REPORT OUTLINE FOR AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES **Report No.**

Date of Meeting	22nd May 2024
Application Number	PL/2023/08516
Site Address	Heleigh Cottage, Middlehill, Box, Corsham, SN13 8QB
Proposal	Replacement and alteration of existing extensions to the main house. Internal and external alterations and addition of an air source heat pump and photovoltaic panels to the main house, replacement and enlargement of existing garage, together with driveway and landscape enhancement works.
Applicant	Mr and Mrs Gofton
Town/Parish Council	Box
Electoral Division	Councillor Brian Mathew
Type of application	Householder Planning Permission
Case Officer	Claire Pratt

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called to the Northern Area Planning Committee by Councillor Brian Mathew so as to allow consideration of the proposal being recommended for REFUSAL. This is to consider the size and scale of the development as well as the planned installation of better insulation, solar energy and air source heat pump.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the recommendation for planning permission is refusal due to the Scale design and impacts to the Green Belt which are considered due to the mass, bulk, design and materials to be inappropriate development which is found to be harmful to the Green Belt in accordance with Section 13 to the NPPF and should be refused.

2. Report Summary

This report will examine the proposed extensions and new garage workshop building and explore the process by which the appropriate conclusion has been reached. It will set out the public benefits which will be obtained as a result of the application and the various impacts which may occur.

The key issues in considering the applications are as follows:

- Principle of development
- Design and scale
- Impact on residential amenity
- Appropriateness of the development in Greenbelt and harm to the openness
- Landscape impact to Cotswold National Landscape formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Highways Parking and Access
- Conservation Area

3. Site Description

The application site is located within Middlehill near Box. Box is a village within the Corsham Community Area and Middlehill is a cluster of properties among wooded areas of common land approximately half a mile to the west of the Box village. There is no framework boundary for the small cluster of properties of Middlehill and therefore the site is located in the open countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

The property is a detached two-storey dwelling set to the south side of the road, the house is above a raised bank when viewed from the road. To the east and south there are mature trees within a generous plot which together with the wooded area of Middlehill screen the property from wider views from the A4 road and longer views from the countryside. The driveway is to the front garden with parking and a garage. The property has evolved over time, originally a cottage built approximately 1960's has bath stone elevations and roman tiled roof to the original part. Extended by single storey additions to the front, rear and north side and north side and a two storey to the south side. The property has also the addition of a single detached garage which is located inside the access to the front (east) of the house. The gardens extend to the front rear and sides with the boundaries of established hedges and planting and mature trees to the rear (east) and south side garden areas.

Heleigh Cottage has neighbouring properties to the south west at Heleigh House, to the north side the property boundary is with the highway leading to Hill House Farm a grade II listed building set approximately 110 metres to the south east. and to the east (rear) and south is farmland. The property as with the neighbouring dwellings known as Middlehill are within wooded areas and are designated within the Middlehill Conservation Area. Middlehill is to the north of the A4 main road Bath to Box and where the railway line runs parallel to the road. The C class road from the A4 north to Middlehill and Ditteridge beyond climbs gradually out of the wooded area to Ditteridge. As such the properties of Middlehill are not easily visible from the surrounding landscape other than glimpsed views of some roof tops from the opposite site of the valley. Heleigh Cottage is close to the roadside out of Middlehill raised higher upon a banked boundary, the north side elevation would be the most visible part of the house from the countryside and Conservation Area. The house is not easily visible from views from the A4 or Doctors Hill to the South due to the trees.

The area is covered by the Western Wiltshire Green Belt, the Cotswold National Landscape (formerly the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the Middle Hill Conservation Area.

4. Planning History

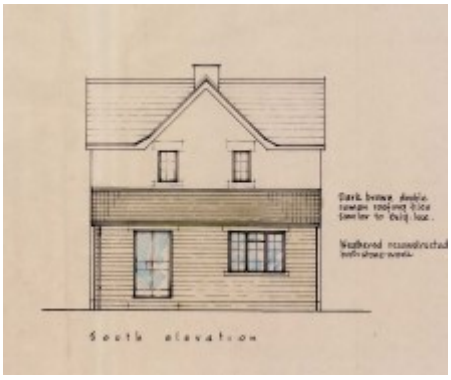
76/01006 – Single storey side and detached garage – Approved

79/01167 – Single storey side extension and single storey front extension - Approved

06/02353 – First floor extension about existing single storey extension – Approved

