Whittonditch House

Ramsbury

Marlborough

Wiltshire SN8 2PZ

17th August 2023

Objection against planning application no. PL/2023/05902 for new farmhouse at Marridge Hill, in AONB.

To Wiltshire County council planning office:

I would like to object to the above application for a new house for the following reasons:

1 The premise of the need for a permanent dwelling for Mr Brown to live in on site to tend to his sheep. The applicant applied for a mobile home in 2019 as he required on site living quarters for a shepherd. However during the years since its' erection, he has been living in Aldbourne at his old address, not on site. This demonstrates that he does not need to live at the same place as he farms. This is a luxury which would be nice but is clearly not necessity.

2 The secondary reason given for needing to live on site is for protection of his equipment and sheep against theft. Since the hardcore farm track was approved and built and the new barns with milking equipment installed, the main gate to the lane on Marridge hill is never shut, but is permanently left open, and unlocked, which leads us to think that there is no threat or precedent for theft of the milking equipment or other equipment in the barns. If there was there would be a much more secure entrance to the farm from the road. This is therefore not a plausible reason for needing a dwelling in the field.

3 Mr Brown kindly knocked our door before submitting the application. During this conversation he told us that his brother is due to inherit the family farm in Aldbourne and that as a consequence he needs somewhere to live for himself and his partner. Although unfortunate for him, this is not grounds for building a new house on a piece of AONB land where there is not an existing dwelling to replace - and he has not demonstrated any requirement to live on site as demonstrated in point no. 1.

4 Mr Brown's planning statement describes a semi autonomous Farm office area, I think with a view to reducing the overall square footage of what might be considered the house.

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Looking at the drawing and elevation this seems rather disingenuous as the two are very much one and the same house.

5 The size of the house is totally out of scale with the stated on-site need for accommodation for a shepherd (the original reason for the planning application) or agricultural workers dwelling (current application). The house is an enormous 30+ metres long, and over 10m in depth, is 3440.58 square feet in area and contains 2 sitting rooms, 2 offices, 4 toilets, a kitchen/dining area to seat 10 people, a secondary glazed dining room and a master bedroom suite. (see footnote). The kitchen alone is 665.21 square feet. The house has 25 windows.

6 The precedent that this application, if successful, will set as a stand alone enormous house given permission to be built in a very prominent and beautiful location on AONB land. This might encourage other people to try and game the system and think of spurious reasons to apply for houses on green field sites and in this stunning patch of Wiltshire it really matters that the rural nature of the landscape is maintained.

7 The development contradicts the NPPF (paragraph 174), which states that planning decisions should

- Protect and enhance valued landscapes
- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity

8 In paragraph 175 of the NPPF it states that " Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. " The addition of a large new house on a greenfield site does not accord with this.

9 The development will also go against Wiltshire Core strategy CP51 which states "development must not have a harmful affect on landscape character", " development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the landscape character", this includes protection of views, protection against light pollution, visually sensitive sky lines, tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise and motion". This totally new building in a very visible location on the ridge line would go against all these elements of CP51 strategy.

10 As the building will negatively affect the landscape as per point no. 10 above, it also therefore doesn't support Wiltshire core strategies no. CP1 (settlement) and CP2 (delivery)

11 Even if the council felt that the applicant had demonstrated a need to live in a house on the site of a single field of sheep, in order to comply with Wiltshire policy NR7, the council should refuse this application due to its adverse impact on the landscape, in particular in relation to the quality of the landscape and the views and visual amenity

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12 The new house will contravene the AONB 'dark skies' policy. This new house has 25 windows which will have an enormous impact on the night sky in this isolated rural location. As the house is complexly visible from the south and south east at knight this will appear like a passenger ferry on the horizon as the house is over 30m long.

13 Mr Brown has not included a biodiversity report in his application and has also not demonstrated a biodiversity net gain (a legal requirement for new developments) The requirement is enforced by the 2021 Environment Act, which introduced an automatic new condition to every planning permission granted: a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 10%. This means that, before any development begins, applicants need to measure the existing and proposed biodiversity values of their sites.

14 The applicant has not shown the orientation or position of his house on the block plan (only the outline of the curtilage) this is only to be found buried deep within the 86 page LVIA so many looking at the application will not be able to find this on such a lengthy document.

15 The position of the house once found on the above document is shown as significantly removed from the host site of the Mobile home. This means the new house would be less screened by the tree line and therefore more visible.

