

Application:19/10471.
Land to the south east of 3A Church Lane, Limpley Stoke.

Erection of two dwellings and associated landscaping and access works.

Background Information.

Pre-application enquiry (19/02424/PREAPP)

“A pre-application enquiry was submitted to Wiltshire Council earlier this year (2019). Following an accompanied site visit, and a subsequent iterative discussion, a scheme comprising a pair of 2 No. dwellings was agreed in principle as constituting an ‘infill’ development being in accordance with applicable development plan policy and NPPF.

The pre-application proposal was also judged to be acceptable in terms of heritage, landscape, highways, and the amenity of existing surrounding residential dwellings. The

advice requested an updated ecological assessment and a drainage strategy, which have been included in the final application submission.”



Planning Design and Access Statement

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Holdoway

Date: October 2019

Site: Land to the south east of 3A Church Lane, Limpley Stoke BA2 7GH

Proposal: Erection of 2 No. dwellings with associated access and landscaping works



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Revised Drawings etc.

“The planning application submission has been revised following feedback received from statutory consultees and third parties, and discussion with the planning case officer. The proposed changes are summarised in comparison to the originally submitted scheme:

- There is an overall reduction in height of 800mm has been achieved by lowering ground levels by 300mm, and a reduction in the eaves and ridge height of 500mm.
- Houses A and B have been made 300mm narrower (north-south) with a total width reduction of 600mm.
- The side extension to House A has been re-modelled and its rear wall is now flush with the rear wall.
- The upper storey gable end windows to the north and south elevations have been removed. Windows to the east and west elevations have been replaced with dormer windows, which will provide light to the first-floor accommodation.
- The proposed Planting Plan has also been updated to increase the diversity of proposed native species hedge planting and to also annotate proposed ecological mitigation in the form of nesting boxes.

- The combination of the changes has reduced scale and mass of the proposed dwellings, enhanced biodiversity, and has eliminated the potential for overlooking from the north elevation which is now a blank gable.

Objection by Limpley Stoke Parish Council and others

“ We strongly oppose the highly insensitive proposed development on 3A Church Lane.

This is for the following reasons:

The corner piece of land between Middle Stoke and Church Lane is a highly sensitive site in the village. It is an area of open land that links the village with the countryside adjoining St Mary’s Church. The Hedgerow that runs tightly along the beginning of Middle Stoke helps to maintain the rural link.

Impact on neighbours: Honey Cottage which adjoins the proposed new development will suffer significantly from an overbearing new neighbour. The proposed houses have not been designed with any apparent regard for the setting or neighbours. This is evidenced by windows in the gable elevation facing Honey cottage, the siting of the proposed properties which are too close to Middle Stoke, the height of the proposed houses and the failure to make any effort to reduce levels onsite to sink the houses down.

The properties opposite on Middle Stoke will be looking up at the new houses and again, the elevated position above Middle Stoke will be really quite overbearing notwithstanding the 20.5m separation distance between houses.

The applicant has stated that the setting of the Grade 2* St Mary’s Church will be improved by this development as a result of the hedge being moved back by 2m. We strongly disagree – the view of the church as one progresses towards it from Middle Stoke is one of the key views in the village. The church is experienced in an open setting and not constrained by buildings.

We accept the distances between proposed development and neighbouring properties are over 20m as recommended however these proposed house are unnecessary overbearing and seriously affect the character and visual amenity of this part of the village.

In addition, policy in villages suggests that infill development comprises up to 2 properties. This site has already accommodated 2 new properties. For ease of reference these are 16/04907/FUL (Southernwood (Plot 3), Church Lane, Limpley Stoke, Wiltshire, BA2 7GH) and 16/05118/OUT (17/03051/REM Plot 1 Southernwood Church Lane Limpley Stoke BA2 7GH) These will 2 proposed houses will take the total on 3 Church Lane to a total of 4 which is no longer infill. This is contrary to the planning policies for Limpley Stoke as stated in the applicants own planning statement:

Limpley Stoke is designated as a ‘Small Village’ under Policy CP1 of the adopted Core Strategy. Policy CP2 allows limited infilling within the existing built area of Small Villages ‘...where they seek to meet housing needs of settlements...’ subject to three criteria

relating to character compliance: (i) does not elongate village; (ii) is not in sensitive landscape areas; and (iii) does not consolidate an existing sporadic loose knit areas of development.

The adopted Neighbourhood Plan has identified 'Village Settlement Areas' within which infill development is permitted. As noted above the application site lies within the defined Northern Settlement Area. The 'Housing Policy' permits infilling capable of accommodating one or two houses, along with a requirement to preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF sets out under criterion 'e' that limited infilling in villages is 'appropriate' development in terms of national Green Belt policy. Limpley Stoke Parish Council has been generally supportive of development within the village (including the applicants previous planning applications on 3 Church Lane).

We also support the principle of affordable housing in the village as there is a distinct shortage. However, in the case of this application (19/10471/FUL) we feel (along with all of the immediate neighbours) that this is a highly intrusive and inappropriate development that will fundamentally change the character of the village. It is no longer infill development and is therefore contrary to Wiltshire planning policy.

We urge Wiltshire to refuse this application."

There are substantial objections from at least 16 other households which can be accessed on the planning portal

Comments by Freshford PC

This is a highly contentious planning application on a plot land which lies right on the cusp of the County and Parish boundaries. It seeks to squeeze every last breath out of a plot that has already seen two new houses erected and the one former original house currently being redeveloped to a significant degree. In seeking to justify the application in planning terms the applicants seek to persuade the planning authority that:

"The assessment of the Northern Settlement 'infill' context of the application site is represented in Figure 10 below. It is entirely legitimate in planning terms to recognise the existence of 3A Church Lane as forming part of the existing context, notwithstanding the fact that this dwelling was itself implemented as an infill plot pursuant to planning permission 16/04907/FUL. The application proposal is considered to be in full compliance with the Housing Policy Rationale, as set out in Paragraph 3.4 of FLSNP."

This interpretation of infill development would allow for precisely the sort of creeping development which both Green Belt Policy and the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan seek to prohibit. Indeed there have been several instances in recent years within the parish of Freshford where the Planning Authority has refused planning permission because the applications were detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt and thus amounted to inappropriate development. With one Neighbourhood Plan operating within the context of two Planning Authorities (B&NES and Wiltshire) there is a clear need for a consistent approach to be taken by the two Authorities.

The National Planning Policy Framework explains that the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

It is necessary to consider whether the proposal would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and if so, whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal.

The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless in accordance with exceptions in the Framework.

One of the exceptions is limited infill in villages. The definition of infill contained in the Neighbourhood Plan is:

“The filling of a gap normally capable of taking no more than two houses. Infill development must be consistent with the policies set out in the plan and preserve the openness of the Green Belt.”

The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear that the planning and development policies aim ‘to preserve the openness and permanence of the land surrounding and within the settlements.’ This is underpinned by the CAONB Strategy and Guidelines - ‘Landscape character here is strong and these sections of the valley are highly sensitive to developments that may compromise these characteristics. Of similar sensitivity are the highly visible landscapes of the upper slopes of the valley.

Conclusion.

It is recommended:

That the PC Object to this application on the fundamental basis that the construction of these two new homes is inappropriate development which by its nature is harmful to the Green Belt. That the definition of infill is not met in this instance and is neither in compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan Housing Policy nor the Villages Design Statement. It does not clearly outweigh the fundamental need to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

That the PC signifies that it is wholly in support of the Objections already lodged by Limpley Stoke Parish Council and by local residents and reiterates the concerns expressed.

Ends.

FPC/ Planning
May 20.