

APPLICATION NO.	P14/S3879/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	8.12.2014
PARISH	THAME
WARD MEMBERS	David Dodds & Ann Midwinter
APPLICANT	Mr & Mrs M Reaston-Brown
SITE	Land adjacent to Elmfield House, Moreton
PROPOSAL	Erection of a single dwelling and garage (re-submission of withdrawn application P14/S3239/FUL).
AMENDMENTS	None
OFFICER	Paul Lucas

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee as a result of a Member call-in, because in their view it “accords with CSR1 as an allocated site within a rural village”.

1.2 The site is identified at **Appendix 1** and comprises an L-shaped parcel of land of about 0.342 hectares in use as a paddock and occupied by a stable building and a ménage in private use. The use of the stables and ménage on the paddock is restricted to the occupiers of Elmfield House, a large detached dwelling on a spacious plot adjacent to the east of the site, but does not form part of its residential curtilage. The site is bordered to the south and west by open countryside. Another dwelling, The Old Dairy, is located approximately 60 metres to the south of the site. There is a farm track to the north of the site. There are two farm buildings in the field to the north of the track, behind a high hedgerow. There are some established trees and shrubs forming the eastern site boundary. There is also some planting along the northern boundary of the site. The western boundary has a more open character. The site lies to the west of the small settlement of Moreton. This settlement is characterised by fragmented groups of dwellings with some spaces in between. The closest dwelling to the north-east of the site is about 65 metres from the front boundary and belongs to a group of dwellings forming a built-up frontage on part of the lane. There are no special designations on this site.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a single storey 2-bedroom dwelling and detached 2-bay garage, as detailed on the plans and supporting documents submitted with the application. The dwelling and garage would be flat-roofed structures comprising a mixture of stone and timber walls with sedum roofing. The garage would be located in front of the dwelling in the north-east corner of the site. The ménage would be removed, but the stables would be retained within the plot towards the southern end of the site. This application differs from the previous withdrawn application [P14/S3239/FUL](#) through the inclusion of additional native tree planting on either side of the site entrance and two sections of native hedge planting along the northern site boundary.

2.2 A copy of the current plans is provided at **Appendix 2** whilst other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the Council’s website: www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 Thame Town Council – The application should be approved:

1. Low key single storey sustainable dwelling designed to a high standard
2. Robust landscaping scheme to shield the development
3. The dwelling would become the last house within the settlement boundary of Moreton

Neighbours – 11 representations of support:

- Site is located within the village envelope
- Appropriate design and landscaping
- Eco-friendly construction
- Need for family to be next door [not a planning matter]

Thame Conservation Area Advisory Committee - this is considered to be inappropriate development in a rural environment.

OCC Highways – Previous comments apply: no objection subject to condition

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 On this site:

[P14/S3239/FUL](#) – Erection of a detached single storey two-bedroom dwelling and detached double garage. Withdrawn following officers' advice that the application would be refused (04/12/2014).

[P07/E0765](#) - Private ménage in paddock adjoining stable building - Planning Permission on 17/08/2007

[P06/E0463](#) - Erection of a detached private stable building in paddock - Planning Permission on 20/06/2006

On a nearby site:

[P14/S1515/FUL](#) – Erection of a two-storey three bedroom dwelling incorporating new vehicular access and amenity space between Elm Tree Farmhouse and Four Seasons. Planning permission granted (20/08/2014).

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) policies

- CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
- CSEN1 - Landscape protection
- CSM1 - Transport
- CSQ2 - Sustainable design and construction
- CSQ3 - Design
- CSR1 - Housing in villages
- CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;

- C4 - Landscape setting of settlements
- C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity
- C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
- C9 - Loss of landscape features
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- D10 - Waste Management

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- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP8 - Contaminated land
- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G4 - Protection of Countryside
- H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 – Sections 3 & 5

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment – Character Area 3 – The Clay Vale

5.3 Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) March 2013 policies;

- H5 – Integrate windfall sites
Permission will be granted for small residential developments on infill and redevelopment sites within the parish, including Moreton village, subject to proposals being well designed and meeting relevant requirements set out in other policies in this Plan and the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy.
- H6 - Design new development to be of high quality
- H7 - Provide new facilities
- GA3 - Developer contributions towards cycle route
- GA6 - New development to provide parking on site for occupants and visitors
- CLW4 - Contributions towards healthcare facilities
- ESDQ11 – Incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage into new development
- ESDQ12 – Applications for new development to provide a drainage strategy
- ESDQ13 – New dwellings: code for sustainable homes
- ESDQ14 – Produce a Green Living Plan
- ESDQ16 – Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings
- ESDQ18 – New development must contribute to local character by creating a sense of place appropriate to its location
- ESDQ19 – The Design and Access Statement and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood
- ESDQ22 – The visual impact of new development on views from the countryside must be minimised
- ESDQ26 – Design new buildings to represent the three dimensional qualities of traditional buildings
- ESDQ27 – Design in the ‘forgotten’ elements from the start of the design process
- ESDQ28 – Provide good quality private outdoor space
- ESDQ29 – Design car parking so that it fits in with the character of the proposed development

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

The policies within the SOCS and the SOLP 2011 of relevance to this application are considered to be in general conformity with the provisions of the NPPF and therefore this application can be determined against the relevant policies above.

