

**SUBJECT            DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS            ITEM 8**

**REPORT OF**        Head of Planning & Building Control

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P08/E1095
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	Full
<b>REGISTERED</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2008
<b>PARISH</b>	WOODCOTE
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Mr Robin Peirce
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mrs J Bray
<b>SITE</b>	The Lodge, 16 Bridle Path, Woodcote
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Erection of a log cabin to form dwelling.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	As clarified by additional information received 27 <sup>th</sup> October and 27 <sup>th</sup> November 2008.
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	464261/181582
<b>OFFICER</b>	Gayle Shepherd

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application has been referred to the Planning Committee as the Officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site is located towards the edge of Woodcote, on the western side of Bridle Road. The plot area is approximately 0.167 ha and comprises a grassed area. An entrance track, serving the blue edged land, runs through the length of the site area. The site is bounded to its western and eastern boundaries by close-board fencing and screening is provided to the highway by hedging either side of the gated vehicular access to the northern boundary.
- 1.3 The application site lies within the Chilterns AONB. The site is identified on the OS survey extract **attached** at appendix 1.

**2.0 PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a timber building to form a single dwelling. The footprint of the proposed building is 6.1 metres x 17.7 metres. The proposed walls of the building area would be clad in tongue and groove treated softwood under a felt shingle roof, 3.04 metres in height at its pitch.
- 2.2 Reduced copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. A copy of the additional information is **attached** as Appendix 3.

**3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Woodcote Parish Council :                    Approve subject to tying the property to an agricultural worker, prefer more interesting design.
  
- Neighbour Representations:                    1 letter of support, low cost housing to keep young people in the village and sustainable nature of the building proposed.

Highways Officer: No objection in principle objections to the proposal, however, the parking area should be surfaced to ensure spaces are usable at all times of year and mud or other debris does not get dragged onto the adjacent highway. With regard to drainage, permeable surfaces limit surface water run-off and would thus provide a more sustainable drainage measure. The LHA would have no objection to the use of permeable recycled planings as the applicant has proposed.

Building Control: Rooms large enough to be habitable require a door or window suitable for escape purposes. Level access to entrance and firm surfaced path required.

Forestry Officer: No objection to the proposal subject to appropriate conditions for a landscaping scheme to soften the development into its surroundings.

Environmental Health Officer: Comments in summary -  
1. Any future permission should be subject to conditions requiring the applicant to a) investigate the site for contamination before development commences and if necessary remediate the site b) inform the LPA if contamination is found during the course of development.  
2. The dwelling conforms with the definition of a mobile home and is therefore subject to the requirements of the Caravans & Control of Development Act 1960. As the home is not seasonal in nature it would not be considered exempt from licensing requirements and the owner would need to apply for a licence to operate a caravan site in order to station it on the land. The licence would require that the home is stationed on a solid concrete base which extends over the full physical footprint of the home and extends out at all entrances far enough to ensure safe access is available (1 metre is considered sufficient).

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 P74/S0106/O – Residential development. Access – refusal of planning permission August 1974 & appeal withdrawn June 1976.

P67/H0631 – Site for residential development – refusal of planning permission September 1967.

Site for residential development and access – refusal of planning permission March 1966 & appeal dismissed June 1967.

#### 4.2 Associated blue edged land:

P98/S0088/RET – One stable and manege area (retrospective). Additional new stable – Granted permission May 1998.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Policies:-**

- G2 – Protection and enhancement of the environment
- G6 – Promoting good design
- D1 – Good design and local distinctiveness
- D2 – Vehicle and bicycle parking
- D3 – Plot coverage and garden areas
- D4 – Privacy and daylight
- D8 – Energy, water and materials efficient design
- R10 – The keeping of horses
- H4 – Towns and larger villages outside the greenbelt
- H5 – Larger villages
- H15 – Residential caravans and mobile homes
- A6 – Agricultural workers dwellings

5.2 **The South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008**

5.3 **Planning Policy Statement 1**

5.4 **Planning Policy Guidance Note 3**

5.5 **Planning Policy Statement 7**

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues are considered to be:

- i) Whether the principle of development on the site is acceptable
- ii) Whether the proposal would fall within the definition of an Agricultural worker's dwelling
- iii) Design, scale, siting & sustainability
- iv) Impact on the Chilterns AONB and surrounding street scene
- v) Neighbour impact
- vi) Other matters

6.2 **Whether the principle of development on the site is acceptable**

The site lies within the built up confines of Woodcote, and as a 'larger village', the principle of development on what is considered to be an 'infill' plot would be acceptable. This is based on the assumption that the proposed development could also meet the other tests set out within policy H4.