16 LIVA:

The LVIA commissioned by Mr Brown itself identifies the fact that the house has many far reaching views, which also means that it will be very visible from afar. The following quotations are taken from the LVIA

- para 3:10: "the site has far reaching views"
- para 3:7: "the site is open to the south and east and elevated. This allows for distant views of up to approximately 2.5km to the south" and "open and localized views are also possible from the valley floor just north of Whittonditch at approximately 800m south, due to the open nature of parts of the site boundary"
- Para 3:22: "due to the elevated and open nature of the eastern site boundary views toward the site extend to around 1.2km to the south east"
- Para 3:23: "the South eastern boundary is open to the arable field and therefore the site is visible with the more open valley landscape immediately south"

All these observations are correct and prove that the siting of the house is unsuitable in an elevated, open chalk downland position (within AONB land)

The LIVA quotes sections of the NPPF such as "Great weight should be given to preserving areas of outstanding natural beauty" and " the scale and extent of developments in these areas should be limited", it also refers to section 15 of the NPPF where it states that "the relevant key objectives to protect and enhance valued landscpes, and recognise the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside". Importantly the LIVA concurs that **" As the Site is located in an elevated and partly open rural chalk downland landscape, there**

is the potential that the proposals could impact the local landscape character in this part of the AONB"

The LVIA also states that "the Site is in a locally prominent rural and elevated location when viewed from the south" and that ". The potential **degree of the effect on the wider character of the AONB as a result of the development is therefore, assessed as potentially moderate in terms of LVIA assessment methodology"**

The LVIA also quotes from the Wiltshire Character Landscape assessment "This is a landscape of strong character. The steep scarps rise up to form an extensive plateau of rolling chalk downland. The distinctive landform, simple arable land cover, absence of settlement and large skies create a landscape with a sense of remoteness and exposure", together with one of the Wiltshire management objectives which is to **Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development**" The building of this new large scale dwelling would go against this objective in many ways.

The LVIA also includes references to the council's own Kennet Valley Landscape Assessment and the Marlborough Downs area within this. It highlights relevant guidelines from this which should be noted here "discourage intrusion of further signage, ***structures,*** tracks or fencing in areas of open chalk upland landscape, and site essential features as discreetly as possible to minimise visual intrusion."

The Kennet District council's own Landscape conservation strategy is highlighted in the LVIA, this should be employed where the conservation of the landscape is an issue. In this case the landscape should be conserved as it has high scenic quality with a strong sense of place and is generally unspoilt (apart from the temporary mobile home).

The LVIA analyses the local landscape and topography as well as existing dwellings etc, and it says that to the south "the open areas are assessed as having a higher sensitiviry to change" and that "sensitivity to change of the local landscape within approximately 1km of the site is assessed as ranging **from high to medium**" This LVIA highights the effect this new dwelling will have on this prominent piece of AONB land.

In section 7 the LVIA analysed various public viewpoints which are shown on a map (page 58) and in photograph form. I have included an amended map and photograph with view from our property to demonstrate how visible the site is from our property to the south east.

17 According to the DEFRA website, this area lies in a SSSI risk impact zone (site of special scientific interest) which in addition to all of the above points, add to its' unsuitability as a location for domestic development

18 The exact location of the house (as only seen on page 59 of the LIVA, not on any other document) reveals that the house is orientated directly to the south, which as stated above in the LIVA is the most open aspect of the site with uninterrupted views to the south. The location and orientation of the house have been planned to take full advantage of the sun and southern aspect, the openness of the very extensive view afforded by this position and orientation and do not accord with any attempt to mitigate the visibility of the house by positioning it closer to the existing barns on in the position of the current mobile home. The necessity for an agricultural worker to have a panoramic view of the

kennet valley is clearly not valid. The house could have been orientated to the west or east, which would mean seeing it end-on from the southern aspect of the bottom of the kennet valley (so only 10 metres wide), instead of face-on (at over 30m wide). This shows that amenity value has been given much greater weighting in the decision making than landscape mitigation and that the house is being considered far from a practical agricultural workers dwelling.

19 There is a discrepancy on the consultation date on the yellow planning notice (23/08/23) and the application on the Wiltshire council website (17/08/23). This confusion may have led to some residents not being able to make their views known or to think that the consultation date is over, when it is in fact still current.