76/1006/F – approved plans:





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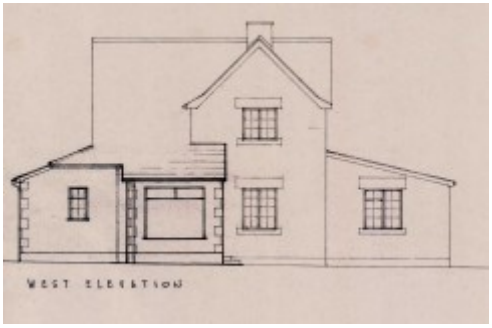
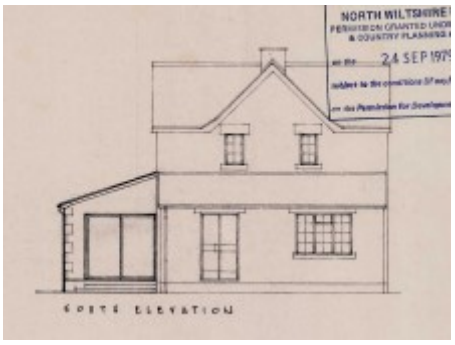
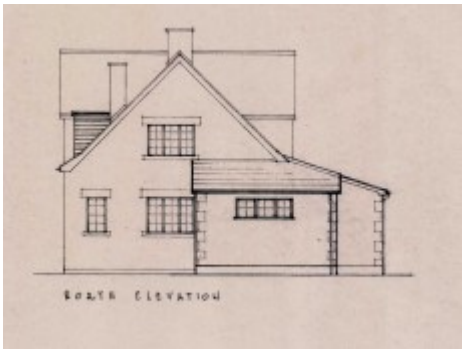
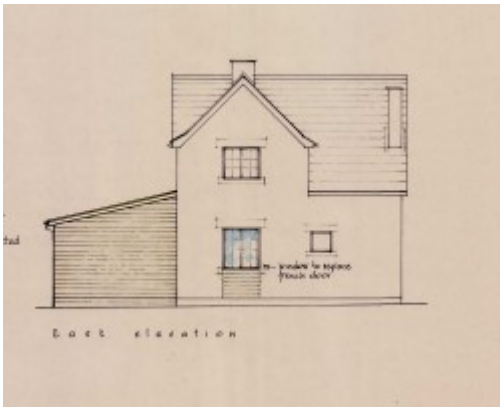
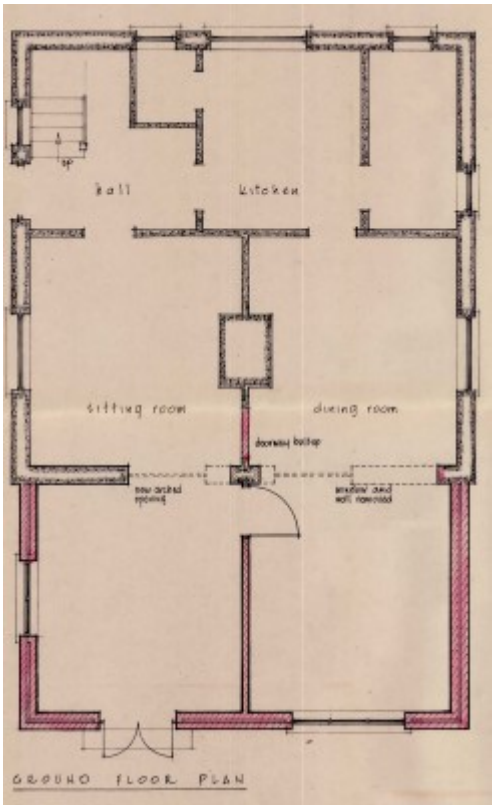


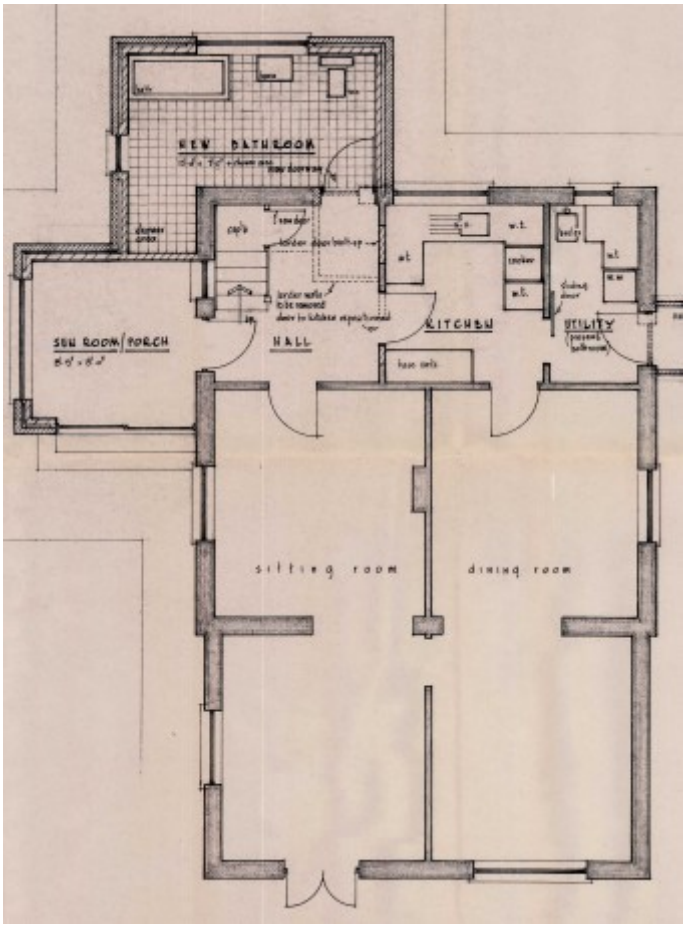












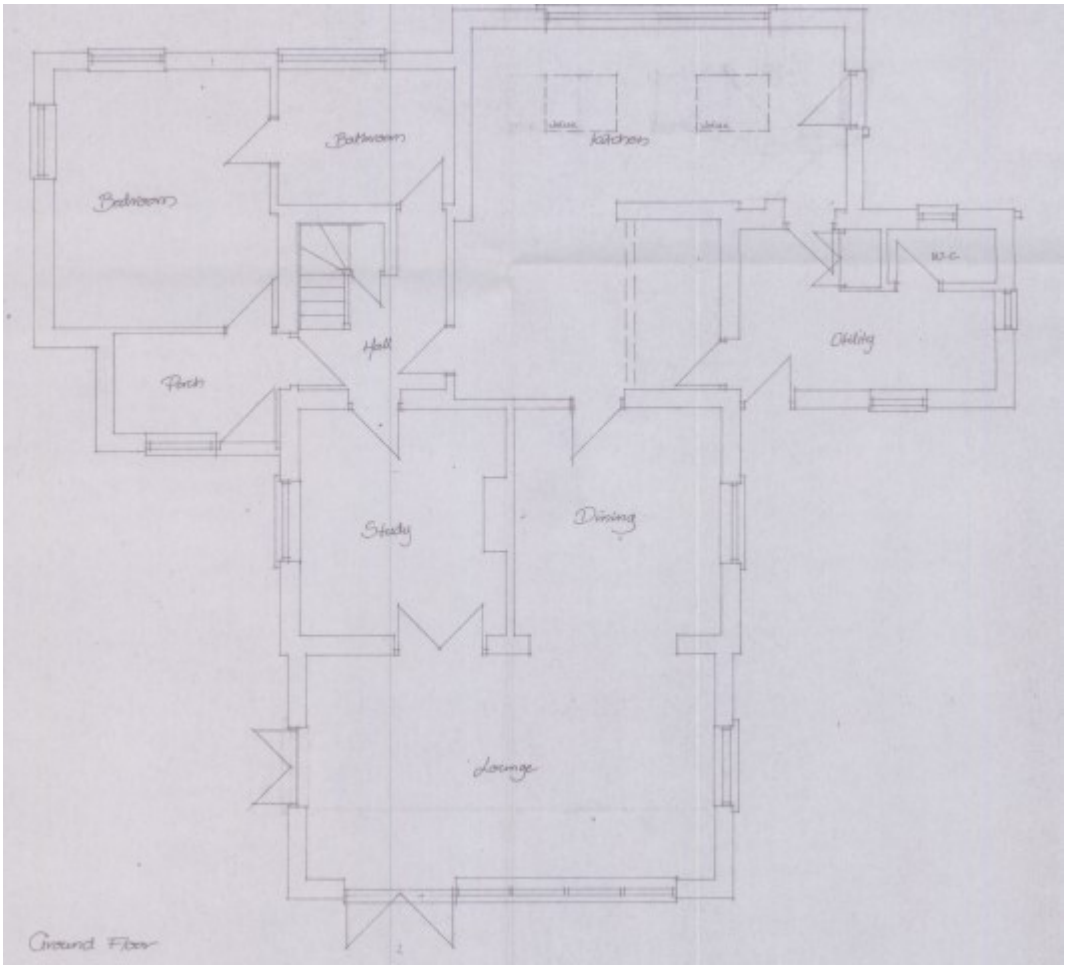
06/2353/FUL – approved plans:











