

HAR/20598 – Mr E Ferguson
Erection of a new dwelling
Land adjacent to Holloway Thatch, The Holloway, Harwell

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 The application is for the erection of a 4 bedroom dwelling which would be located at the end of The Holloway, and would be sited up to the highway boundary. The application site is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 1.2 Extracts from the application plans are at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 The application is brought to Committee at the request of Councillor Reg Waite.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 HAR/725/3-X – An outline application for the erection of a single dwelling house with all matters reserved except access. Refused and dismissed at appeal in March 1999 as the Inspector considered that “a new dwelling in this location would inevitably appear as an extension of the existing built up area of the village along The Holloway.” “In particular it would, in my opinion extend the built form of the settlement outside its natural confines, as defined by the banks on either side of the lane, rather than constituting the logical completion of the development pattern...” The appeal decision and application plans are at **Appendix 2**.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Policy DC1 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan requires development to be of a high design quality in terms of layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials to be used, and its relationship with adjoining buildings, and to take into account local distinctiveness. Policy DC5 of the adopted Local Plan requires safe and convenient access and parking.
- 3.2 Policy DC9 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.
- 3.3 Policy H11 of the adopted Local Plan enables development within the larger villages on sites up to 0.5ha and up to 15 dwellings providing the scale, layout, mass and design of the new dwelling(s) would not materially harm the form, structure or character of the settlement. Policy H13 restricts housing development outside of the built up areas of the towns and villages as listed in Policies H10-H12.
- 3.4 Policy NE6 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to ensure development conserves or enhances the natural beauty of the landscape within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Development which would be visually prominent, would detract from views from public vantage points or would spoil the appreciation of the landscape quality of the AONB will not be permitted.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Harwell Parish Council – “Do not object but the Council requests that neighbours comments are borne in mind by planners, and that any excavation of land on the site for building or landscaping purposes does not have any adverse effect on adjoining land, especially on the southern and eastern boundaries.”
- 4.2 County Engineer – “The application seeks permission for the erection of a new 4 bed dwelling on a vacant piece of land at the end of The Holloway. There is currently a metal garage on the site with an access to it off the driveway leading to Holloway Thatch and The Chimneys. The proposal seeks to retain the existing access and demolish the garage. On site observations indicate that The Holloway is of single carriageway width with no passing spaces, footways or street lighting. At the junction of The Holloway and the A417, The Holloway is of sufficient width to enable vehicles to pass when entering and leaving (for a distance of at least 10 metres into The Holloway) and vision splays at the junction are considered acceptable in both directions. Although I have concerns about the intensification of use of a substandard road, I am aware that a previous application for the erection of a new dwelling on the site was made in 1998. Although the Highway Authority’s recommendation was that this application should be refused on highway grounds, at appeal the Inspector’s decision was that the additional traffic generation from one new dwelling would not be so significant or detrimental in highway terms to justify a refusal. Although the application proposing off-road parking, which may be in accordance with the local plan standards, the internal garage dimensions do not accord with current standards. It is recommended that garages be at least 6m by 3m to enable them to be used as a garage by modern cars. With the above in mind the Highway Authority does not wish to object to the current application.”
- 4.3 Principal Drainage Engineer – “The applicant has provided insufficient details concerning the intended methods of draining the site. Planning consent could be made conditional on the provision and approval of drainage details submitted after the consent and prior to the commencement of building on site. These should incorporate sustainable drainage systems including permeable paving for the surface water system.”
- 4.4 3 letters of objection have been received from residents of The Holloway. Their comments can be summarised as follows:
- The last development in The Holloway has increased vehicular movements. This proposal would only make the traffic situation worse and more dangerous
 - Concerns are also raised regarding parking provision
 - The proposal would be out of keeping with the area with a relatively large house on a relatively small plot
 - The Holloway is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty used by walkers and riders. The further development of this ancient lane will only adversely impact this amenity
 - It is the route to the Downs which begins with a number of pleasantly laid out properties which lie back from and do not dominate the lane. This is part of the heritage of the village and should not be spoilt.
 - The land was previously used for grazing animals and has only recently turned ‘derelict’ and the close boarded fence erected is unpleasant and out of character with the area

