Planning Committee: 18 August 2015 **Item Number:** 14

Application No: W 15 / 0722

Registration Date: 26/05/15
Town/Parish Council: Rowington **Expiry Date:** 21/07/15
Case Officer: Anne Denby
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Downlands, Mill Lane, Lowsonford, Warwick, B95 5HH
Extension and alterations to dwelling FOR Mr Graddon

This item was deferred from the last Planning Committee in order to allow Members to visit the site.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application be **refused** for the reasons stated.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for the extension of and alterations to the existing dwelling and the erection of a detached garage.

The extensions and alterations include the removal of an existing two-storey wing to the east of the dwelling, which is set at a slight angle. This existing extension will be replaced with a two-storey extension to the main dwelling which will extend in a linear manner, to the side and rear with a terrace being created at first floor to the rear elevation.

A further two-storey extension is proposed to the north-west of the existing building. This will be in line with the existing front and rear elevations of the main dwelling and will measure 6m in width and 6.2m in depth.

3no. two-storey height bay windows with gable frontages are proposed to the existing front elevation. These will project between 0.9-2m from the main front elevation with the central bay being predominately glazed to the upper floor to create a feature window. Chimneys will be added to both end elevations of the re-modelled dwelling.

The roof the existing dwelling will be removed and a new hipped roof proposed to the existing and proposed extensions. The ridge height will increase by 1m from the existing to allow for accommodation within the roofspace. To the rear elevation a flat roof dormer, velux rooflight and balcony area are proposed within the roofspace.

A detached garage block is proposed to the north-west of the dwelling. This will be set at right angles to the main dwelling with the bulk of the garage being forward of the main front elevation. The garage block will provide parking for 4no. cars with a workshop above within the roofspace.

The garage block will measure 12.3m in width, 5.16m in depth. It will have a pitched roof with gable feature to the frontage, the eaves height will be 3.3m

with the ridge height at 6.35m. An external staircase is proposed to the south-west elevation to provide access to the workshop proposed within the roofspace.

The application is supported by the following documents:

Planning Statement - This provides details on the context of the site and a policy assessment of the principle of development, impact on Green Belt, impact on neighbours, access, ecology and energy efficiency.

The report concludes that the existing dwelling is of little architectural merit and the proposals have been specifically designed to create a family home and meet the applicant's needs. The proposals do not accord with the floorspace guidelines given in Policies RAP2 and emerging Policy H14 however it is considered that the proposed dwelling would result in a considerable design improvement. Due to its siting and location on a non-through road and as it is not especially publically visible or within a countryside location which is isolated or open landscape, it is considered that there is no material harm arising from the extensions proposed and that the guide of 30% in this instance is inappropriate.

The development is considered to comply with the purpose of the Plan Policies which seek to ensure that the extension would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding open countryside and are of an appropriate design and scale for their location.

The applicant considers that very special circumstances exist in that the dwelling could be substantially altered under permitted development and this creates a 'fallback' position which is a material consideration. The extensions that could be carried out under permitted development would cause greater harm to the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. The degree of harm to the Green Belt is limited as the proposed extensions do not significantly extend the existing dwelling footprint and there is only a small increase in the ridge height. The overall bulk and mass is therefore not significantly different to the existing dwelling. The works which could be carried out under permitted development would cause greater harm to the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and are very special circumstances to override the limited harm to the Green Belt.

The development would not result in any harm to neighbours, ecology, trees or highway safety. It is therefore considered that the development is a sustainable form of development and provides the opportunity to improve standards of design.

Bat Survey - provides details of a bat survey undertaken on the 24th April 2015. The report concludes that there were no suitable external crevices or cavities in either the house or outbuilding and no signs of void dwelling bats were found in the outbuildings and no further surveys or mitigation measures are considered necessary.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The site is a detached dwelling set to the south of Mill Lane. The property is set back from the main highway and is accessed via a shared driveway. The site lies to the north-east of Lowsonford in an area washed over by Green Belt.

The dwelling is set almost centrally within a substantial plot. There is an 'in-out' driveway arrangement to the front of the property with an integral garage to the eastern corner of the building. The dwelling is a modern two-storey building having been constructed following planning approval in 1964/69.

To the north-west the site adjoins the driveway for 'The Nest' with further residential properties, known as Plum Tree Cottages beyond. To the south is 'Finwood Green' and to the west is an area of Paddock land also shown to be within the applicant's ownership.

