

PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

The Jays, land adjacent to Glebe Lodge, Holwell, Hertfordshire, SG5 3SS

The Site

The site comprises a single agricultural building. The site is accessed via a private road and a shared access with the adjacent property, Glebe Lodge, off Pirton Road.

Planning History

A Prior Approval notification was applied for under NHDC reference 20/00869/PNQ. Prior Approval was Not Required for the Conversion of the building to a 2-bedroom dwelling with associated garden and parking areas confirmed in a Decision Notice issued on 23 July 2020 ("The Part Q Scheme"). Planning permission was then granted on the 14 April 2021 for the erection of one detached 3-bed dwelling following the demolition of an existing farm building (LPA Ref: 21/01179/FP).

Further planning permission was then granted in April 2022 for the erection of a 4 bed dwelling with basement following the demolition of the existing farm building (LPA Ref 22/00146/FP).

Use and Amount

This proposal seeks to remove the basement element of the build and add a second storey to the return leg of the building. The description would now be erection of one detached 3 bedroom dwelling with parking and garden land.

The existing barn is proposed to be left in situ and to be restored where required, the barn would then have solar panels fitted to the roof and have a plant room built to store battery packs and associated equipment for good environmental standards. The aim being to build a very well insulated house close to passivhaus standards. Other parts of the barn would be used for general storage.

The new building would be very similar in size and appearance to that already approved. The basement element has been removed as this is not environmentally friendly to construct. The second storey to one end is still of a low level and has no windows overlooking any neighbours property. The second storey allows for a third bedroom and second bathroom resulting in a reasonable size property that is actually smaller in square footage than previously approved.

The roof line is lower than both neighbouring properties and similar in style to the 3 houses most recently built on Pirton Road.

The repositioning of the building actually allows more privacy to neighbouring properties as it is moved away from boundaries but is still tucked very much to one corner of the overall plot. The siting of the property will also be no further east than the approved building line for Glebe Lodge property to the south and not as far east as the Old Vicarage located north of the plot. Both neighbours have been advised of the amended application and have raised no concerns.

Design and Appearance

In terms of design and appearance the scheme would blend in with that of the existing barn and the principles of the previously approved scheme.

Access

Vehicular access to the dwelling will continue to be taken from Pirton Road.

Parking is to be provided for several cars in front of the original barn. An electric charging point is to be fitted to the barn next to the plant room. This will allow for electric charging directly from the battery storage facility. Parking would be in accordance with the vehicle parking in the new development supplementary planning document (September 2011)

In relation to parking and access, the officers report for the previously approved scheme stated (Paragraphs 4.3.10 – 4.3.11):

“Access would be from the existing shared driveway to Glebe Lodge. No new access is proposed and the highway authority raise no objection to the development in highway safety terms. Refuse bins can be left at the kerbside as is the existing arrangement by the dwellings that surround the site. Adequate refuse storage can be made within the site.

More than 2 parking spaces are shown which meets the minimum standard as required by the NHDC Parking SPD and there is also space on site for visitors.”

Principle of Development

The proposed development will have minimal visual impact compared to the existing building and the design is considered to be appropriate in its context. The slight amendment to location will be imperceptible from the existing position as the property cannot be seen from any roadways and is only visible from some footpaths. The officers’ report previously stated (paragraph 4.3.10):

“The limited size of the dwelling and its discreet location set back from the access track to the west and screened by landscaping within the garden of Mount Pleasant and other planting along the access drive means that the dwelling would have very limited impact on the visual amenities of the area.”

Despite the slight increase in size and repositioning of the plot, this position is considered to be the same by the applicant.

The construction of a 3 bed dwelling is not considered to have any adverse impact that would affect the contribution towards achieving sustainable development in any materially different way nor have a materially greater effect upon the immediate site context and surrounding character. The slight increase to a second storey is considered to make best use of land.

The site is located beyond, but adjoining the selected village boundary for Holwell in the saved Local Plan and is within the rural area beyond the Green Belt. The draft policies reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the NPPF.

Although the fallback Part Q Scheme may not apply with the resitting of the property the overall impact of the development is negligible in such a large plot and will have no impact on the surrounding area. Therefore, the principle of development should be acceptable.

Other Considerations

Transport and highways:

The proposal retains several parking spaces to serve the property. The existing access is to be maintained and was previously considered acceptable to the Local Highway Authority as stated above.

There is defined gated access to the Site via the existing private road off Pirton Road. The proposed change of use will have a negligible increase in traffic using the site, over and above its lawful agricultural use or the fall-back position.

The parking continues to be laid out to ensure vehicles can park and leave in a forward gear.

Amenity:

The proposed use being residential is compatible with the surrounding area which is predominantly arable fields and residential properties. The use would not generate any materially different impact that would adversely affect the amenity of the nearest houses. There are no noise-generating activities alongside the site that would prejudice the quality of the new occupiers. As before, there are no different or negative impacts likely on the amenity of neighbouring properties. In relation to the impact on neighbouring properties, the Officers' report previously stated:

"The nearest neighbours are at Mount Pleasant and Glebe Lodge. Mount Pleasant sits in large grounds with the main dwelling over 30 metres to the north. Given this distance and the low height of the dwelling with no windows facing that property it is unlikely that there would be any adverse impact on Mount Pleasant. Glebe Lodge is to the south and about 20 – 25 metres away from the proposed dwelling. There would be some disturbance from vehicles coming and going to the new dwelling along the shared access road but this is likely to be so infrequent so as not to be of significant harm. There are no directly facing windows on the development facing Glebe Lodge and with the limited height of the dwelling and its northerly orientation to Glebe Lodge it is not considered that there would be any significantly adverse impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of Glebe Lodge."

Contamination:

The current use of the building and land as agricultural does not hold any contamination risks. As with the Part Q scheme, the site is considered appropriate for the proposed residential use and no objections have previously been raised by the environmental health officers.

Flooding and Drainage:

The Site is in Flood Zone 1 (FZ1), which is the zone of lowest flood risk. The site is not in an area identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems and residential uses are an acceptable use within FZ1. It is reasonable to conclude that the site is not at risk of flooding or that the proposed development would result in an increase in flooding. Suitable conditions can be applied to require the details of the drainage scheme before development commences.

The surface water drainage can easily be managed within the site by soakaways.

Biodiversity:

The retention of the barn would benefit the biodiversity of the area as this would be used to house several bird boxes as suggested by the Ecology Report.

Summary:

The proposed development is considered to be in general conformity with local and national planning policy guidance. As demonstrated by the previous approvals on this site, there is no harm associated with the development and the scheme will bring much needed housing to the area. The fall back position provides a material consideration which provides great weight in support of this application. The revised design of the scheme is considered to make best use of land and is therefore an improvement on the previous scheme while ensuring that there is no harm to the surrounding residential properties.

The three overarching objectives of sustainable development address social progress, economic wellbeing and environmental protection.

In relation to this development, the economic role brings benefits for the local labour force during the construction phase, and thereafter, Council Tax/New Homes Bonus will be triggered. A report commissioned by the House Building Federation in 2018 stated that 3.1 jobs are created for every home built in England and Wales.

Assessed against the social role, the development will offer choice to the local housing market and it will also support the services in nearby villages which have a reasonable range of facilities, including local schools, shops, public houses and other businesses. Given the significant shortage in housing land supply within the district, this addition, albeit small, will help towards boosting the housing supply. In terms of its environmental role, the proposal will not have any significantly different impacts to the approved scheme that would justify withholding planning permission.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms.