Steven Abbott Associates LLP
Chartered Town Planners

PLANNING STATEMENT

Addington Investments

Proposed Greenhouse

Soley House, Crooked Soley, Chilton Foliat

October 2023

REPORT DETAILS

Contact: **Steven H Abbott** BSc (Hons) MRTPI
Partner

Tel: 01257 251177
E-mail:stevena@abbott-associates.co.uk

Office address: **Steven Abbott Associates LLP**
Penstraze Business Park
Truro TR4 8PN

Ref: 3885

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. We act for Adrian Gott who owns Soley House and land in Crooked Soley amounting to approximately 40 hectares.

1.2. This application relates to an outbuilding in the grounds of Soley House.

1.3. The proposed greenhouse is for the enjoyment of Soley House to enhance its horticultural capabilities and grow more produce 'at home.' It replaces a previous greenhouse.

1.4. This application comprises the following: documents and plans:

- HPA Architects
    - Plans and drawings:
        - 2076 104B: Location Plan
        - 2076 106B: Site/Block Plan
    - Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement by us
- Ecological Assessment by Envirotech
- Arboriculture Impact Assessment by Yew Tree

2. THE SITE, SURRONDINGS AND DESIGN ASPECTS

2.1. The greenhouse would be located on the north side of Soley House as shown on HPA Architects plan number 2076 106B.

2.2. The grounds to Soley House correspond with boundaries acknowledged by the Local Planning Authority (Wiltshire Council) in the past.[1]

2.3. The proposed greenhouse sits within them where the existing, smaller greenhouse stands.

2.4. The building is of a bespoke traditional design which respects the context. HPA have provided a Design and Access Statement which forms part of this application.

2.5. Access to the site is by way of two long established points. A private drive which is on the west of the site and a track which runs north south from opposite the south end of Boomerang Stables..

[1] HPA plan 2076-080 Rev A of June 2019 which is one of the approved plans under planning permission PL/2021/07750 granted in February, 2022.

3. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS – THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN THE LOCAL PLAN

The Wilshire Core Strategy – Adopted January 2015

3.1. Crooked Soley is located in Marlborough Community Area[2]. Paragraph 1.18 notes that the community areas are central to the Council's commitment to empowering local people to have a greater role in what happens in their local communities. The Applicant's property is a very significant part of the local community in physical terms. The grounds at Soley House are now a long-established part of the local scene. Since purchasing the property in March 2019, the Applicant has made a significant investment into it to enhance its environmental qualities.

3.2. Paragraph 5.77 in the WCS states that the Plan aims to deliver, within the overall objective of conserving a designated landscape (the North Wessex Downs AONB). The proposed greenhouse is relatively modest in size and visual appearance within the context of Soley House (a very large country house) and its grounds.

3.3. The design and siting of the greenhouse takes account of the 7th bullet point under 5.78 i.e., it has no adverse impact on the AONB. As an adjunct to Soley House, it enhances its locally distinctive character.

3.4. The subject proposals are minor and concern a domestic use. However, the broader Strategic objectives in the Plan ae relevant contextual factors given the AONB location.

3.5. Under 6.2 one of the goals is about delivering resilient rural communities as part of the strategic objectives of delivering a thriving economy. Soley House is a significant stakeholder in Crooked Soley being a large country house set in grounds with agricultural/equestrian land beyond.

[2] Figure 1.2 in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Adopted 2015

3.6. The Applicant employs 4 people full time and the gardener would be able to work more efficiently with the benefit of the proposed greenhouse.

3.7. Core Policy 41 'Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy' is of some relevance even for an outbuilding. The design is sustainable.

3.8. Regarding Core Policy 50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' these relatively minor proposals are supported by an ecological assessment. As such, the proposals are in accordance with the policy.

3.9. The relatively minor scale and purpose of the proposed building means that a BNG Plan is not required.

3.10. The site is in the North Wessex Downs AONB, a nationally important designated and sensitive landscape. Paragraph 6.82 in the WCS confirms that great weight is given by the Council to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB in accordance with paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF. We refer to both the NPPF and AONB Management Plan below. More particularly, in the spirit of paragraph 6.83 the Management Plan has been considered since the outset.

3.11. The bespoke, vernacular design of the proposed greenhouse (like the gate lodge approved by the Council in 2021) fully takes the AONB into account.