6.3 However, due to the nature, scale and design of the proposal, it would fall within the definition of a mobile home and is therefore primarily subject to the tests of Policy H15. This states that *'proposals for new residential caravans or mobile home sites or extensions to existing sites will be considered in accordance with the housing policies in the plan. Permission will only be given for single residential caravans or mobile homes in exceptional circumstances on a temporary and personal basis.'*

6.4 The text relating to the policy goes on to states that:

*'In general, the Council considers that residential caravans and mobile homes should be grouped onto well-located and properly-maintained sites. The proliferation of single caravans within settlements or in the countryside should be avoided. Planning permission for single units will only be given in exceptional circumstances, for example within the curtilage of a dwelling to provide care and support for an infirm relative or while a dwelling is being built, repaired or renovated. Applications for agricultural worker's caravans will be considered against Policy A6'.*

- 6.5 The applicant refers to the need for the proposal on the basis that it would be an affordable unit of accommodation and that it would provide passive surveillance for horses grazing on the land in the associated blue edged land. However these are not considered to represent exceptional circumstances. An example of such a situation might be where a temporary unit of accommodation is required during a lambing season. The proposal does not therefore accord with the provisions of policy H15.

**Whether the proposal would fall within the definition of an agricultural workers dwelling**

- 6.6 Both the Parish Council and applicant have made reference to there being an agricultural justification for the proposed dwelling. The applicant has advised that the future occupant of the building is currently employed as an ‘agricultural worker’ and she is an aspiring professional show jumper. However there are not any details of the type of agricultural work or business. The applicant has confirmed that the horses grazing, and stabled on the adjacent land, are for personal use. It has not been established that the site is an agricultural holding or that alternative accommodation cannot be found within the local area, which is a test required by this policy. As such it is not considered appropriate or possible for an agricultural occupancy condition to be applied in accordance with the Parish Council’s request.

**Design, scale, siting & sustainability**

- 6.7 The design of the proposed structure has been informed by the applicants desire to construct a sustainable and environmentally friendly structure. The Design and Access Statement submitted states that the materials used are almost exclusively carbon neutral and sourced from sustainable sources. Solar gain, insulation and rainwater harvesting have also been addressed. Whilst the applicants efforts to develop in a sustainable manner are acknowledged they are not considered to outweigh other concerns about the proposal.
- 6.8 The building is utilitarian in its design, and given its scale, form and materials it would be more akin to an outbuilding. It does not appear to be informed by the surrounding street scene, or guidance contained within the Council’s Design Guide. The siting of the building is largely influenced by the neighbouring building line, and the access track that runs from the main access through the application site to the land to the rear. There is no specific garden area indicated on the plans or boundary treatment to the access track which runs through the site shown.

**Impact on the Chilterns AONB and surrounding street scene**

- 6.9 The site lies within the AONB. Policy C2 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan confirms the primary aim within such areas is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, special landscape quality and distinctiveness of the area. To be acceptable, development must be of a scale and type appropriate to the area, and be sympathetic in terms of its siting, design and materials used. Additionally, Policy G6 states that ‘Planning permission will not be granted for proposals which are not of a high quality and inclusive design, which fail to protect and reinforce local distinctiveness, or which are of a scale or type that is inappropriate to the site and its surroundings.’
- 6.10 Existing development along Bridle Path comprises a mixture of mature properties constructed generally in brick under tiled roofs. The external finish and detailing of the proposed mobile home would be out of keeping with the character of existing development in this area. The boundary of the site with the highway is formed by hedging which would help to screen the structure from the highway and with the proposed height of the building at 3.04 metres to its pitch, it would be unlikely to be seen if the screening is maintained at its current height. This would limit the impact of development on the street scene, but views through the entranceway would be possible.

**Neighbour impact**

- 6.11 Due to the screening to the site boundaries and proposed siting of the structure, it would not result in unneighbourly development. However, whilst it is evident that further openings would be required to satisfy Building Control requirements they would not be likely to result in any direct loss of privacy to neighbours.

**Other material considerations**

- 6.12 The Highways Officer has raised no objections to the proposed scheme, the existing vehicular entrance to the site would remain unaltered and would serve both the proposed building and the blue edged land to the rear. Parking has been designated for two vehicles on site and the applicant has confirmed that the surfacing of this will be bound to prevent dropping of mud and debris onto the highway.
- 6.13 The applicant has raised the issue of security, and considers that the location of a dwelling on the application site would be beneficial in terms of deterring trespassers onto the blue edged land. However, whilst it is accepted that the occupants of such a building would provide a degree of passive surveillance when the building is occupied, this would not outweigh the other objections.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The environmental benefits put forward by the applicant resulting from this type of development, the provision of a cheaper unit of accommodation and the passive surveillance for the horses kept on the blue edged land, are not considered to out-weigh the policy objections to the erection of a mobile home in this location. Furthermore the proposal could set an undesirable precedent for the siting of mobile homes on other infill plots within the village of Woodcote.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**8.1 That planning permission be refused**

1. **The proposal represents the siting of an individual mobile home within the built-up area of Woodcote. Having regard to its design, form, scale and materials the development would be out of keeping with the surroundings and adversely affect the character of the area, which lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority they are not any exceptional circumstances that would justify the mobile home contrary to Policies G2, G6, D2, C1, H4 and H15 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.**

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