings. None of the new building will be closer to the neighbouring property to the east than the original bungalow. There will be an increase in bulk of the gable end on the east elevation, due to the increased ridge height and dormer windows, and this will be visible from Holborn Farmhouse due to the difference in site levels of the two properties. However, this is at a distance of 20m and is an increase in height of only 1.35m. As such, it cannot reasonably be considered to over dominate the neighbouring dwelling.
- 5.8 With regard to the issue of overlooking, there is an existing window on the east elevation of the bungalow which, due to lack of natural screening at this point, overlooks the garden of Holborn Farmhouse. The proposal is to remove this window, which will improve the privacy of the neighbour. Further windows, in the rear extension, at ground and first floor level, will not cause harmful overlooking due to intervening high hedging and tall evergreen trees. In addition, an amended plan has been received which includes 2m high fencing to prevent overlooking from the ground

floor windows and obscure glazing to the first floor window. As such, it is considered that the proposal will not overlook the neighbouring property to the east.

- 5.9 The properties on the opposite side of the road have also raised concerns about overlooking, but at a distance of some 60m, there is not considered to be any harmful impact. As such, it is considered that the proposal does not harm the amenities of neighbouring properties.
- 5.10 The proposal does represent a large increase in the footprint of the dwelling, and due to the need for excavation at the rear to accommodate the extension and garage, there will be a reduction in amenity space on the site. However, there is a garden to the front of the property, and a further undeveloped area to the north east. The development does not extend closer to any neighbouring properties and therefore does not give a cramped appearance or affect the overall appearance of spaciousness within this part of the village. The development of hard standing for vehicles adjacent to the garage will enable more convenient access to and from the property, and improve the present situation whereby occupants and visitors to the property must park on the highway. As such the proposal is not considered to represent an over development of the site.

6.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *RE1 – Matching materials.*
3. *MC9 – Obscured glazing and no additional windows to east elevation*
4. *LS4 – Submission and implementation of landscaping scheme (incorporating existing trees)*