3.12. So, the proposals are in accordance with Core Policy 51 'Landscape' as follows:

I. The siting of the greenhouse takes account of the woodland within the site;

II. The design respects the locally distinctive character of Crooked Soley and the setting;

III. It would be tucked into the landscape. The Applicant wishes to enhance the landscape. The relatively minor scale and purpose of the proposed building means that a BNG Plan is not required.

IV. No landscape features of cultural, historic or heritage value are affected;

V. The greenhouse would not cause any light pollution. Nor would it generate noise and motion in a tranquil place;

VI. The greenhouse relates to a living, working and relaxation place i.e., Soley House and its grounds;

VII. The design is of a high quality, bespoke, vernacular style because of the special qualities of the AONB, where great weight is being afforded to conserving and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty.

3.13. With regard to the last paragraph under Core Policy 51, concerning the AONB MP, we refer to that later.

3.14. In accordance with national policies described below (which have more weight than when the WCS was adopted) Core Policy 57 requires a high quality of design and place shaping. Both aspects are relevant to the proposals given that the Applicant's functional requirements manifest themselves in an appropriately designed outbuilding to Soley House. This would reinforce its identity and its sense of place.

3.15. Regarding the criteria beneath the policy, we comment as follows:

1) The design of the building demonstrably responds to the value of the natural environment, relating positively to its landscape setting. The Applicant has chosen to site it where the existing greenhouse stands. Important views outside the site are unaffected.

2) As the tree survey demonstrates the existing important trees and other natural features are retained.

3) The design of the greenhouse responds positively to the existing landscape features in terms of built form, height, mass, scale, elevational design and materials to effectively integrate the greenhouse into its setting.

4) No historic landscape is affected.

5) As the DAS explains sustainable construction is involved.

6) The greenhouse is compatible with Soley House, its existing outbuildings and use. There are no neighbours close enough to have their amenities affected by the building.

7) High-quality building materials and finishes are proposed and bearing in mind the relatively small scale of the buildings within the grounds to Soley House.

8) Whilst the application is not for a major development, it is accompanied by a DAS. This is because the Applicant wishes to demonstrate that care he has taken with his architect to erect a building which conserves and enhances the beauty of the AONB in which he lives.

3.16. Regarding Core Policy 67 there is a very low risk of flooding as the site is in Flood Zone 1. In any event, the greenhouse employs basic sustainable drainage measures and the minor run off will have no impact on flooding anyway.

3.17. From the above we can conclude that the proposals are in accordance with the adopted Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

3.18. There is currently no Neighbourhood Plan for Chilton Foliat.

Kennet Local Plan (2004) (Saved Policies 2011).

3.19. Policy NE7 was 'Protection of the Landscape.' The policy states that the former Council would seek to protect and enhance the character and quality of the environment outside the limits of development. Soley House is outside those limits. The proposals comply with the criteria in the policy as follows:

a) There is no adverse impact on the landscape character, quality and distinctive features. The proposed greenhouse is a bespoke design crafted to take account of the AONB context within the Soley House setting;

b) The position of the buildings and their design means that they have no adverse impact on views or visual amenity.

3.20. A criteria-based policy remains live – Policy PD1 'Development and Design.' The proposal complies with the policy as follows:

A) The building is designed to a high standard to ensure that the character, appearance and environmental quality of the area is maintained and enhanced;

B.1) Sustainable design principles have been followed;

B.2) The scale and height of the greenhouse is consistent with their function and relationship with Soley House;

B.3) The greenhouse would sit comfortably with the landscape context;

B.4) The servicing and access arrangements to Soley House would be unchanged;

B.6) The greenhouse does not require any landscape intervention as it is well within the grounds and screened by woods to the north;

B.8) The elevational treatment is in the vernacular and is appropriate for the context;

B.9) The building materials, colour and detailing were chosen to blend with the aesthetic qualities and character of the context;

B.10) There is no impact on residential amenity given the distance from other dwellings;

3.21. We conclude that the proposed greenhouse is in accordance with the saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan (2004).

The Emerging Local Plan – Wiltshire Local Plan Review – Pre-submission Draft Plan.

3.22. The Council resolved to publish the above document in July 2023.[3]

3.23. This is a relatively minor proposal. The Draft Wiltshire Local Plan Review (WLPR) 2023 only has limited weight as a material consideration. Furthermore, it is a Strategic Plan for the whole of Wiltshire. If any policies are introduced specific to outbuildings these would be dealt with at the parish level in a neighbourhood plan. There is no neighbourhood plan for the parish at the present time. However, there are some subject specific policies in the WLPR which are worthy of note as follows.