PLANNING HISTORY

3751 - site for 2no. dwelling in replacement of existing block of cottages - Outline approval Granted, 18th May 1964

3751/1 - Dwellinghouse and garage - Reserved matters Granted, 26th August 1966

3751/2 - Dwellinghouse and garage (amended) - Granted, 8th January 1969

W/93/0410 - Erection of a first floor extension - Granted, 8th June 1993

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework

The Current Local Plan

- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP12 - Energy Efficiency (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP2 - Extensions to Dwellings (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)

The Emerging Local Plan

- BE1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- BE3 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- H14 - Extensions to Dwellings in the Open Countryside (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)
- NE3 - Biodiversity (Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 - Publication Draft April 2014)

Guidance Documents

- Residential Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Guidance - April 2008)
- The 45 Degree Guideline (Supplementary Planning Guidance)
- Sustainable Buildings (Supplementary Planning Document - December 2008)

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Rowington Parish Council: Objection

- The proposals are Contrary to RAP2 (WDC Local Plan 1996-2011) and H14 (WDC Draft Local Plan 2011-2029).
- The proposed extensions are disproportionate to the original dwelling.
- The increased ridge height will significantly extend the visual impact of built development.
- The property is located on an elevated site which is visible from the surrounding area.
- Whilst the need for improvements and upgrading to the existing dwelling is recognised, the current proposals appear excessive, particularly the increase in ridge height.
- Any extensions to dwellings should respect the location of the property and its visual impact on the wider area.

WCC Ecology: No objection, subject to conditions

WCC Archaeology: No objection subject to conditions

Public Responses:

7no. letters in support of the application have been received. The details of these can be summarised as follows:

- The existing property looks tired, outdated and in need of sympathetic refurbishment.
- The house can quite clearly be seen during the winter months from the Fleur De Lys Public house in the village and the proposals will provide a far more aesthetically pleasing property.
- The property would be more contemporary and characterful but also in keeping with the surrounding are and property types in the village.
- The proposals are more sympathetic to the existing structure.
- The proposals are an improvement on the appearance of the existing property.
- These will be a benefit to the local area which will maintain high standards of residential properties.
- The dwelling would be more suitable and versatile for a young family.

The proposals are more suitable than the alternative of implementing their Permitted Development rights.

Assessment

The main issues in the assessment of this proposal are:

- The principle of the development
- Impact on the character of the surrounding area / Green Belt
- Impact on neighbouring properties
- Ecology
- Archaeology

- Energy Efficiency / CO2 reduction

Principle of development

The application site lies in the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states the essential characteristics of Green Belt are openness and permanence. The NPPF states that inappropriate development in the Green Belt is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. (Para 87.) 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states with regards to extensions, the extension or alteration of a building (inter alia) where they do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building will not be considered as inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The construction of new buildings within the Green Belt are however considered to be inappropriate. However, there are exceptions to this, including, extensions to existing buildings and replacement buildings, which are not materially larger than those they replace.

Policy RAP2 of the adopted Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 and Policy H14 of the emerging Warwick District Local Plan 2011 - 2029 seek to prevent "disproportionate" additions to dwellings in rural areas which substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling, in order to protect the landscape and character of rural areas. Within these Policies, as a guideline, it is considered that development which would represent an increase of more than 30% to the gross floor space of the original dwelling (excluding any detached buildings) located within the Green Belt are likely to be considered disproportionate. Furthermore, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that disproportionate extensions are inappropriate development which is harmful by definition.

The application site, which is within the Green Belt, comprises of a detached two-storey dwelling which already benefits from a first floor extension to the original dwelling, however this extension is to be removed as part of the current proposals.

The proposals seek to construct two-storey extensions to both side elevations and the front elevation of the dwelling, and to raise the main ridge line of the roof by 1m to provide for accommodation within the roofspace. The proposed extensions will result in a 40% increase in the floorspace of the original dwelling.

It is considered that these extensions and alterations would significantly alter the original dwelling. The extensions would envelope 3 sides of the original dwelling which, together with the alterations and increase in height to the roof, would leave no reference to the scale or design of the original dwelling. Together with the increase to the footprint, beyond 30% from the original dwelling, the extensions are considered to result in disproportionate additions that would not respect the character or scale of the original dwelling and adversely impact on openness.