5. The Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the removal of previous single storey extensions to the front (west) elevation, north side and rear (east) elevation of the dwelling. The first floor of the existing two-storey south side extension is to be replace with a new first floor extension of flat roof. Existing single-storey extensions to the front, side and rear are proposed to be removed with a replacement single-storey wraparound style extension to the north side projecting to the rear to form the wraparound with the proposed new rear extension which extends along the original rear elevation of the dwelling. The first floor element of two storey south side extension is proposed to be replaced by a flat roof extension. Also, a single storey extension is proposed at ground floor south side elevation and a single storey extension is proposed to the front entrance of the original dwelling.

The existing single detached garage to the front garden just inside the access is proposed to be demolished with a new larger garage and workshop proposed together with two additional parking spaces formed.

The existing dwelling is of recon stone-faced block with double roman clay tiles to the original pitched roof of the dwelling and the front porch and side extension with single roman clay tiles to the pitched roofs of the two-storey side extension. The existing property has timber windows and doors.

The proposed development includes photovoltaic panels to the flat roof of the first-floor extension and an air source heat pump to the north side. The renewable technologies provide heating, hot water and remove the applicant's reliance upon fossil fuel.

The proposals are for ancillary accommodation to the existing dwelling. The supporting information explains the development is to include the provision of a granny annex within the proposed internal arrangement.

Revised drawings were received during the life of the application to reduce elements of the proposed extensions, reducing the first-floor element. The revisions also changed the roof of the proposed new garage/workshop building to a flat design, along with timber clad elevations, where previously it was to be of a block walls with a pitched tiled roof.

The details of the proposed extensions to the dwelling and replacement garage/workshop are set out below:

First floor extension to south side

The existing first floor and twin pitched gable roofs of the two-storey extension granted 2006 is to be removed and replaced with a flat roofed first floor extension. The elevations are proposed in vertical timber cladding, the proposed flat roof is of a EDPM membrane with parapet covered in aluminum coping. The remaining ground floor element (remaining extension of 2006) is proposed to be clad in horizontal timber cladding full height glazed doors patio doors are introduced to the front elevation (west) and to the south elevation an extension of approximately 0.9m in depth and width of original ground floor extension approximately 4.75 metres is proposed to form the ground floor south elevation of glass doors.

Single storey side extension

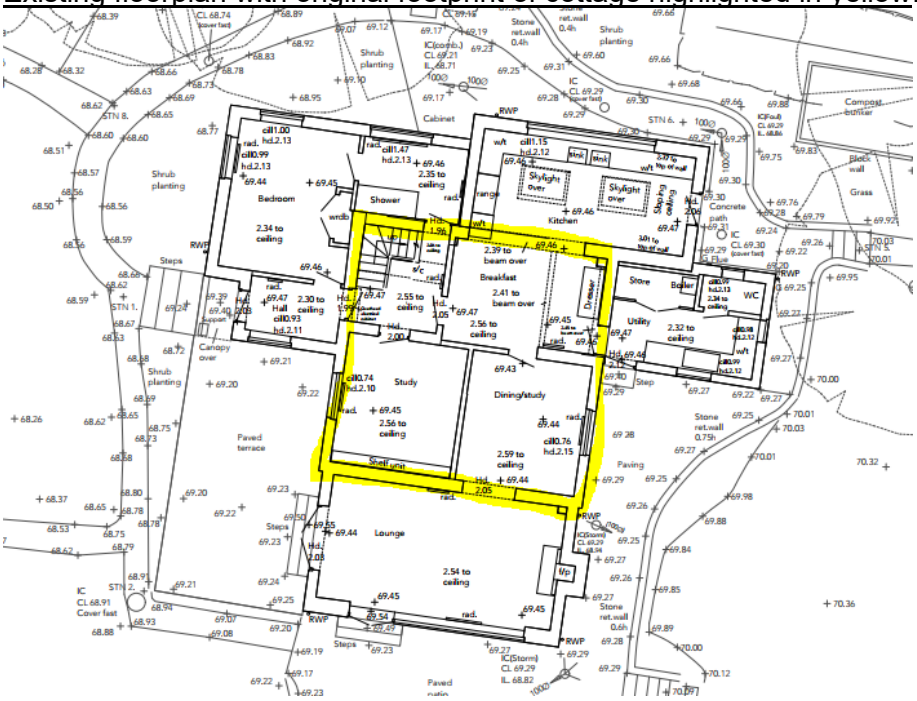
Constructed with a flat roof EDPM system with horizontal timber cladding to elevations and bifold patio doors, the extension is shown as approximately 3.3 metres wide by approximately 12.3m total length. The extension is sited to project beyond the existing front elevation of the cottage by approximately 0.7m and projects beyond the original rear elevation of the house by approximately 4 metres.