20 There is also a rather irregular discrepancy in the postcode on the original application for the mobile home (SN8 2QA application 1909899/Full), and the current application for the farmhouse (SN8 2FW application 05902). This is not explained anywhere. But the effect of this is that the two applications cannot be linked by location which is very misleading, as people may not realise that effectively one application has led to another. This is what I predicted in 2019 and which was one of the reasons for my objection to the first application (please see original application objection letter Sophie Knight which is viewable on the wilts website).

21 The expiration for the planning permission for the mobile home expired (in December 2022), but as you will see from the attached photograph the mobile home has not been removed, so is therefore in breach of planning.

This is a long document but there is much that needs highlighting in relation to this application. In conclusion this house should not receive permission to be built as it is over scaled, orientated towards far reaching views and therefore visible, is not required for on site accommodation, and is on protected AONB land.

With many thanks in advance for your time and consideration of this objection,

Yours sincerely

Sophie Knight

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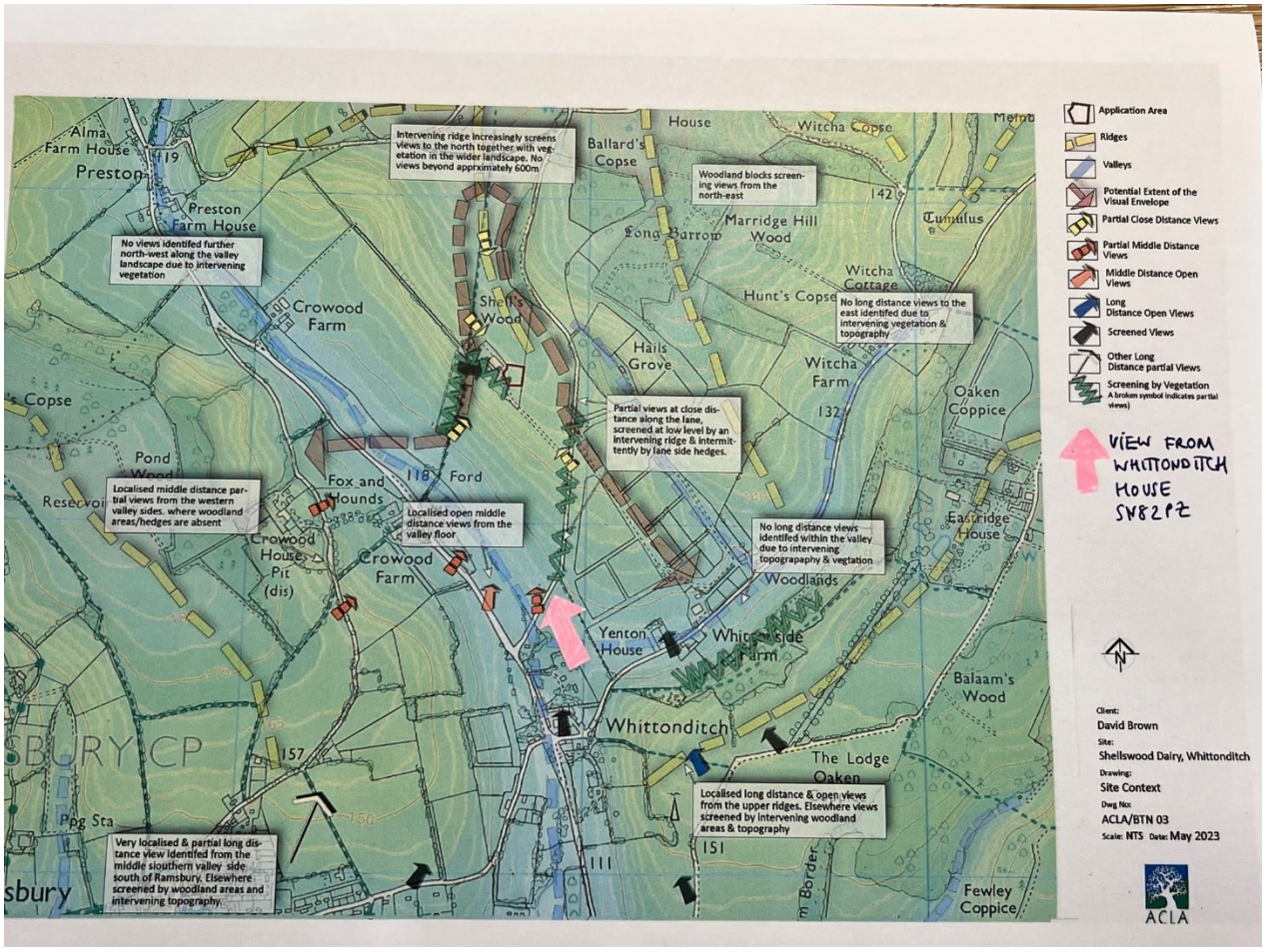

