

Batcombe Parish Council

Application Number 2014/2127/FUL

28th October 2014

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings (one retained) and replacement dwelling with conversion of traditional barn into cottage.
Location: Valley View Farm Batcombe Shepton Mallet BA4 6AJ
Applicant: Mr Simon Waterfield
Application Type: Full Application

The Council has received an application for permission for the above proposal on which your Council may like to make observations. It is important that the reasons for your observations are clearly stated. Should you wish to make general comments you are encouraged to do so.

Mr James U'Dell CASE OFFICER
For Development Control Manager

~~1. Recommend Approval~~

2. Recommend Refusal of Permission

REASON(S)

The Parish Council considers that the distance of the proposed new dwelling from the existing dwelling (over 400 metres) and the fact that the new dwelling is completely outside the curtilage of the existing building means that the new dwelling cannot be considered as a replacement dwelling but must be considered as new development in the open countryside and so is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside (NPPF paragraph 55).

The Council notes that in all previous applications for replacement dwellings in Batcombe, the replacement dwelling has been required to be located within the curtilage of the existing building.

In 2008 there was an application for a replacement dwelling at Baileys Lane Farm that was just outside the curtilage of the existing dwelling on agricultural land belonging to the farm (Ref. No: 034522/004). This application was rejected by the District Council on the grounds that "The proposed dwelling by reason of its significant bulk and scale and unjustified siting which encroaches onto undeveloped agricultural land, result in a harmful built development detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside and landscape." The following year another application for a similar large replacement building at Baileys Lane Farm (Ref. No: 2009/1000) – but this time within the curtilage – was granted permission.

In 2012 there was an application for a replacement dwelling at Hedgestocks (Ref. No: 2012/2428) that extended slightly over the edge of the curtilage. This application was approved – but only after revised plans were submitted in 2013 that brought the dwelling back within the curtilage of the existing building.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF allows for an isolated new home in certain special circumstances. The only one that would apply to this case would be if the design of the dwelling was of exceptional quality or innovative nature. However, the NPPF states that such a design should: "be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; reflect the highest standards in architecture; significantly enhance its immediate setting; and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area".

The Parish Council considers that the proposed new dwelling meets none of these conditions. In particular, the “neo-classical” design and the prominent location of such a large building in open countryside is out of keeping with the character, design and siting of the vernacular buildings of Batcombe that lie within the valley below this site and the isolated farmsteads in the surrounding hills. It therefore does not “reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials” (NPPF paragraph 58).

The Parish Council also considers that the proposed new dwelling due to its design, size and prominent position would have a harmful and detrimental impact on the character and appearance on the countryside and landscape, contrary to saved Policy Q1 in the Mendip Local Plan. The countryside surrounding Batcombe is of exceptional beauty, a largely unspoilt landscape of great natural and historic value. The intrusion of this large, prominent building with a design out of keeping with the character of the local area would do significant harm to the character of the landscape. There would also be a significant visual impact on the views from the higher ground surrounding the village.

The Parish Council would have no objection to a replacement dwelling that was located within the curtilage of the existing dwelling at Valley View Farm. This site is much less visually prominent than the site of the proposed new development and, given that there are already buildings there, the impact on the landscape would not be as great, and in particular open countryside would not be lost to development.

~~3. Recommend that the decision be left to the Planning Officer following consultation responses.~~

4. General Observations (Please continue overleaf)

The Parish Council received a total of 38 e-mails from 47 local residents objecting to the application. The main objections were:

- i. the location of the proposed replacement dwelling well away from the built environment of the village in open countryside on top of a hill that will be visible on the higher ground surrounding the village
- ii. the change of use from agricultural land to residential and the precedent this would create for future development in the open countryside, resulting in a curtailment of the English countryside
- iii. the size of the building which will make it stand out prominently
- iv. the design of the house which was felt to be of questionable merit, out of keeping with the vernacular buildings of Batcombe, and more suited to a suburban setting than the hills of the Mendips
- v. the visual impact of a building, out of keeping with the local farms and farmland, on the views from the surrounding higher ground, several footpaths and the road into the village from Bruton
- vi. the impact on an unspoilt landscape of exceptional historical and natural value and beauty and on the Batcombe Conservation Area
- vii. the potential impact on local wildlife
- viii. the misleading nature of the description as a replacement dwelling when the dwelling does not occupy the same site as the buildings it is replacing
- ix. the fact that a replacement building on the site of the current building would have much less impact on the landscape
- x. the loss of potential business premises in the buildings being demolished.

The Parish Council meeting was attended by 40 local residents. After the summary of the objections received was read out, nine residents spoke to object to the application and one spoke in favour of it.