Rear single storey extension

This extension attaches to the rear element of the prosed side extension forming a wraparound extension, the rear element continues across the original rear elevation of the house. The depth off the original rear elevation of the cottage is approximately 4 metres which extends south off the proposed rear projecting side extension across the distance of the original rear elevation to a width of approximately 7 metres.

Floor plan excerpts are shown below of the property as existing and proposed. In both instances, the yellow marking denotes the extent of the original 1960s cottage.

Existing floorplan with original footprint of cottage highlighted in yellow:



Proposed floor plan, with original footprint of cottage highlighted in yellow:



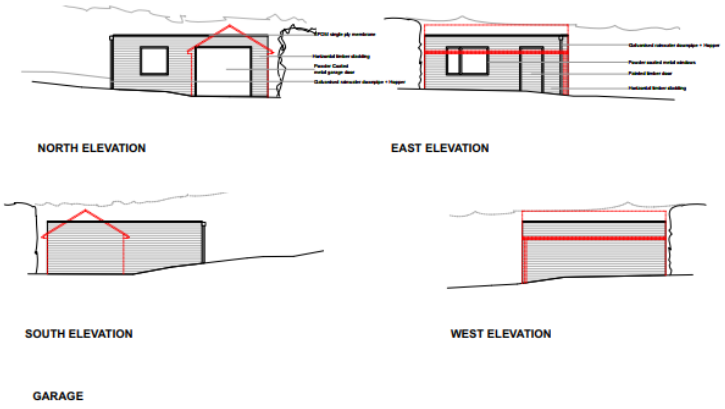
The proposed building for garage and workshop

The proposal also includes the demolition of the existing single garage granted planning permission 1976 to be replaced with a double garage with flat roof to be a single garage at one side and a workshop.

The existing garage is approximately 6 metres in length by 3.2 metres in width, with a shallow pitched roof the height to the eaves is approximately 2 metres and the ridge 2.5 metres. The proposed garage/workshop is approximately 6 metres deep and 6.5 metres in width divided in half to form the garage and workshop spaces. The height of the proposed flat roof is approximately 2.5 metres. Materials are proposed in timber horizontal cladding and a flat roof.

Excerpts from the submitted plans are included below show the existing single garage compared with the proposed new garage workshop.

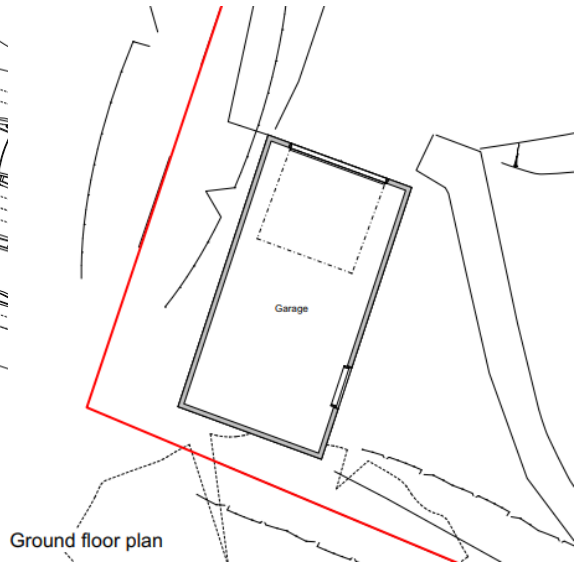
Proposed garage/workshop, with red outline of existing garage building superimposed:



Floorplan of proposed garage/workshop:



Floorplan of existing garage:



6. Planning Policy

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS)

Core Policy 51: Landscape
Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF)

Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
Section 12: Achieving well designed and beautiful places
Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

7. Consultation responses

Box Parish Council – No objection.

