

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

Date of Meeting	13 th November 2025
Application Number	PL/2025/06872
Site Address	The Old Vicarage, Homington Road, Coombe Bissett, Salisbury, SP5 4LR
Proposal	Demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and replacement with a new dwelling (self-build) with other associated works including landscape treatment, infrastructure and vehicle parking
Applicant	The Walker Family
Town/Parish Council	Coombe Bissett
Electoral Division	Downton and Ebble Valley – (Richard Clewer)
Grid Ref	51.035505, -1.843342
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Joe Richardson

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called-in before committee by Cllr Clewer if officers are minded to refuse on the basis of the heritage status of the building, that the existing building is an eyesore, the proposal would be a significant improvement to the look and feel of the village and the strong local support.

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 application be **refused** for the reason(s) set out below.

2. Report Summary

The issues in this case are:

- Principle of development including self-build;
- Design, scale and heritage/CCNL;
- Amenity impacts including trees;
- Ecological Impact including the River Avon SAC/nutrient neutrality;
- Parking/Highway Safety

3. Site Description

The existing dwelling, The Old Vicarage is set with a large area of land located within the village of Coombe Bissett that is defined as a large village by WCS policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy), CP2 (Delivery Strategy) and CP23 (Southern Wiltshire Community Area). The existing dwellinghouse apparently dates from the late 18th/early 19th Century and is of a notable scale. The site is served by an existing access onto the Homington Road at the north

western corner of the site. Within the entrance site, are two significantly well-established plane trees.



The site also within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area National Landscape (formerly known as the AONB), is also within Flood Zone 1 and within an area where groundwater levels are between 0.5 metres and 5 metres below the ground surface. To the north of the site, the River Ebble is located with the site situated within the River Avon Catchment Area and is also within the 13.8km recreational buffer zone of the New Forest SPA/SAC/RAMSAR site.

The site consists of a detached dwellinghouse known as The Old Vicarage located within a large plot of land to the rear. The site is surrounded by various residential dwellinghouses with the A354 Homington Road to the west in the village of Coombe Bissett. Planning permission is sought the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a self-build replacement dwelling with associated works.

4. Planning History

S/2009/1694 - Convert existing 6 bedroom dwelling with self-contained flat to form one 5 bedroom dwelling and one 2 bedroom dwelling. Form site access road and construct single storey 3 bedroom dwelling (2 bedrooms within the roof space) A.C 08.06.10

PL/2022/00198 - Partial demolition of the existing house and outbuildings, alteration and extension of the house and construction of four detached houses to the rear. Formation of new access onto Homington Road and demolition and replacement of front boundary wall WTD on officer advice 11.07.22

PL/2022/06579 - Partial demolition of the existing house and outbuildings, alteration and extension of the house and construction of three detached houses (3 x three bedroom) to the rear. Formation of new access onto Homington Road and demolition and replacement of front boundary wall (amended scheme) WTD on officer advice 09.02.23

PL/2024/09612 - Demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and replacement with a new dwelling with other associated works including landscape treatment, infrastructure and vehicle parking WTD on Officer advice 07.04.25

5. The Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and replacement with a new dwelling (self-build) with other associated works including landscape treatment, infrastructure and vehicle parking.

6. Local and National Planning Policy

S72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 2 Achieving Sustainable Development

Section 12 Achieving Well Designed Places

Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Wiltshire Core Strategy

Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy

Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy

Core Policy 23 Southern Wiltshire Community Area

Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Core Policy 51 Landscaping

Core Policy 57 Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

Core Policy 58 Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment

Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport

Core Policy 61 Transport and New Development

Core Policy 69 Protection of the River Avon SAC

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2015-2026: Car Parking and Cycling Strategy

National Design Guide 2021

Wiltshire Design Guide 2024

Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030

Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocations Plan adopted February 2020

Draft Coombe Bissett and Homington Neighbourhood Plan

Emerging Local Plan

7. Summary of consultation responses

Coombe Bissett and Homington Parish Council – Support with the following comments received:

The proposal to redevelop the site of the Old Vicarage in Coombe Bissett was discussed at the CBPC meeting held on the 9th September 2025. It followed a presentation by Mr R Greenwood from Benchmark Development Ltd. Who attended the meeting on behalf of his clients to share the plans for proposed development of the Old Vicarage site. There were issues which had been raised by various organisations and which the council duly considered.

The first was in relation to concerns about the Heritage status of the Old Vicarage as a building, given the proposal to demolish the existing structure and replace it with a new substantive house. There is disagreement between the applicant's expert report and the Wiltshire Council

Conservation Officer on the heritage value of the property. It is not of a style typical of other heritage buildings in the village and is not listed. It has over many years been altered and had additions in a variety of styles. The main concern of the PC is the dilapidated state of the current building and the need for a long term solution to this issue. It is our opinion that there is no heritage status to the existing building

The second was a concern about potential damage to mature trees on the site during building. The representative from Benchmark Development Ltd. provided a detailed plan of action to protect the trees on the site and to minimise damage to root structures. The PC were satisfied that the proposed plans would provide protection and accepted that any future works on the site (for renovation of the existing building for example) would have to have mitigation for potential arboreal damage.

The third was the size, type and style of the proposal. The draft Neighbourhood Plan which is now at the regulation 18 Stage identifies a need for additional 2 and 3 bedroom properties and also identifies this plot as a potential development site to contribute to this requirement. This application does not meet this need as it proposes a new structure on a similar scale to the one it replaces. The style of Neo-Georgian does not reflect the vernacular as described in the Neighbourhood Plan's Design Guide. However the village has a wide range of styles which have been built in recent years and so it was felt that this was not a reason to object to the development. It was also noted that the new house would not be visible from the road, protected by trees and hedges.

There were a number of local residents with properties close to the new development at the meeting and all were supportive of the plans.

WC Highways – No objection subject to conditions with the following comments stating:

I refer to the above planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and replacement with a new dwelling (self-build) with other associated works including landscape treatment, infrastructure and vehicle parking. This application is the same in highway terms to the previous application PL/2024/09412 and I therefore offer the same comments:

The site is accessed off the classified C12 and the vehicle access into the site is not proposed to be altered as part of this application. The proposal includes adequate off street parking to meet Wiltshire's current parking standards. I wish to raise no highway objection providing the following condition is imposed:

No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first occupied until the parking spaces [3] have been completed in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans. The areas shall always be maintained for those purposes thereafter and maintained free from the storage of materials.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

WC Arboricultural Officer – Comments received stating:

The tracking diagrams provided indicate space is just about sufficient for large construction vehicles to enter/exit site, but they do not appear to show the tree protection in place around

the trunks of the two Plane trees at the entrance (as recommended in the Arb Report). Furthermore, the idea of scaffold poles being driven into the ground close to the base of such large trees, to create a frame to fix protective panels to (see extract from Arb Report below), seems a good idea in theory, but in practice it will be difficult to achieve without causing significant damage to large structural roots, and further restricting space for vehicle movement in and out of the site. The two Plane trees are such a significant feature of the local environment it is imperative we ensure they can be adequately protected during any development process before any permission is approved. With this in mind, and for the same reasons I would be reluctant to see any proposal to erect gates near to the two Plane trees. The Arb Report suggests gates could be installed as part of a landscaping scheme (reference section 5.18). If gates are required anywhere within the RPA of the trees it is important details are obtained before permission is granted, not left to condition. Finally, it seems the plan is to lift the Cellular Confinement System once the development is completed. However, for the benefit of the trees it would almost certainly be better if it were left in place, and dressed with a permeable surface layer, to provide ongoing protection against root compaction.

UPDATE:

No objection subject to a condition with comments stating:

I do have concerns about construction traffic entering and exiting the site between the 2 Plane trees at the entrance but I do have to accept this is an established access. The revisions to the Arb Report have addressed my earlier concerns so my stance has to be 'No Objection'.

I would recommend a strongly wording pre-commencement condition is included which insists on the tree protection being put in place under Arboricultural Supervision and approved (by myself) prior to any development activity taking place on site.

WC Ecology – Objection on the grounds of out-of-date ecological surveys (see full comments in the ecology section of this report)

WC Conservation – No objection subject to conditions with comments received stating:

The previous application for the proposed demolition of The Old Vicarage was considered by my colleague, Maureen Pearce. As you are aware, she raised a number of objections.

The current application is supported by a further heritage assessment from Forum Heritage Services dated 12 August 2025 which scrutinises the issue of whether the building is: of listable quality; whether it could be considered a non-designated heritage asset (if not listable), and whether it makes a positive contribution to the Coombe Bissett conservation area. The report also looks into the historic evolution of the building in more detail. The author concludes that it is not of listable quality, which I note Maureen too had concluded (as would I). The author then explores whether it could be considered a NDHA and concludes that, whilst there is some old fabric (and the previous HBAS report had included a useful speculative phasing plan), it is much altered and that the 'old fabric' is not of high significance. It has already been agreed by all parties that the building is much altered, such that the historic elements are subsumed by later 19th and 20th century development so that the original plan form is no longer readily legible. These are reasons not to consider the building a NDHA. The report then analyses the contribution to the conservation area and notes the 'limited visibility from the public realm'. This leads the author to conclude that it would be unreasonable to treat the

building as a NDHA simply because elements of it are old. In the light of this further analyses and teasing out of the issues, I agree with the author that the building is much altered and contributes very little to the character of the conservation area (the wall and the trees at the entrance, however, do contribute to this part of the CA. As such, I do not wish to object.

In respect of the new building, the 'devil is in the detail' as to its success, you might want to consider the following conditions:

*The bricks to be laid Flemish bond (or another bond, just not stretcher);
Approval of the choice of bricks;
Natural slate for the roof;
A detail of the quoin detailing (i.e. how it is to be handled);
Sash windows, recessed and with stone cills;
Details of the porch.*

8. Publicity

The application has been advertised by way of letters to near neighbours of the site and by the displaying of a site notice at the site subject to this proposal.

The publicity has generated 23 letters of support in total with comments received summarised as the following:

- The existing house is in a state of disrepair and dilapidated;
- The scheme is better solution to renovating the existing house and would enhance positively the character and setting of the immediate area/streetscene;
- The scheme would provide a safe, modern and energy-efficient home

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Principle of development including self-build

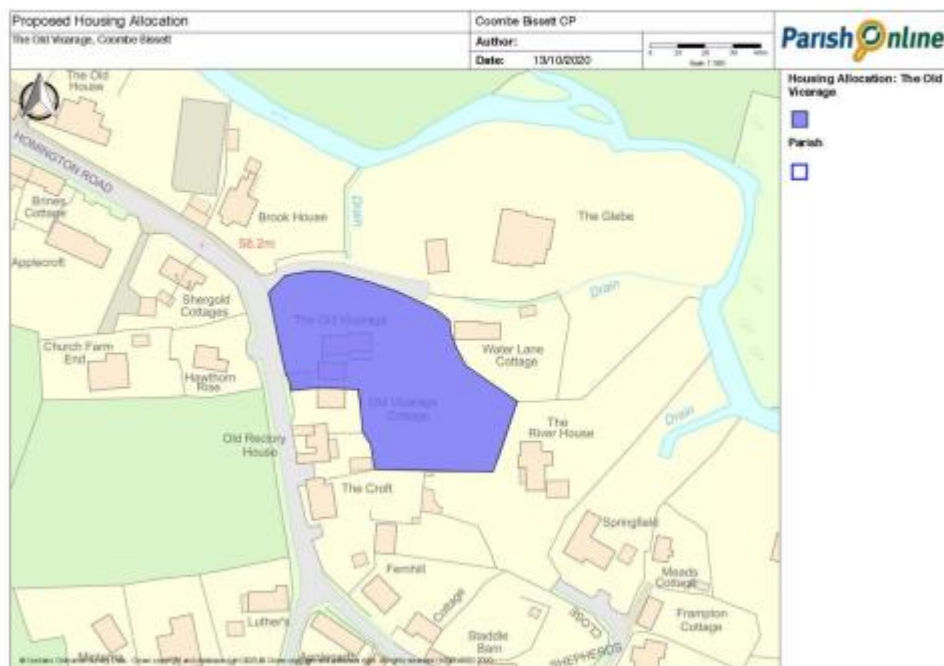
Planning permission is required for the development. Applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004). The NPPF is also a significant material consideration and due weight should be given to the relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency of the framework. The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted in January 2015.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) sets out a Settlement Strategy and a Delivery Strategy for the sustainable delivery of new development within the County. Applying the normal principle that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise; proposed new development which does not comply with the Settlement and Delivery Strategies will be unsustainable, and so unacceptable as a matter of principle, in this overarching context. The WCS for the area was adopted by Wiltshire Council in January 2015.