Plan showing visual receptors from application, with view from our property added, and the photograph of the view below – demonstrating the very visible siting of the farmhouse proposed location



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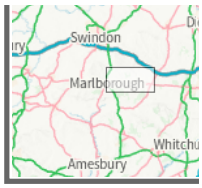

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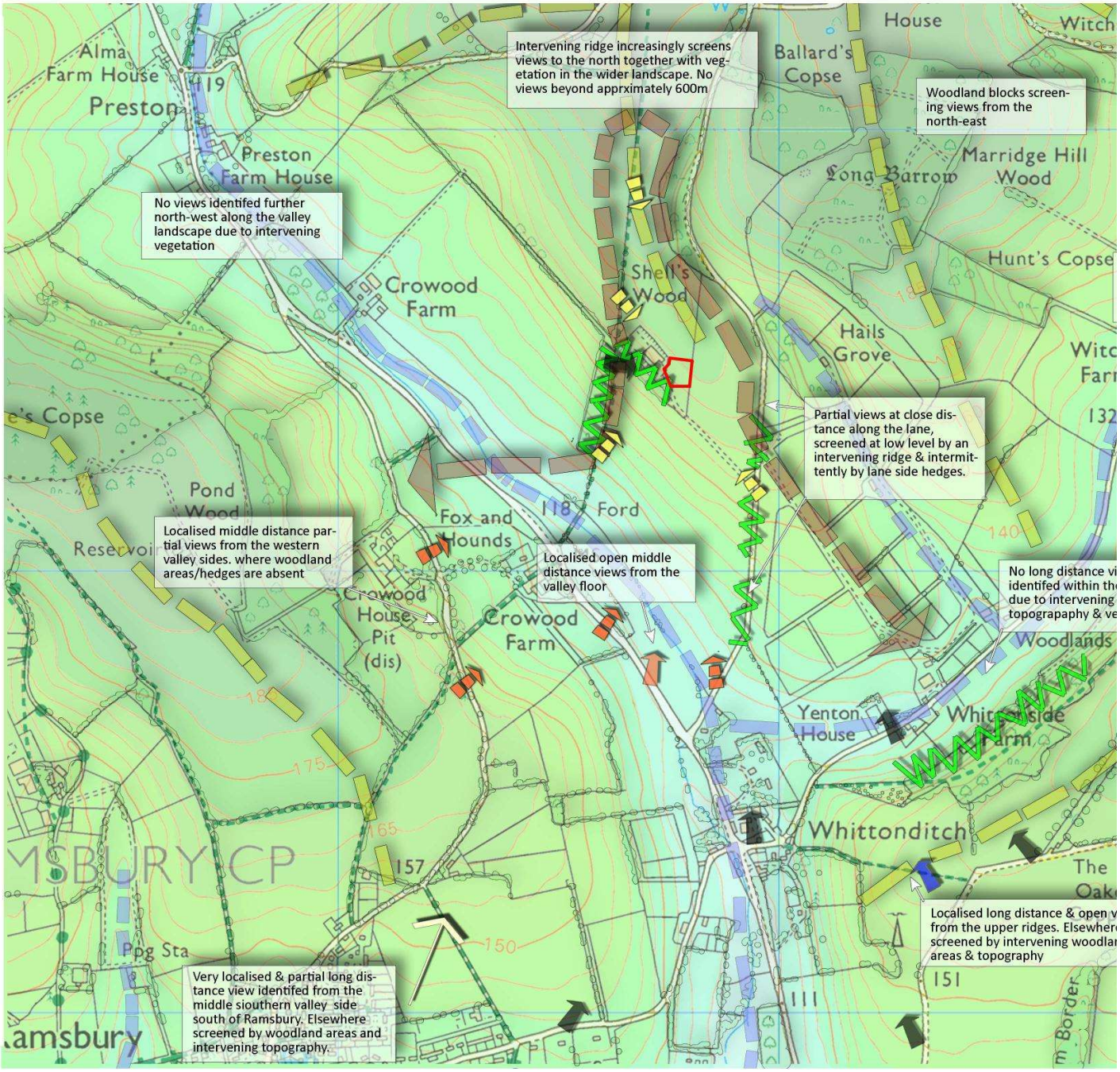
Coords: (427833,171748) Grid Ref:SU27837174



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