3.24. Draft Policy 85 concerns sustainable construction and low carbon energy. It relates to new residential developments and non-residential buildings. As such, the policy is not about domestic greenhouses.

3.25. Policy 88 concerns biodiversity and geodiversity. The proposal is supported by a proportionate habitat survey and mitigation recommendations. As such, although only minor, they comply with Policy 88.

3.26. There are no site or area specific ecological designations affecting the site.

3.27. Draft Policy 91 is about conserving and enhancing Wiltshire's landscapes. Regarding the criteria under it we can comment as follows (where relevant):

1) The bespoke design of the greenhouse takes account of the local character of the landscape within the broader AONB. It will contribute towards the area's distinctiveness.

2) The Applicant is a steward of his local landscape as a major stakeholder in it. The design of the greenhouse and its siting take cognisance of those local features maintained and managed by him.

3) The greenhouse would sit well in the loose pattern of domestic and equestrian buildings which characterises Crooked Soley.

[3] Wiltshire Council meeting 18th July 2023

4) The design of the greenhouse is of a high quality, wholly appropriate to the landscape context.

5) The building would be discrete and not have an adverse impact on the relative calm of Crooked Soley or impact on dark skies. As noted above, lighting would be focussed and functional. There are no plans to floodlight it.

6) The minor scale of the greenhouse, tucked away as it reduces the visual impact to the Grounds alone.

3.28. The same draft policy (91) refers to Wiltshire's Designated Landscapes. In this case that means the North Wessex Downs AONB as the site (and the whole settlement of Crooked Soley) is located within the AONB.

3.29. The Applicant chose to live in the AONB because of its landscape qualities and is a steward over the 40 hectares he owns and manages. He appreciates that, as Draft Policy 91 states, that great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. The importance of the context was considered by the architects (HPA of Lancaster) who have been involved in countless proposals in the Lake District National Park, Silverdale AONB, The Applicant has similarly been involved in such high-quality landscape and has resided in an AONB previously.

3.30. The design of the proposed building is subtle and the detailing reflects the context – the grounds of a large country house in the North Wessex Downs; and more particularly the local characteristics of that part of the AONB. the greenhouse would sit 'naturally' in its context. It would contribute towards conserving and enhancing the AONB. 'Conserving' because it would sustain the use of Soley House as a country house and grounds forming part of the character of Crooked Soley. 'Enhancing' as it (whilst not prominent in the landscape) would enhance its immediate environs as it would both be attractive and in keeping with the established land use pattern.

3.31. Draft Policy 91 also refers to the AONB Management Plan. This is covered below.

3.32. Finally on draft policy 91, the development (although minor) would conserve and enhance the landscape character and special qualities of the AONB.

3.33. Draft policy 92 refers to dark skies. The AONB is specifically referred to in the policy as being sensitive. It is not proposed to install external lighting to the building other than for practical purposes. The Applicant has no objection with a condition requiring details of any external lighting prior to a commencement of the use.

3.34. Draft policy 95 refers to flood risk. The location is in Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The proposed greenhouse is only for domestic use. Surface water can be dealt with in situ in a sustainable manner. Again, a condition can be imposed to secure details, if considered necessary.

3.35. As stated above, this relatively small building has been designed to a high quality. Draft Policy 98 is a material consideration as it is entitled 'Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping.' As described above, the design of the subject buildings complies with the policy as follows:-

i. It would enhance local distinctiveness as it is in keeping with the local vernacular. In addition, the more eclectic character of Soley House, and the extant planning permissions for an annex and gate lodge. In choosing locations for the building, the landscape setting (as well as practical considerations) informed the creative process. We have previously pointed out that the building would sit comfortably within the settlement pattern which comprises Crooked Soley. This consists of scattered buildings and small groups and significant areas of paddock land used for equestrian use. Topography was carefully considered such that the building would sit comfortably in the landscape. Important views locally are unaffected. This is because the greenhouse would be hidden by existing woodland.

ii. The woodland and hedges would not be affected.

iii. The elevational composition, detailing and materials are sensitive to the landscape. It is important to note that the proposed greenhouse replaces the existing one.

v. Energy conservation has been considered too and this is also referred to in the Design and Access Statement (DAS).

xii. It is proposed to employ high standards of materials and finishes.