Core Policies CP1 (Settlement Strategy) and CP2 (Delivery Strategy) form the settlement strategy for the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS). In line with NPPF, this directs development towards the more sustainable settlements and locations, including housing development.

The area to the south east of the existing dwellinghouse has been identified for housing within the draft Coombe Bissett and Homington Neighbourhood Plan (CBHNP) which has yet to be formalised/adopted but is now at examination stage. The allocation of this site for housing (up-to 4 dwellings) is shown by the blue area in the extract taken from the draft CBNHP below.

Provisional Allocation AS1: The Old Vicarage.



Notwithstanding this, the site in planning policy terms is within the settlement boundary of the village of Coombe Bissett which there is provision/allocation for sustainably located dwellinghouses and therefore subject to matters around design, scale and heritage, amenity issues, ecological implications and highway safety will be considered in further detail within this report below, a scheme of this nature in principle, is considered acceptable in planning policy terms.

The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 \(as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016\)](#) provides a legal definition of self-build and custom housebuilding. The Act does not distinguish between self-build and custom housebuilding and provides that both are where an individual, an association of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or

associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals.

The proposal would provide a self-build unit for which there would appear to be an un-met need as confirmed in the Wiltshire Council self-build register. As a proposal for a self-build dwelling, this carries moderate weight in favour of the proposal as it would meet an identified housing need. In terms of securing the proposal for as a self-build dwellinghouse, this is to be secured by the applicant(s) entering into a unilateral agreement with the Council. The agent representing the applicants for this application has confirmed that his clients are prepared to enter into a legal agreement should members be minded to grant planning permission for this development proposal.

The Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. However, the provision of a replacement dwelling on the site is considered by officers to be of limited or no weight and of neutral benefit in that regard as it would not increase the supply of housing. However, the lack of a 5 year housing supply does mean that the provisions of paragraph 11d of the NPPF apply. This is referred to where relevant in the sections below.