The proposed detached garage / workshop is not a limited extension to an existing building, nor is it a replacement building. Therefore, it is a new building within the Green Belt which is inappropriate development and harmful by definition and by reason of its adverse impact on openness.

The applicants have stated that they consider 'Very Special Circumstances' have been demonstrated sufficient to justify the proposed development. As part of the application plans have been submitted to demonstrate the extensions / additions, and a detached garage that could be carried out under permitted development rights. The applicants consider that this is a 'fallback' position and therefore a material planning consideration in the determination of this application.

They consider the development that could be constructed under permitted development would result in the spread of development at the rear of the site and a more significant bulk of development which would have a greater impact on openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt. They therefore consider that this constitutes very special circumstances which are sufficient to override the limited harm to the Green Belt.

It is acknowledged that substantial extensions and a detached garage could be constructed under permitted development. (PD) However the plans submitted by the applicants of potential PD extensions/garage identify that such extensions would be limited. The PD extensions shown would be restricted to single storey, could not project beyond the existing front elevation and could not include proposals to increase the existing eaves/ridge height of the original dwelling. Furthermore the detached garage would also need to be set behind the front elevation of the original dwelling and could only be a single storey structure. Therefore whilst substantial in their footprint, the extensions would retain the character of the existing property and overall would have less visual impact.

In accordance with a recent Inspectors decision there is limited weight that can be attached to the permitted development fallback, and this does not outweigh the totality of harm which is the test that has to be met. Therefore it is not considered that 'very special circumstances' exist in this instance.

The development is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policies.

Impact on the character of the Surrounding Area & Green Belt

Policy DP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that development will only be permitted which positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment through good layout and design.

Policy RAP2 states that extensions to dwellings will be permitted unless they result in disproportionate additions to the original dwelling which:
a) do not respect the character of the original dwelling by retaining its visual dominance
b) do not retain the openness of the rural area by significantly extending the visual impression of built development; or
c) substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling.

The proposed extensions will not retain the visual dominance of the original dwelling. The proposals will envelope the original dwelling and leave little trace as to what form the original dwelling took. The existing dwelling is typical of a 1960s building in its style, size and design. Whilst the applicants desire to 'update' the building is recognised it is considered that this could be done in a manner which still respected the scale and character of the original dwelling. Whilst the design of the existing dwelling is not of any particular architectural merit it is not considered to be so visually intrusive to the surrounding area to warrant the extent of proposals subject of this application or override other policy considerations.

The extensions would result in a large linear dwelling which would be substantial both in footprint and overall height and bulk. As discussed above the proposals are not considered to retain the openness of the rural area as they result in disproportionate additions to the original dwelling and the proposals will significantly extend the visual impression of built development when viewed from the surrounding area, particularly when combined with the substantial detached garage/ workshop also proposed.

The dwelling is set back from Mill Lane and there is tree planting within the surrounding area which provide some screening of the site. However the ground level to the rear of the site does fall quite significantly resulting in the rear elevation of the dwelling being exposed and prominent when viewed from the surrounding area. Whilst existing planting in the area will provide some screening during parts of the year, as identified in one of the letters of support the application site is visible from the Fleur De Lys Public House which is situated in the main village, approximately 400m (straight line distance) to the south-west.

The proposals will substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling and due to their overall scale and bulk are considered to result in a dwelling which does not positively contribute to the rural character of the surrounding area and will adversely impact on openness.

The development is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policies.

Impact on neighbouring properties

Policy DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that development will not be permitted which has an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of nearby uses and residents.

The dwelling sits within a substantial plot and the proposed extensions will not have a significant impact on any adjacent properties. Finwood Green is located to the south of the application site, the proposed extensions will be over 40m from the boundary with this property. To the north-west of the site there are 3no. residential properties; 1 & 2 Plum Tree Cottages and The Nest.

Plum Tree Cottages are separated from the application site by the vehicular access to 'The Nest' however the proposed extensions and detached garage/workshop will be visible from these properties. There will be a distance in excess of 30m between the rear of Plum Tree Cottages and the side extension and a separation distance of 24m to the detached garage/workshop. There are

no windows proposed to the rear elevation of the garage/workshop and therefore the proposals would meet minimum side-rear separation distances. Conditions could be imposed to ensure that no windows or roof alterations are made so as to ensure no undue overlooking occurs.