Council Highway Engineer – No objection:

> *I am content that the proposed changes are within the curtilage of the property and will not have a negative impact on the highway interests. As such I am happy to offer no highway objection.*

8. Representations

No third-party representations have been received.

9. Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The extensions and outbuilding to be erected relates to an existing residential property, the principle of which is established as acceptable. However, since the application site is located within the Western Wiltshire Green Belt, an assessment must also be undertaken as to whether the proposals constitute "inappropriate development" for the purposes of section 13 to the NPPF. For convenience, that assessment is undertaken in the sub-section immediately below.

The detail of the proposals must also be assessed against all other relevant policies. That assessment is undertaken in the relevant sub-sections below.

Green Belt

Great importance is attached to Green Belts and new development within the Green Belt is highly restricted by national planning policy. Paragraph 152 to the NPPF is unequivocal in stating that *inappropriate* development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF state:

Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 goes on to explain that:

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt

Before then going on to identify exceptions to that policy, setting out forms of development which may be *not inappropriate* in the Green Belt (known as exceptions (a) though to (g). Of most relevance in this instance is exception (c), which states:

The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

And also exception (d) which states:

The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces

Extensions to the original building

With reference to exception (c), "original building" is defined within the Annexe 2: Glossary to the NPPF as a building as it existed on 1 July 1948 or, if constructed after 1 July 1948, as it was built originally. It is very clear from the planning history that when having regard to the NPPFs definition, the "original building" amounts to a modest two-storey cottage constructed c.1960.

Subsequent to the original building being constructed, several substantial extensions have been added. Firstly, a large single storey, two-roomed extension was added to the south elevation in 1976. Later in 1979, further single storey extensions were added to the north and west elevations, along with dormer window and other external/internal alterations. Finally, and although not clear whether all was granted planning permission or not, in 2006 large single and two storey extensions were added at various points to the dwelling.

There appears to be no dispute with the applicant that significant extensions have been added to the original building from the 1960s.

The proposal is to remove all of the previous additions granted by planning permissions and otherwise and replace the whole with new extensions in a contrasting design and materials to the original cottage. The proposed extensions are to three sides of the original building and extend off original elevations by depths of approximately 4 metres at single storey to the proposed wrap around extension and by approximately 4 metres at two-storey. As can be seen from provided floor plan extracts, the footprint of the original cottage will be disproportionately added to by extensions of bulky, two-storey height. Indeed, it is the chosen flat roof format that most clearly demonstrates the disproportionate size of the addition over and above that of the original 1960s building.

Section 13 to the NPPF does not define what constitutes “disproportionate” and the Wiltshire Core Strategy does not contain any policy which prescribes a floorspace or % increase what or what is not regarded as acceptable in the Green Belt. However, in this case, the matter is considered to be very clear, since by any and all measures – footprint, height, length, mass, size or scale – the proposed extensions are demonstrably disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original 1960s building thereby failing the test set out in exception 154 (c)..

There is no provision within the NPPF to somehow “net” or trade-off” the removal of existing extensions to an original building against those new extensions being proposed to justify or overcome the harm such inappropriate development causes to the Green Belt. For that reason, the volume calculations undertaken by the application which seek to compare the existing and proposed extensions are not considered to alter the very clear conclusions reached in the context of very clear national policy on the matter. They are not considered to constitute very special circumstances.

In other respects, the applicant does refer to what they regard as an improvement to the appearance of the property if the development were to take place. However, this is subjective and as is concluded elsewhere in this report, on its own terms the extensions are not considered to respect the character ad appearance of the existing property. Similarly, there is no reason to believe any of the improvements to insulation and energy efficiencies could not be achieved without the need for the proposed development to take place. None of the matters raised are considered to constitute very special circumstances which would justify development that is harmful to the Green Belt.