- Concerns relating to the impacts of the construction phase on local amenities
- The proposal would likely result in overlooking towards Orchard Cottage
- The tree survey submitted is incorrect and the screening proposed is mainly birch which would provide limited screening in winter and has little density of growth
- A previous application on this site was rejected. There is no change in the situation
- Concerns have been raised regarding potential subsidence issues

5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The key issues to be considered are: whether the application site is considered to be within the built up area of Harwell; the impact of the proposal on the character of the area and the AONB; the impact on neighbouring amenities; whether there is an acceptable level of amenities for future occupiers; and any drainage, access and parking issues.
- 5.2 The application site is at the end of The Holloway and its western elevation would be sited up to the common boundary with the public highway. To the north of the application site the lane is characterised by properties which are sited close to the highway boundary, however as you travel further south the lane becomes more rural in character and Holloway Thatch and Downs Croft are sited well away from the public highway. The application site, therefore, forms part of the important transition between the tight built form to the north and the open fields to the south. Officers are aware of the length of time since the previous appeal decision was dismissed in 1999. However in assessing the proposal against current Local and National policies and guidance it is considered that the proposal for a new dwelling in this location would appear as an extension to the existing built up area of the village. Officers are aware that a 1.8 metres high close boarded fence has been erected since the previous appeal decision along the common boundary with the highway; however this is not considered to have any significant bearing on the concerns as stated above, and does not represent a significant change to the site characteristics. The southern extent of the built up area is considered to be at the junction between the lane and the driveways serving Holloway Thatch, The Chimneys and Downs Croft. Co-incidentally this is also the end of the metalled highway. Given the rural character of this section of the lane and the fact that any dwelling would be sited higher than the public highway Officers consider that any dwelling on this site would have an overriding urbanising and harmful impact on the rural character of the lane and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 5.3 Officers are of the opinion that the harm to the rural character of the lane would be exacerbated by the siting, scale and form of the dwelling now proposed. The dwelling would be sited up to the common boundary with the public highway which would inevitably increase its prominence and dominance when viewed from the lane in all directions. Furthermore, by reason of the difference in ground levels and the resultant mixture of design forms and massing, the dwelling would appear contrived and bulky, especially when viewing the west elevation from the lane. It would also appear as a much larger dwelling. Whilst it is appreciated that this is a barn style dwelling, and that Holloway Thatch and The Chimneys are essentially larger barn style dwellings, it is considered that given the prominent location of the application site together with the

size of the dwelling and the mixture of the design features, the proposal would have a significantly harmful impact on the rural character of the lane as set out above.

- 5.4 Given the distance to neighbouring properties it is not considered that the proposal would have a harmful impact on neighbouring amenities. Furthermore, whilst it is noted that any rear garden is likely to need to be levelled to provide a usable space, it is considered that the proposed rear garden is of an acceptable size.
- 5.5 Officers note the comments from the County Engineer in terms of the size of the proposed garage. However given the size of the proposed area of hardstanding to the front of the property which could be conditioned to be retained as parking, Officers are of the opinion that sufficient parking could be provided.
- 5.6 The Principal Drainage Engineer has requested drainage details be conditioned to be provided on any permission granted.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *It is recommended that planning permission be refused for the following reason:*

1. *The proposal would result in an extension of the existing built up area of the village along The Holloway and would have a significantly urbanising impact on the rural character of the lane, which would be exacerbated by the higher ground level of the site. Furthermore, the siting of the proposed dwelling up to the common boundary with the highway, and the design and scale of the dwelling would result in a prominent and dominating addition to the lane. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies DC1, H13 and NE6 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011.*