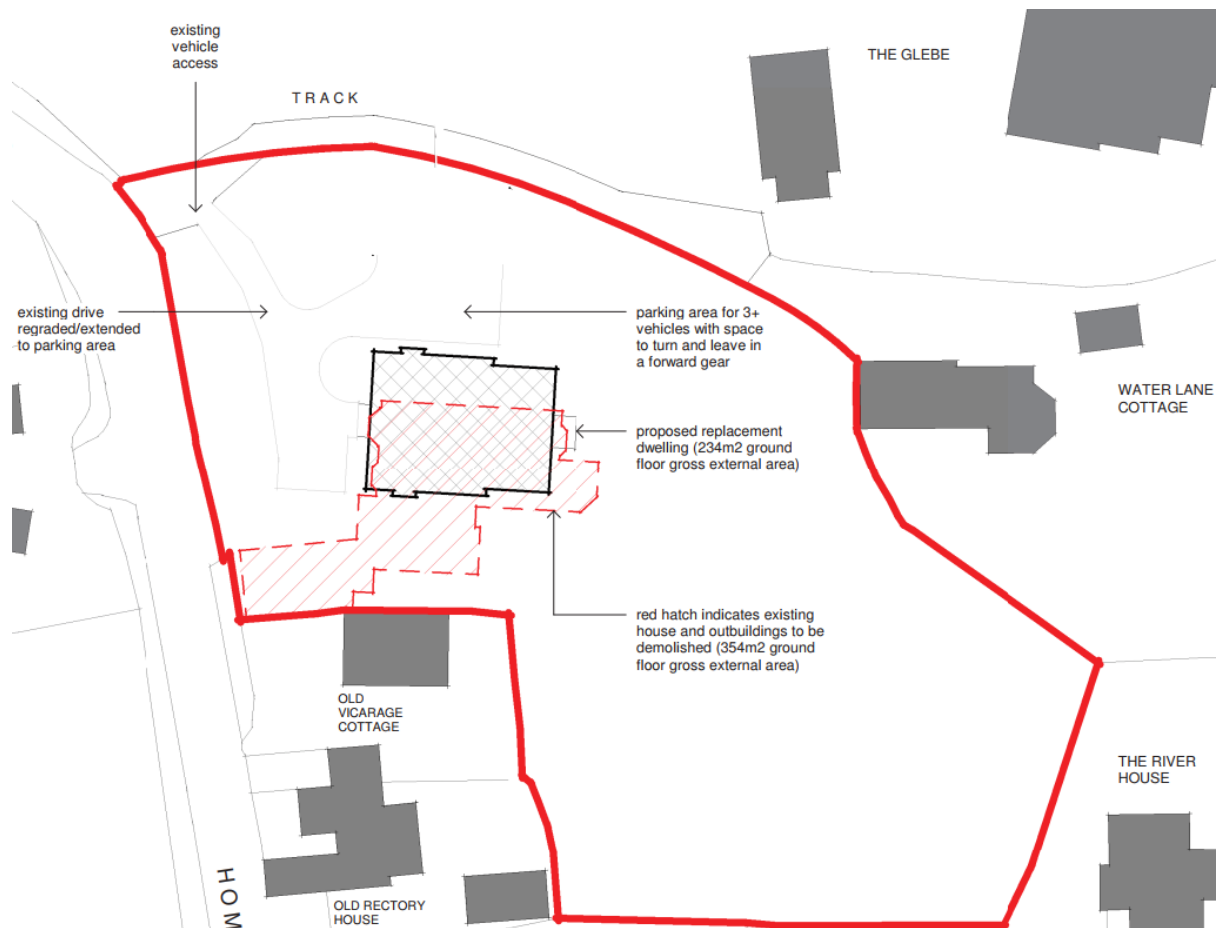
9.2 Design, scale and heritage matters/CCNL impact

The revised NPPF puts greater emphasis on the need for good design. Paragraph 135 sets out that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; demonstrate good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; be sympathetic to local character; and establish a sense of place. It states at Paragraph 139 that development that is not well designed should be refused. Paragraph 189 is clear that “Great weight” be given to the conserving and enhancement of the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

At a local level, WCS policy CP57 (Ensuring High Quality Design & Place Shaping), further requires a high standard of design in all new developments through, in particular, enhancing local distinctiveness; retaining and enhancing existing important landscaping and natural features; being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and landscapes in terms of layouts, massing, building heights and plot sizes; and making efficient use of land whilst taking into account the local context and surrounding uses.

Also of relevance is WCS policy CP51 (Landscaping) that states: *Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.*

This scheme seeks consent for the demolition of the existing dwellinghouse within a large, plot of land and the erection of a replacement dwelling. The site layout is shown in an excerpt below. This shows the existing dwellinghouse outlined in dashed red and the siting of the replacement dwellinghouse subject to this proposal.



The design of the replacement dwellinghouse is grand in statue and appearance with the elevations shown in an excerpt below.



FRONT (W)
1 : 100



SIDE (S)
1 : 100



REAR (E)
1 : 100



SIDE (N)
1 : 100

The proposed dwelling is a two-storey hipped roof dwelling, with a double-fronted facade and portico to define the main entrance. The design includes brick chimneys on the gable ends to frame the main roof.

WCS policy CP58 (Conserving the historic environment) states development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in the exercise of any functions, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in this Section, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Members are advised that the previous application, PL/2024/09612 for an identical proposal to this application was withdrawn by the applicants on the basis that the Local Planning Authority considered the existing dwellinghouse to be a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and its subsequent demolition would result in substantial harm to heritage assets. This application is supported by a further heritage assessment from Forum Heritage Services that provided an assessment of the 'listable' quality of the building and if not listable, whether the building could be considered as a NDHA (if not listable) and whether the building makes a positive contribution to the Coombe Bissett Conservation Area. The report concludes that the building is not listable, is not considered to be a NDHA and therefore, does not make a positive contribution to the area.