The proposed extensions will be over 30m from 'The Nest' and considering the relationship between these properties are not considered to result in any detrimental harm to residential amenity. The proposed windows and balcony areas to the rear, particularly the one proposed to the roofspace, will increase opportunity for overlooking. The dwelling at 'The Nest' is also at a lower ground level which would further increase any impact. There are however balconies to the rear of the existing property and the balcony proposed within the roofspace will be inset considerably from the boundary with this property. Therefore overall the proposals are not considered to result in any harm to residential amenity that would warrant refusal of this application.

Ecology

WCC Ecology have commented on this application site and a bat survey has been submitted. The Ecology Officer has stated that the survey appears to have been carried out in accordance with the appropriate methodology and there can be confidence in its findings. The report found no evidence of bats and no suitable areas for bats to roost were identified. The recommendations in the submitted report are accepted and a condition relating to provision of bat boxes and a bat note are recommended to be attached to any approval.

Initially the Ecology Officer raised concerns with regards to Great Crested Newts and requested a Habitat Suitability Index Report. However following further consultation with the applicant the Ecology Officer has confirmed that due to the population of Koi Carp fish in the nearby pond it is unlikely that great crested newts would be present and the report is not necessary.

Therefore, this application in its present form is considered acceptable and complies with Warwick District Council Policy DP3.

Archaeology

Policy DP4 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 seeks to preserve archaeological remains where possible and requires that any remains of archaeological value are properly evaluated prior to the determination of the planning application.

Downlands is located on the site of a timber framed building dating from the post-medieval period (Warwickshire Historic Environment Record MWA9450) which was demolished around 1964 prior to the construction of the current building. There is therefore a potential for the proposed development to disturb archaeological deposits associated with the use of this area from at least the early post-medieval period, if not earlier.

The Archaeological Officer has been consulted on the proposals and whilst raising no objection to the principle of the development considers that some archaeological work should be undertaken. A condition could be imposed to require these works prior to commencement on site.

Energy Efficiency / CO2 reduction

The Planning Statement submitted with the application acknowledges the requirement to include energy efficiencies within the proposed development. The Statement indicates such efficiencies could be provided through a fabric first approach. This is in accordance with Policy DP13 and the associated SPD and can be secured by condition.

Summary/Conclusion

The application is for extensions / additions to the existing dwelling and the construction of a new building within the Green Belt, due to their size, design and scale of the proposals they are considered to constitute inappropriate development which will have an adverse impact on the openness of the surrounding area contrary to national and local policy. Furthermore the proposals will substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling and are therefore contrary to Policy RAP2, DP1 and the NPPF and no very special circumstances have been put forward sufficient to outweigh that harm.