New garage/workshop

As referenced above, for the purposes of Green Belt policy within the NPPF, the new garage/workshop building is also a new, separate building. Exception (d) to paragraph 154 to the NPPF confirms:

> *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces*

In this case, it can be agreed that the new garage/workshop would replace an existing garage on the same footprint and would be in the same use. However, it is also clear that the existing garage is modest in scale and size, being some 6 metres long by 3 metres wide and has a ridge height of 2.8 metres to the ridge. In comparison, the new building would be some 6 metres long by 6.5 metres wide, the height to the flat roof is approximately 2.5 metres. This is considerably larger than the building it replaces, especially in consideration of the difference in scale and bulk associated with a comparison between pitched and flat roofs.

The garage and workshop building is a doubling in footprint and mass of the existing building, this is considered to be demonstrably materially larger than the existing building. In terms of para 154 d.) the building will fail to be considered as an exception and is therefore regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are o very special circumstances which would justify such harmful development.

Conclusions

All elements of the proposal are considered to constitute inappropriate development in the West Wiltshire Green Belt. Since such development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt, and in the absence of any very special circumstances, that harm must be given great weight in the determination

of this planning application.

Scale and Design

Paragraph 131 to the NPPF states:

> *The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.*

Core Policy 57 (CP57) requires that development be of a suitable design and quality for the site and immediate area and sets out fourteen separate criteria which development proposals are required to meet in order to be considered acceptable. CP57 states that:

> *…Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.*

Criterion (iii) of CP57 requires that applications for development should:

> *… respond(ing) 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.*

Both national and local policy therefore requires new development to be of a high-quality and well-designed and where they are not, planning permission should be refused.

In this particular case, the proposals incorporate a large block like extensions to the dwellinghouse. The scale of development seeing a near doubling of the footprint and volume, with flat roof elements reaching the very tallest part of the property and reading as a significant addition. Indeed, the scale of the additions are considered to be clearly disproportionate and will overwhelm and result in the existing property being lost.

The architecture and palate of materials for dwellings in the locality is of traditional slate or stone slate pitched roofs and stone elevations. Modest timber outbuildings are also seen, including that at the application site. While there are some large agricultural buildings constructed of cement fibre roofing and black or dark timber cladding, they are a significant distance away to the south-east at Hill House Farm and of course are clearly agricultural in nature and obviously contextualised by established farming operations, as opposed to being domestic dwellinghouses as is the case here. Accordingly, the angular and overtly modern architecture and fenestration and materials being proposed is considered to be inappropriate and discordant to the existing and surrounding properties, as well as the rural character in which they all sit.

Whilst the proposed new garage/workshop is large and blocky, in this particular instance, its design and construction is not considered to be unacceptable when assessed against adopted planning policy. The associated landscaping and what appears to be earthworks not considered to be objectionable.

Accordingly, the proposed extensions are considered to constitute high quality development. The additions are excessive in scale and are of a design and materials which do not respect the existing

property or that of its rural surroundings. For these reasons, the proposals would fail to meet the requirements of policy CP57 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Landscape and Cotswold National Landscape (previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

Core Policy 51 states that development should protect, conserve and where possible, enhance the landscape character. Section 15 of the NPPF expects decisions to ensure the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes.

Core Policy 51 and Chapter 11 of the NPPF is applicable as the application site is wholly located within the Cotswold National Landscape. In regard to impacts on the CNL, Core Policy 51 of the WCS and Policy CE1 the Cotswolds Management Plan and position statement seek to ensure that the landscape character, scenic quality and geological features of the CNL are conserved, and where possible enhanced.

Additionally, Core Policy 57 indicates that proposals should relate positively to its landscape setting by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are retained and enhanced. Core Policy 51 requires that proposals affecting the CNL shall demonstrate they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the Management Plans for these areas.

The north side elevation of the property is adjacent the highway and is the most visible elevation within the landscape, it can be seen in long views from the top of lane west of the settlement of Ditteridge above Middle Hill and from the highway beside the property. The proposed flat roofed single storey extension of the north elevation while visible is considered to have no greater impact than the existing single storey at the property. It maybe visible from the immediate roadside but is single storey and set close against the dwelling where is appears as a subservient addition which blends effectively against the existing built form.

The single storey garage building proposes a flat roof and is set into lower ground to the west corner of the front garden. It is visible from the highway access but is largely concealed by the banked boundary and hedges of the property.

The site is well screened by established planting and trees to the garden on the remaining boundaries the wooded areas of Middle Hill to the west and is not visible from longer countryside views from the south, or east due to the treed boundaries to farmland.

