CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/09236
Application Type:	Householder planning permission
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	29 November 2023
Case officer:	Verity Giles-Franklin

Site Address:	Six Guinea Cottage, 212 Lower Woodrow, Forest, Melksham, SN12 7RB
Proposal:	Extension and alterations to 212 Six Guinea Cottage.
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

Proposal and Site Description: This application is seeking planning permission for alterations and extensions to an existing detached dwelling at 212 Six Guinea Cottage, Forest, Melksham. In order to accommodate the proposed extensions to the rear, part of the existing building (including an existing two-storey gable) would be demolished and part of an existing single storey addition would be removed. The proposals include the construction of a rear gable extension, first floor balcony and pitched roof porch. The proposal also includes the construction of a single storey timber framed store to be sited adjacent to an existing outbuilding on land within the applicant's ownership.

The external walls of the proposed extension would be finished in a combination of render and timber cladding under a natural slate roof. An oak framed porch is proposed on the front elevation.

The site is located in Flood Zones 2 and 3. A revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was submitted on 22 December 2023, as the FRA that was originally submitted with this application was not relevant to this proposal as it was associated with a previous application on this site (reference PL/2022/09008) which sought planning permission for the construction of a replacement dwelling on this site (the permission for which remains extant).

The application site is located in open countryside, outside the defined settlement boundary for Melksham and Bowerhill Village. The dwellings found along Lower Woodrow Road are generally characterised by detached dwellings located in large spacious plots.

Policies

National Context: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Local Context: The adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) 2015, namely core policies (CP): CP1 - Settlement Strategy; CP2 - Delivery Strategy; CP15 - Spatial Strategy for the Melksham Community Area; CP57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping; CP64 - Demand Management; CP67 - Flood Risk

The ‘made' Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2020 - 2026, July 2021

Saved policy U1a (Foul Water Disposal) of the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration, adopted June 2004

Wiltshire Council's Local Transport Plan 2011-2026

Key Issues: Design and visual impact; neighbour amenity; ecology; highway matters; and flood risk

Relevant Planning History

The most relevant planning application is:

PL/2022/09008 - Replacement dwelling with associated outbuildings - Approved with conditions

Consultation Responses

Melksham Without Parish Council: No objection, but notes that the FRA originally submitted does not apply to the new proposals as it was the same FRA submitted with PL/2022/09008

Wiltshire Council Ecology: No objection, subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Drainage: No objections

Representations

Third-party Representations: No letters of objection received

Planning Considerations and Assessment

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Design and Visual Impact: Policy CP57 of the adopted WCS requires a "*high standard of design*" for all new developments including extensions and alterations to existing buildings. This policy requires developments to "*create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality*" with applications being accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal would "*make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire*". Criterion iii of CP57 requires proposals to respond "*positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale,*

building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting".

In addition to the above, the latest iteration of the Framework has a greater focus on delivering high-quality design and sets out in paragraph 131 that the "*creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve*". Paragraph 135 moreover sets out a series of six criteria to ensure development is of high quality over the lifetime of the development, is visually attractive and sympathetic to the local character and history, and creates a strong sense of place.

The proposed extensions would give the existing dwelling a more contemporary appearance with the proposed materials (mixture of timber cladding and a render finish) contributing to a more modern aesthetic, which is considered acceptable in this instance given the rural setting of the building. The proposed two storey rear extension would project beyond the principal elevation of the original dwelling (from the north-east (side) elevation) by 0.5m, however the two storey extension would have a lower ridge line compared to the existing dwelling.

The plot is considered to be of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed extensions and the proposed extensions would be built of appropriate materials and to a suitable design that would preserve the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with the abovementioned policies.

The proposals involve renovating and altering the remaining existing two-storey dwelling, which is not considered to be of any particular architectural merit and are therefore considered acceptable.

With regards to the proposed timber storage building, this would be located adjacent to an existing larger outbuilding and is considered to be of an acceptable design and size.

Neighbour Amenity: Core policy CP57 requires in criteria vii for developments to have "*regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing, vibration, and pollution (e.g. light intrusion, noise, smoke, fumes, effluent, waste or litter)*".

Criterion f) of paragraph 135 of the Framework meanwhile requires the creation of "*places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users*".

The proposed extensions to No. 212 would introduce additional glazing and changes to the existing fenestration, with the addition of a rear balcony. The rural setting of the dwelling was noted during the case officers site visit and in the absence of any residential properties directly neighbouring the application site, the proposals do not present any harm in terms of loss of privacy or overlooking to neighbouring occupiers.

In terms of the bulk, mass and height, the proposed extensions would not create any harmful overshadowing or overbearing impacts due to the dwelling being located a generous distance away from any neighbouring properties.

With regards to the proposed store, this would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, due to its location and design. As such, the proposals set out in this application are considered to comply with CP57 and the Framework.

Highways Safety: Criterion xiv of CP57 requires proposals to satisfy the requirements of CP61 (Transport and New Development). CP61 requires new developments to be "*located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives*". CP61 also requires in criterion ii that proposals would be "*capable of being served by safe access to the highway network*". In addition, CP64 requires adherence to the council's adopted residential parking standards.

The proposals would result in a reduction in the overall number of bedrooms, from 4 to 3, but the proposed alterations would result in the loss of the existing integrated garage. However, there would result adequate space on the site to accommodate the parking for multiple vehicles on site. The proposals also do not seeks to alter the existing vehicular access to the site, so this would remain as existing. Therefore, no highway concerns are raised.