Paragraph 55 states:

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- The exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.
Such a design should:
 - be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;

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- reflect the highest standards in architecture;
- significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
- be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether the development would:

- be acceptable in principle in this location;
- result in the loss of an open space or view of public, environmental or ecological value;
- be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers and would provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers; and
- demonstrate an acceptable provision of off-street parking spaces for the resultant dwelling or other conditions prejudicial to highway safety; and
- give rise to any other material planning considerations

6.2 Principle of Development

The Development Plan policy relevant to this proposal is the SOCS Policy CSR1, which determines whether proposals for infill residential development in the District are acceptable in principle. The SOCS classifies Moreton as an “other village”. Under Policy CSR1, residential development on infill sites of up to 0.1 hectares in size is acceptable in principle in “other villages”. The supporting text for Policy CSR1 states, “Infill development is defined as the filling of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage, or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings.” In officers’ opinion, the site lies outside the main built-up confines of Moreton, which is demonstrated by the fact that it neither forms a small gap in an established built-up frontage, nor is it closely surrounded by buildings, with the only adjacent building on its eastern side. Furthermore, the application site is 0.342 hectares in size, which is significantly outside the allowances of Policy CSR1. Consequently, officers have concluded that the principle of this development is not supported by Policy CSR1. Policy H5 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan explains that planning permission would be granted for residential development on windfall sites, subject to meeting the relevant requirements set out in the SOCS.

6.3 Officers have given consideration to Paragraph 55 of the NPPF as to whether any special circumstances exist to outweigh the conflict with Policy CSR1. In officers’ opinion the proposal would not meet all of the required tests. Firstly it would fail to demonstrate exceptional quality or innovative nature in relation to the design of the dwelling, because flat-roofed dwellings with a low profile and high levels of energy efficiency are a relatively common contemporary design approach in the District. Secondly, the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment identifies that the site lies within an undulating open vale. There is no evidence that the development would significantly enhance the site’s immediate setting through restoration of the landscape structure and character of this part of the countryside. On this basis, officers consider that there is no justification for the development plan to be set aside. As far as officers are aware, no new dwellings in isolated locations in the District have been granted planning permission as a result of their exceptional quality or innovative nature of their design, under the special circumstances clause set out in National Planning Guidance.

6.4 Notwithstanding officers’ conclusions concerning the principle of development, the remainder of this report will consider the impact of the detail of the proposal against the criteria of the SOLP 2011 Policy H4.

6.5 Loss of Open Space

Criterion (i) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view spoilt. The site is not accessible to the public and there is no evidence of any protected species or habitats on the site. The site is visible in public views from the lane to the north of the site, however from these vantage points the development of the site with single storey structures could not be said to result in the loss of an important public view. On this basis, the proposal would be in compliance with the above criterion.

6.6 Visual Impact

Criterion (ii) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings and criterion (iii) requires that the character of the area is not affected. Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS aims to protect the District's distinct landscape character from inappropriate development. Policies CSQ3 of the SOCS and D1 of the SOLP 2011 expand on this requirement in respect of ensuring good design. The existing foliage along the eastern site boundary, much of which is evergreen, provides significant screening of Elmfield House. However, the planting along the western site boundary is less mature and dense. Officers recognise that the proposed dwelling and garage would have a low profile, comprise traditional/sympathetic external materials, would seek to take advantage of existing screening and would introduce additional native planting. On this basis, it is acknowledged that the proposed development would not be unduly prominent in the wider landscape. However, the change in the use of this land from a paddock to a residential use and its occupation with a dwelling, garage and associated residential curtilage and domestic paraphernalia would inevitably be more evident in its immediate landscape setting than the existing paddock and ménage. This would lead to consolidation of development around an isolated pair of dwellings (Elmfield House and The Old Dairy), thereby resulting in encroachment of development towards the adjoining countryside, contrary to the aims of the SOCS Policy CSEN1.

6.7 Residential Amenity

Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. Policy D4 of the SOLP requires that all new dwellings should be designed and laid out so as to secure a reasonable degree of privacy for the occupiers. Given the level of separation to existing dwellings, there would be no loss of light, outlook or privacy to any nearby residential occupiers. The amount of outdoor amenity space would be sufficient for future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. The proposal would accord with the above policy requirements.

6.8 Access and Parking

Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. The Highway Liaison Officer is satisfied with the proposed access and parking arrangements, as there would be adequate parking and turning space within the site. On this basis, the proposal would comply with the above criterion.

Other Material Planning Considerations

6.9 Matters relating to securing Code Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes as required by SOCS Policy CSQ2 could be secured by a planning condition. There would be sufficient space within the site for storage and collection of waste. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has previously confirmed that this site is suitable for the intended residential development with respect to contaminated land.

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7.0 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 To refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

The proposed dwelling would be situated in an isolated rural location outside the built up confines of Moreton. It would remain clearly distinct from the built up frontages to the north-east that form the main body of this small settlement. Instead, the site lies adjacent to an isolated dwelling, which does not form part of a built up frontage. Consequently, the residential development of this site would not result in the filling of a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage or development on a site closely surrounded by buildings. Furthermore, the dwelling and garage would be more evident in its immediate landscape setting than the existing paddock and ménage and would lead to consolidation of development around an isolated pair of dwellings and would lead to the encroachment of development towards the adjoining countryside. The proposal does not demonstrate that there are special circumstances to justify a departure from the Development Plan. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to Policies CS1, CSS1, CSR1 and CSEN1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, Policies G2 and G4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and Government Guidance contained within the NPPF.

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