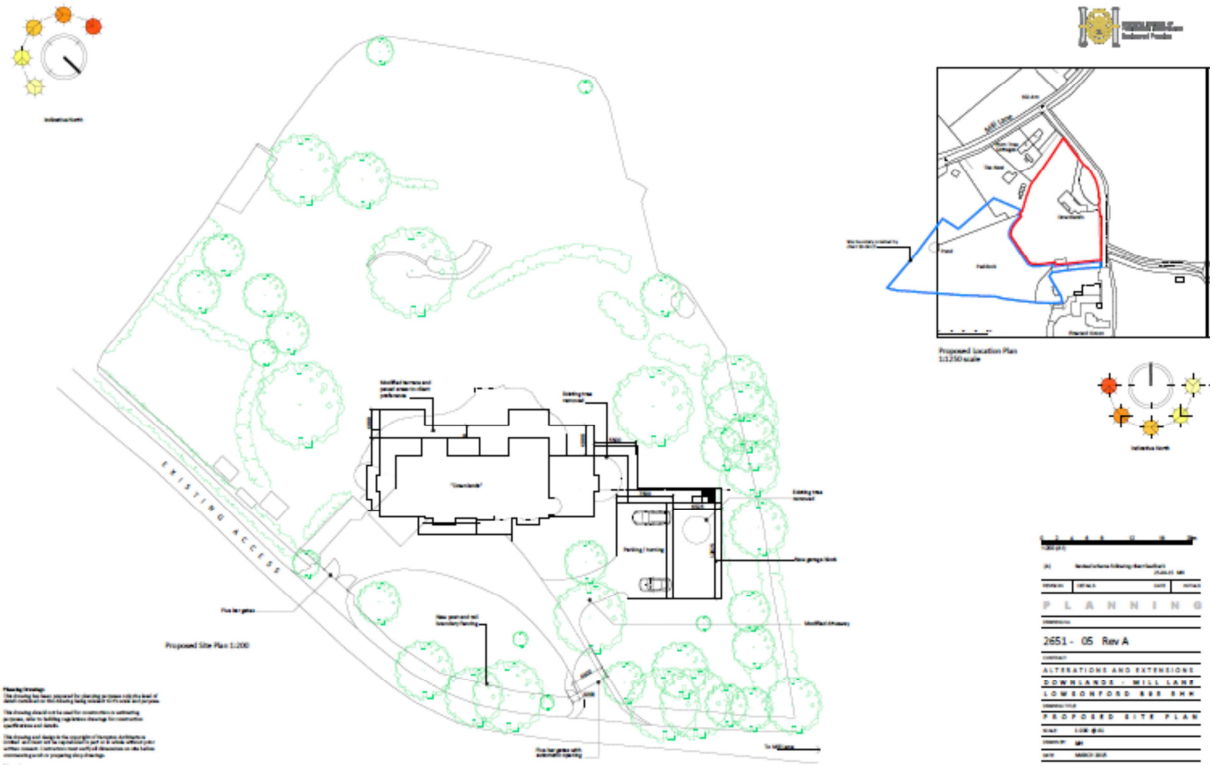
REFUSAL REASONS

1. The property, subject of the application, is within the Green Belt, wherein the Local Planning Authority is concerned to ensure that the rural character of the area will be retained and protected in accordance with national policy guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF states that the limited extension of existing dwellings in Green Belt areas may be appropriate provided that it does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. Policy RAP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 seeks to prevent extensions to dwellings which substantially alter the scale, design and character of the original dwelling and indicates that extensions which are greater than 30% of the floor area of the original dwelling are likely to be considered disproportionate.

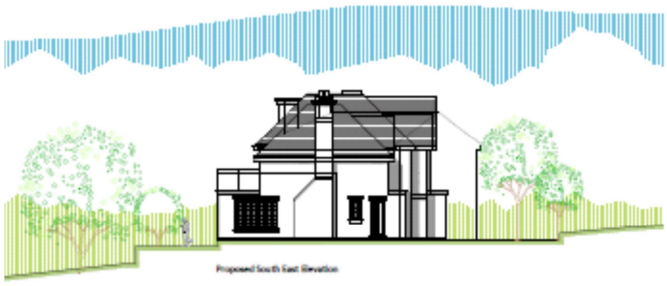
   In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, it is considered that the proposed development would radically alter the scale and character of the original dwelling, thus constituting a disproportionate extension and consolidation of a residential property which would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is harmful by definition and also by reason of a material loss of openness of this part of the Green Belt. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the aforementioned policy and the NPPF.

2. Policy DP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 states that development will only be permitted which positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment through good layout and design. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority due to the scale, design and overall bulk of the proposed extensions they would adversely impact on the rural character of the surrounding area and have a harmful impact on its

character and quality. This would be contrary to the objectives of the aforementioned policies.

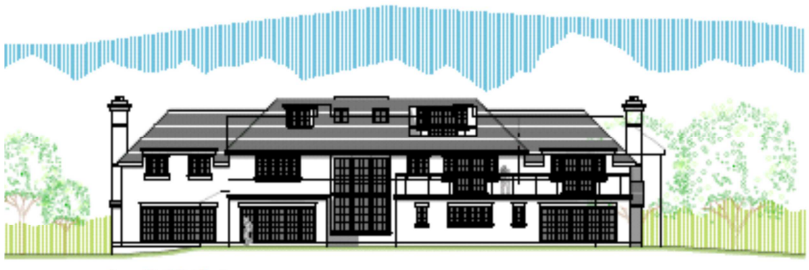


Proposed North East Elevation



Proposed South East Elevation

Proposed North West Elevation



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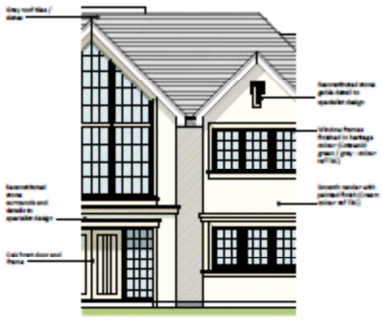

Extract Elevation showing Materials 1:50