3.36. Our conclusion of the Draft Local Plan is that none of its broad policies preclude against the proposed building. However, the detailed design conforms with the Draft Plan regarding sensitivity to the context and the need for high quality in any event.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.37. Like the development plan, the NPPF is a material consideration which has to be considered in decision-making. It comprises national policies at a high level and thus has nothing in it specifically concerning outbuildings.

3.38. However, there are subject specific policies concerning issues which are material. Whilst the development plan and MP (see below) cover them we set out a brief commentary on them here – because the site is in an AONB.

3.39. Section 15 in the NPPF must be the start point. It covers the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

3.40. The greenhouse is consistent with paragraph 177 as it would contribute to the enhancement of the natural and local environment. In terms of the criteria under the policy we can state the following:-

(a) It forms part of Soley House, an established country house, grounds and agricultural/equestrian land which comprise the 40ha holding. It is required for its horticultural maintenance and upkeep.

(b) The siting, design and use of the proposed relatively small building respects the intrinsic character and beauty of the local countryside. The proper management and maintenance of the estate involves

agricultural/equestrian land, trees and woodlands – its natural capital. Those facets require proper functional buildings for storage, shelter and in this case, horticulture.

(d) The relatively minor scale and purpose of the proposed building means that a BNG Plan is not required.

3.41. Paragraph 179 is especially important as a material consideration. It states, of course, that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of AONBs. With National Parks they are afforded the highest level of protection. The small scale of the proposed greenhouse accords with the policy. As is the careful siting and design to take account of the setting. The buildings would have a minimal impact and certainly not an adverse one.

3.42. Regarding paragraph 183 (on biodiversity) we can comment on the criteria as follows:-

(a) There is no significant impact on biodiversity.

(c) No ancient woodland affected or veteran trees are affected.

3.43. Design is a prominent feature of the NPPF. Paragraph 84a) is relevant in that it promotes well-designed, beautiful new buildings. The context of that paragraph is supporting a prosperous local economy. Whilst the proposed building is not proposed for commercial (Class E) uses, it performs an economic function within the day-to-day operation of the grounds and land at Soley House. There are economic benefits to the local rural economy with that. This includes employment in horticulture and gardening,

3.44. A whole section in the NPPF (Section 12) is devoted to achieving well-designed places. The proposed revisions to the NPPF add the term 'beautiful' which is pertinent to this AONB context.

3.45. The proposal complies with paragraph 128 in that section. This is because the building would involve the creation of a high quality, beautiful and sustainable building. Good design, such as that proposed (even at this local level) is a key

aspect of sustainable development. The Council and AONB Unit have design expectations (as manifested in the development plan, MP and the Design Guide). Those expectations are met.

3.46. In terms of paragraph 130 we can comment on the criteria as follows:-

a) The proposed building would function well and add to the overall quality of the area – specifically by providing necessary facilities for horticulture in the grounds.

b) It would be visually attractive.

c) It reflects the local vernacular seen in Crooked Soley and Chilton Foliat and takes cognisance of the setting at Soley House in and adjacent to the woods there.

d) It would reinforce the sense of place in the grounds.

3.47. Cognisance has been paid to paragraph 131 in the NPPF. Consequently, there is no impact on the woodlands at Soley House. The proposals are consistent with paragraph 131 as a consequence.

3.48. The application is consistent with paragraph 132. Design quality has been considered throughout the evolution of the design of the building. This is manifested by design from a reputable architectural practice which has relevant experience.

3.49. The proposal is worthy of 'significant weight' as described in paragraph 134 of the NPPF as per the criteria as follows:

a) The development reflects local character and government guidance on design as well as the Draft Wiltshire Design Guide as far as it applies to a development of this size;

b) The design is sustainable It fits in well with the overall domestic/equestrian form and layout of their surroundings.

3.50. The proposed building is relatively small scale and in a low-risk flood zone. It does not raise issues for climate change issues.

3.51. Paragraph 154 is relevant in that the site is not vulnerable;.

3.52. It should be noted that the greenhouse replaces the existing one in the same place.

3.53. With regard to paragraph 167, the site is not located in a location where the risk of flooding could be increased. It is in a Flood Zone 1 area. This is an area which has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. The site is less than one hectare so a flood risk assessment is unnecessary.

3.54. Similarly, the Extent of Flooding map on the Environment Agency's website illustrates that it is unaffected by surface water flooding – being in the 'very low' category.[4] The nearest water course is located well to the east of the site and runs between Queens Coppice and Princess Copse.