An assessment of this submitted report has been undertaken by the Council's Conservation Officer and agreement is reached with the author of the report, that the building is much altered and contributes very little to the character of the Conservation Area. Please refer to the full comments of the Conservation Officer in the consultee response section of this report. Consequently, there is no objection raised to the demolition of this building subject to the imposing of a condition requiring further details of the materials to be used in the construction of the replacement dwelling. Furthermore by securing this detail via the imposing of a planning condition, this would provide mitigation against any impact of the scheme given the location of the site within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL). Whilst the NPPF para 189 indicates that "Great weight" be given to conserving and enhancing the overall beauty of the AONB, in this context the dwelling is simple the replacement of an existing dwelling in an otherwise screened and urban location, and it would have no visual impact outside the application site on the wider landscape or scenic beauty of the AONB. Thus, in officers opinion, there are modest benefits of this scheme that would see a site with a dilapidated building brought back into use with the enhancement of this by way of the replacement dwellinghouse proposed. These carry modest weight in the overall balance.

Subject to a condition imposed onto any consent, requiring further details of the materials to be used in the construction of the replacement dwellinghouse, officers consider the design and scale of the proposal utilises space within the plot of land and would therefore adhere to the requirements of Core Policies CP51, CP57 and CP58 of the WCS.

9.4 Amenity impacts including trees

Core Policy 57 requires that development should ensure the impact on the amenities of existing occupants is acceptable, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, and the NPPF (paragraph 135f) states that planning

decisions should 'create 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 existing dwellinghouse is set back within the plot of land with access/egress obtained via the north western corner of the site. All the western boundary of the site adjacent to Homington Road, a number of well-established trees are situated that help reduce the view of the existing dwellinghouse. In terms of amenity impacts, the replacement dwelling would be sited further away from the immediate neighbouring property, known as Old Vicarage Cottage.

The existing dwellinghouse is located within a residential area where a degree of inter-relationship and overlooking is considered acceptable in planning terms. The built form of the area appears to be mainly detached properties of varying design set within differing plots sizes. As shown in the excerpt below, The Old Vicarage is surrounded by neighbouring dwellinghouses. Views afforded from the first floor windows of the replacement dwellinghouse would be largely similar to that already available from the existing dwelling. The existing trees and shrubbery along the western perimeter of the site are to be retained and provide a degree of screening that would limit any overlooking onto the neighbouring properties from the first floor windows. It is considered unlikely that views afforded from the first floor windows on the rear (eastern) elevation of the replacement dwellinghouse would have any significant impact on the neighbouring properties known as Water Lane Cottage, The River House, Brook House, The Old Vicarage and The Glebe.



At the north western corner of the site at the entrance are two significant plane trees. These trees are not under a tree preservation order and are shown in the photo.



The Council's Tree Officer has assessed the application following the submission of an Arboricultural Survey and Method Statement and whilst having no objection to the scheme in principle, has some concerns around the protection of the two plane trees during any construction works. His comments state:

The tracking diagrams provided indicate space is just about sufficient for large construction vehicles to enter/exit site, but they do not appear to show the tree protection in place around the trunks of the two Plane trees at the entrance (as recommended in the Arb Report). Furthermore, the idea of scaffold poles being driven into the ground close to the base of such large trees, to create a frame to fix protective panels to (see extract from Arb Report below), seems a good idea in theory, but in practice it will be difficult to achieve without causing significant damage to large structural roots, and further restricting space for vehicle movement in and out of the site. The two Plane trees are such a significant feature of the local environment it is imperative we ensure they can be adequately protected during any development process before any permission is approved. With this in mind, and for the same reasons I would be reluctant to see any proposal to erect gates near to the two Plane trees. The Arb Report suggests gates could be installed as part of a landscaping scheme (reference section 5.18). If gates are required anywhere within the RPA of the trees it is important details are obtained before permission is granted, not left to condition. Finally, it seems the plan is to lift the Cellular Confinement System once the development is completed. However, for the benefit of the trees it would almost certainly be better if it were left in place, and dressed with a permeable surface layer, to provide ongoing protection against root compaction.