The rear single storey extension is partly against rising rear garden extending up the hedged boundary with the neighbouring field and Hill House Farm beyond. The first-floor extension is well screened by trees and the house is not visible from long views from the A4 or from long views from the countryside to the south.

Due to the siting of the property within the landscape where it is largely concealed by the trees of Middlehill and the trees within the site and to the boundaries there is considered to be no unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the CNL and no harm to the openness of the CNL.

It is considered that the proposal will conserve the landscape character and will comply with CP51 and CP57 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy, policy CE1 Cotswolds Management Plan 2023 as well as section 15 to the NPPF.

Heritage

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for works which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require Local Planning Authorities in determining planning applications affecting a Conservation Area to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that conservation area.

Core Policy 58 states that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

The proposed development is to a property contained within the Middlehill Conservation Area there are listed buildings, known as Hill House Farm approximately 140 metres to the south east.

As stated above the dwelling is set within landscaped grounds and among established trees, a feature of Middlehill Conservation Area is the setting within the trees of the common land to either side of the highway through Middlehill. The development is sited within the existing grounds of the property, due the setting and established boundaries there is considered to be no impacts to the conservation area from the development to extend the house due to the most visible parts of the proposal being the single storey north side extension and single storey garage.

Due to the distance to the nearest listed building to the south west and the established trees and hedges to the west boundary there is considered to be no harm to the significance of the listed building from the development.

The Conservation Area and listed buildings wound not be harmed due to the development which is found to be in accordance with CP 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, section 16 of the NPPF.

Impact upon amenity

Core Policy 57 states that development should 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. Section 12 of the NPPF also states that planning decisions should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The neighbouring property most sensitive to the development is Heleigh House set approximately 40 metres to the south west. The boundaries of Heleigh Cottage are of established planting and Heleigh House is on higher ground. The single storey garage and workshop elements of the proposal will be the closest element of the development to Heleigh House. The extensions to the Heleigh Cottage are to the north side, rear and south side at first floor in the location of an existing first floor element. Therefore, given the distances, siting and scale of the development there is considered to be no unacceptable impacts upon the amenities of Heleigh House from the proposals.

In this respect, the proposal will comply with policy CP57 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Access and parking

Wiltshire Core Strategy policy CP61 states that new development should be capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. Core Policy 64, states that provision of parking associated with new residential development will be based on minimum parking standards.

The existing vehicle access will remain unaltered. The proposal will provide a single garage and two parking spaces created off the existing driveway within the front garden.

The Wiltshire Highways Engineer raises no objection, with the proposed changes being within the curtilage of the property and will not have a negative impact on the highway interests.

The existing property is a four-bedroom dwelling the proposed extensions will provide a four bedroom dwelling.

The Wiltshire Highways parking standards will require a new development for a four-bedroom property to be three plus off-street parking spaces.

The parking provided will be three spaces and driveway parking, therefore the proposal is considered to meet with Wiltshire Parking Standards in accordance with CP 64 of the WCS.

The existing vehicular access remains unchanged and meets with CP 61 of the WCS.

Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to not cause an unacceptable impact on highway safety and will meet with the requirements of policies CP57(xiv) and CP61 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy, as well as those set out in section 9 to the NPPF.

10. Conclusion

The proposals constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. By definition, inappropriate development is harmful in the Green Belt, and in accordance with the NPPF, that harm must be given great weight when determining this planning application. There are no very special circumstances or other material considerations which would otherwise justify the harm caused to the Green Belt.

In other respects, and due to the height, mass, scale, design, siting, elevational design and materials, the proposed extensions are not considered to respect or integrate with the existing property or its rural setting and cannot be regarded as high quality development. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to fail the requirements of policy CP57 (iii) and (xii) to the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as section 12 to the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. By reason of their disproportionate size and larger scale respectively, the proposed extensions and replacement garage/workshop building constitute inappropriate development in the Bath and Western Wiltshire Green Belt. By definition, inappropriate development is harmful in the Green Belt, and in accordance with the NPPF, that harm must be given great weight. There are no very special circumstances or other material considerations which would otherwise justify the harm

caused to the Green Belt and, for that reason, the application is contrary to the policy set out in section 13 to the NPPF.

2. By reason of its height, mass, scale, design, siting, elevational design and materials, the proposed extensions are not considered to respect or integrate with the existing property or its rural setting and cannot be regarded as high quality development. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to fail the requirements of policy CP57 (iii) and (xii) to the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as section 12 to the NPPF.