3.55. Section 15 in the NPPF is concerned with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The site is located close to woodland in a rural area so even though the proposed buildings are relatively small, it is a material consideration.

3.56. The proposals conform with paragraph 174 as follows:-

a) The site is in a 'valued landscape' i.e., the North Wessex Downs AONB. The proposals do not have a negative impact on the AONB but are in keeping with it. It would conserve and enhance it;

b) The sensitive siting of the proposed building recognises the intrinsic character and outstanding natural beauty of the local countryside including woodland;

c) The relatively minor scale and purpose of the proposed building means that a BNG Plan is not required;

[4] Environment Agency website, August 2023

d) There would be no adverse impact on soil, air, water, noise or land instability.

3.57. As mentioned earlier in paragraph 176 in the NPPF is fundamentally important. It requires decision makers to place great weight on the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. This is because it enjoys the highest status of protection in relation to these subjects. However, the conservation and enhancement of wildlife is also seen as important in such areas. The application is supported by an ecological assessment produced by Envirotech. It is small scale and so the presumption against major development does not engage. It would be only limited development in accordance with the policy.

3.58. Furthermore, the policy is met because the building has been sensitively located and designed.

3.59. Paragraph 180 in the NPPF concerns habitats and biodiversity. We can comment on how the principles would be addressed, as follows:

a) No significant harm (or any) arises to biodiversity;

b) An SSSI is not involved directly or indirectly;

c) No irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland) occur;

d) The relatively minor scale and purpose of the proposed building means that a BNG Plan is not required.

3.60. The proposed building is necessary for functional/practical reasons. It is incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse – Soley House.

North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2019 – 2024 (MP)

3.61. The MP does not carry the same weight for decision-making as the adopted Local Plan or the NPPF. However, the MP is an important material consideration as the site is in the AONB.

3.62. This relatively minor proposal involves local impacts only. However, the careful siting, design and use means that it complies with Policy DE01. This is because it conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the AONB in the context of Soley House and the rest of Crooked Soley beyond.

3.63. Policy DE02 reinforces the need for high quality design as set out in the development plan and the NPPF. More specifically, it prefers traditional building traditional building styles. The proposed, bespoke, building employs traditional building styles and materials. Accordingly, it will regress into the landscape rather than have a strident visual impact.

3.64. Regarding Policy DE07, the proposed greenhouse does not involve any noise-generating activities – the role of the building is domestic, related to Soley House and nothing else.

3.65. Regarding light pollution, no floodlights or bright lights are planned. A condition can be imposed requiring full details of any external lighting before the building is first used. As a consequence, the proposal will comply with Policy DE08.

3.66. Our conclusion on the MP is that the proposal is in accordance with its important policies.

The proposed building would be readily accommodated at Soley House and improve the efficiency of day-to-day horticulture.

The Draft Wiltshire Design Guide (2023)

3.67. This document does not enjoy the same weight as the adopted development plan (currently the Wiltshire Core Strategy) or the NPPF. It will sit alongside the WLPR when adopted. However, it is a material consideration for decision-makers. The document should be read in tandem with the Draft Local Plan and so only has limited weight for decision making at this time. It has been considered in the evolution of the proposals.

In the document, the site is located within what is defined as the Central of three Character areas.[5]

3.68. One of the 'Expectations' in the Draft Design Guide is Quality Detailing. The expectations are met by the bespoke design of the proposed building.

3.69. Our conclusion on the Draft Design Guide is that the design of the proposed buildings is in accordance with it.

[5] Wiltshire Design Guide – page 20 untitled plan

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. The proposal is of a minor nature. It relates to the day-to-day management of Soley House, its grounds in particular.

4.2. It is in accordance with the Wiltshire Care Strategy (2015).

4.3. The proposal complies with the NPPF (2021).

4.4. There is currently no Neighbourhood Plan.

4.5. The proposal complies with the saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan (2004, saved 2011).

4.6. It conforms with the draft policies in the Wiltshire Local Plan Review Pre-Submission Draft (2023). The policies in it only enjoy limited weight for decision makers because of its early stage in the plan-making process.

4.7. It is consistent with the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan (2019-2004).

4.8. The proposal complies with the Draft Wiltshire Design Guide (2023).

4.9. The building would be of a high quality. It would enhance Soley House and its grounds within the AONB.

4.10. In the circumstances, we respectfully request the Council to grant planning permission at the earliest opportunity.