As detailed above, the Council's Arboricultural Officer has raised concerns around the protection of the two plane trees during construction works associated within any planning consent. As a consequence, additional information has been provided by the agent on behalf of the applicants to address the concerns raised. It is accepted by the Council's Arboricultural Officer that the entrance to the site where the two plane trees are located is an established access. Therefore, subject to a suitably worded condition requiring appropriate protection of the two plane trees during any construction works, any potential harm to these two trees would be suitably mitigated for. Any condition imposed would require appropriate tree protection being put in place under the appropriate arboricultural supervision of a qualified person(s). If Members are minded to approve this scheme, a condition to this extent can be imposed.

Having regard for the consideration of any neighbouring amenity impacts by of this scheme which there are considered to be none in regard to overlooking or overshadowing and subject

to the imposing of a suitably worded condition for the protection of the two plane trees during any permitted construction works associated with the development proposal, the proposal adheres to the requirements of Core Policy CP57

9.4 Ecological Impact including the River Avon SAC, the New Forest SPA and BNG

CP50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework require that the planning authority ensures protection of important habitats and species in relation to development and seeks enhancement for the benefit of biodiversity through the planning system. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF indicates that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia):

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); (emphasis added)

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs; (emphasis added)

Paragraph 192 of the NPPF states that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should (inter alia):

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. (emphasis added)

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF also states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused; (emphasis added)

Biodiversity Net Gain

From 12 February 2024 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Based on the information available the biodiversity gain planning condition is not considered to apply to this application as the application is for self and Custom Build Development, meaning development which:

- consists of no more than 9 dwellings;*
- is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and*

- *consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding (as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015).*

The proposal is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as the application is for a self-build replacement dwellinghouse. The applicant will be required to enter into a legal agreement with the Council to secure this proposal as a self-build dwellinghouse.

New Forest Protected Sites

The proposed development site lies within the 13.8km zone of influence for the New Forest internationally protected sites, which comprises the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site. Therefore, the application is screened into appropriate assessment under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) on account of its potential to cause adverse effects on the New Forest protected sites through increased recreational pressure which may occur alone and in-combination with other plans and projects. Many of the special features of the New Forest protected sites afforded protection are vulnerable to adverse effects associated with an increase in recreation as demonstrated in Natural England's supplementary advice issued for the SPA on 19 March 2019 and for the SAC on 18 March 2019.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council). This concluded that given the nature of the development and the absence of any increase in overnight accommodation, there would be no recreational impact on the New Forest, therefore there is no mechanism for adverse effect. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC and New Forest Ramsar site and the proposal is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Based on the comments above, the proposal will not have any impact on the New Forest SPA.

Habitat Regulations Assessment: River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Hampshire Catchment

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and has potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through discharge of phosphorus in wastewater. Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (the LPA) to determine the potential significant effects and the suitability of any measures proposed to avoid or mitigate those effects. A test of likely significance has been conducted by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council). This assessment determined that, due to the lack of any increase in water supply, drainage installation within this development, there will be no mechanism for effect on the River Avon SAC catchment. The Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the River Avon SAC Catchment and the proposal is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

The proposed package treatment plant and drainage field should be installed, maintained and operated in accordance with the submitted specification and details. Any subsequent replacements should have an equivalent or improved performance specification. The package treatment plant and drainage field should be installed, connected and available for use before the development is occupied and they should be maintained and operated thereafter for the lifetime of the development. The area in which the development is located is within close proximity to the River Avon and may experience flooding and ground water conditions of concern. Primary responsibility for ensuring sewage systems for new developments are adequate lies with the Building Control Department. We would recommend you satisfy yourself that a non-mains sewerage system is appropriate and practicable in the circumstances taking

into account ground water conditions throughout the year. For further guidance see the National Planning Practice Guidance “Water supply, wastewater and water quality.” Any installation of a Package Treatment Plant needs to meet approval of Environment Agency’s requirements under their permitting role.

Officers note the comments of the Council’s Ecologist on this element of the proposal. Based on the above, the impact of the scheme will not have any impact on the River Avon SAC catchment.