Ecology: Core policy CP50 of the adopted WCS requires proposals to "*demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale*" and requires all proposals to "*incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development*". All developments are also required to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity with proposals.

Improving biodiversity has been enshrined within the environmental objective contained within paragraph 8 of the Framework for achieving sustainable development. The Framework also requires net gains for biodiversity to be provided including by "*establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*" in paragraph 180d.

This application has been supported by a Bat Survey Report, produced by Smart Ecology (dated 25 October 2023, reference 2022-082, version 2) which confirms that there are bat roosts present within each of the existing three roof spaces of the dwelling. The survey concludes that the dwelling is used as a day roost for the common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats and the proposals set out in this application would result in the loss of these roosts and the report sets out a series of mitigation measures in Section 5, which includes the provision of compensatory roosts.

The council's ecology department were consulted on this application and have raised no objections but have stated that an European Protected Species (EPS) bat Mitigation Licence would be required for the lawful construction of the proposed development. The ecologist also considered that a "*sufficient information has been provided to ensure that favourable conservation status of bats can be maintained should the application be approved*". Therefore, subject to planning conditions being imposed on any consent granted to protect the bat species, no objections are raised.

Drainage and Flood Risk: Policy CP67 of the adopted WCS also requires proposals for all new development to "*include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and improve rainwater infiltration to soil and ground (sustainable urban drainage) unless site or environmental conditions make these measures unsuitable*".

Furthermore, saved policy U1a of the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 states that new developments would only be permitted "*where adequate foul drainage, sewerage and sewage treatment facilities are available or where suitable arrangements are made for their provision*".

The application site is located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 (at a high probability of flooding) and given that this application is a householder application, the application must be assessed against the Environment Agency's flood risk Standing Advice. The submitted FRA details the proposed flood resilience measures to ensure the proposed development remains safe during a flood event and recommends that the ground floor of the extension is set at 350mm above ground level. As the proposed works are not considered to increase flood risk to others or result in an increased level of vulnerability (as the proposals relate to an existing dwelling), the application is considered to comply with the abovementioned policies.

Conclusion: Approve subject to conditions

Conditions: (6)

1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Drawings nos: 10384 P-01, Existing Floor Plans and Elevations; 10384 P-02, Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations; 10384 P-03, Existing Site Plan; 10384 P-04, Proposed Site Plan; 10384 P-05, Location Plan; 10384 P-06, Proposed Store Plans and Elevations

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 The flood resilience measures, including raising the finished floor levels to 350mm above ground level, detailed in the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) received on 22 December 2023 shall be carried out in full prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved.

REASON: To protect future occupiers from flood risk and to prevent flooding elsewhere in the locality

4 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the following documents:

• Section 5 of the Bat Survey Report, reference 2022-082, version 2, dated 25 October 2023, produced by Smart Ecology
• Drawing no. 10384 P-02, Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations, produced by Baxter Green Architects

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity

5 Bat roosts and bat access points shall be incorporated into the development in accordance with the Bat Survey Report (reference: 2022-082, version 2) and the Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations drawing (reference 10384 P-02) or as otherwise specified in a relevant European Protected Species Licence. The installation of these bat roosts and access features shall be supervised by a professional ecologist and must be installed prior to the first occupation of the development. Photographic evidence of all the installed features shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These bat roosts and access points shall remain available for bats over the lifetime of the development.

REASON: To mitigate for impacts to bats arising from the development.

6 No external lighting shall be installed on-site until plans showing the type of light appliance, the height and position of fitting, illumination levels and light spillage in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institution of Lighting Professionals in their publication “The Reduction of Obtrusive Light” Guidance Note 01/21 (reference GN01/21), have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting shall be installed and shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details and no additional external lighting shall be installed.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimise unnecessary light spillage above and outside the development site and in the interests of conversing biodiversity.

Informatives: (4)

1 Any alterations to the approved plans, brought about by compliance with Building Regulations or any other reason must first be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before commencement of work.

2 The roof space of Six Guinea Cottage is used as a bat roost. Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), it is an offence to harm or disturb bats or damage or destroy their roosts. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. The applicant is advised that a European Protected Species Licence will be required before any work is undertaken to implement this planning permission. Future conversion of the roof space to living accommodation or replacing the roof could also breach this legislation and advice should be obtained from a professional bat ecologist before proceeding with work of this nature.

3 All British birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 while birds are nesting, building nests and sitting on eggs. The applicant is advised to check any structure or vegetation capable of supporting breeding birds and delay removing or altering such features until after young birds have fledged. Damage to extensive areas that could contain nests/breeding birds should be undertaken outside the breeding season. This season is usually taken to be the period between 1st March and 31st August but some species are known to breed outside these limits.

4 The habitat within the proposed development site and the surrounding area is suitable for roosting, foraging and commuting bats. An increase in artificial lux levels can deter bats which could result in roost abandonment and/or the severance of key foraging areas. This will likely result in a significant negative impact upon the health of bat populations across the region. Artificial light at night can have a substantial adverse effect on biodiversity. Any new lighting should be for the purposes for safe access and security and be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2021, ‘Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light’ (ILP, 2021), and Guidance note GN08/23 “Bats and artificial lighting at night”, issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.