Protected Species

On site ecological enhancements

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The NPPF also encourages applications to deliver measurable net gains (para 187 d). While it is not expected that this development will result in significant loss of habitat, both CP50 and NPPF requires the inclusion of biodiversity enhancements. Ecological enhancements would be provided through the installation of bird and bat boxes, hedgehog dome and bee bricks.

The Council’s Ecologist also recommends a certain standard of lighting for the site and specifies an acceptable period for vegetation removal: *“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. 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. Suitable lighting to ensure dark foraging and commuting routes can be retained could be secured via condition.*

The scrub and trees across the site provide suitable nesting habitat for a range of bird species. Where possible, vegetation removal will be scheduled outside the bird breeding season (1st March–31st August) to avoid potential disturbance. If removal during this period is unavoidable, a pre-works nesting bird inspection will be conducted no more than 48 hours before clearance”.

Off site ecological enhancements

Notwithstanding the above, the agent on behalf of the applicants have offered to enter into a legal agreement with the Council to provide a financial contribution to offset the perceived ecological harm by way of the scheme. This suggested mitigation has not been accepted as necessary by the Council’s Ecologist and hence cannot be accepted as it would not pass the tests laid out in the NPPF.

Surveys

Phase 2 surveys for bats and reptiles were undertaken in 2022, with updated walkover surveys in 2024 and 2025.

At the time of the original survey in 2022, the site was reported to have suitability for a low population of reptiles. Three dusk emergence surveys were undertaken by Kingfisher Ecology Ltd in July and August 2022. These surveys identified two day roosts of common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats within the main house, supporting an estimated 1 to 5 individuals.

The site was recently cleared of vegetation as stated within the Full Ecological Mitigation report. It is unclear whether this clearance followed the working method statement outlined in the original reptile survey report. This clearance would have an effect on the availability of habitats for the reptile populations.

The application states that Kingfisher Ecology Ltd revisited the site in July 2025 and recommended that the applicants repeat the reptile and phase 2 bat surveys due to these now being out of date. A 'walk-over' of the site was conducted by Kingfisher Ecology Ltd and it was noted that *"the garden was recently cleared of a lot of vegetation, but the ecological value of the site remains the same"*.

Updated reptiles surveys are required to confirm the current status of the site for reptiles, in line with the consultant ecologist's recommendations.

Updated bat surveys are also required, considering the bat surveys were undertaken over 36 months ago. The survey data should be from the most recent survey season, with Natural England's EPS licence application stating surveys should be "up-to-date and have been completed within the current or most optimal recent survey season

In particular, the Council's Ecologist has stated that: *"...Bats and their roosts are afforded stringent protection under the Conservation of The Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and as such are a material consideration within the planning consultation process. In carrying out its statutory function, the LPA must be reasonably sure that the proposal will not result in significant adverse effects on protected habitats or species. **The further survey work recommended within the submitted report, including appropriate additional roost inspections, bat surveys and reptile surveys, must be completed and submitted for review by the LPA's ecology team prior to determination. The results should confirm the current status of the bat roosts and may necessitate revisions to the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, which must be updated and secured accordingly. I therefore maintain a holding objection until all the issues listed above have been suitably addressed**"*.

The agent and applicants for the proposal have requested that Council officers use their discretion on this matter and would like further surveys dealt with by a suitably worded planning condition requiring an ecological mitigation strategy be provided onto any consent.

The applicant's suggested condition is as follows:

"No development shall commence on site (including demolition, ground works and vegetation clearance) until an Ecological Mitigation Strategy (EMS) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The EMS shall include full details for the measures set out in the Mitigation Strategy, as updated by any European Protected Species License (EPSL). The approved EMS shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with approved details.

REASON: To ensure that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of the protection of species."

However, it is clear from the comments of the Council's Ecologist and the recommendations of Kingfisher Ecology Ltd that further reptile and phase 2 bat surveys are required to be provided before any decision for planning approval can be recommended to establish if there have been any substantial changes to the ecological habitat of the area.

The Council's Ecologist has clarified that as per CIEEM's (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management) Advice Note April 2019, which is endorsed in the Government's Guidance *Protected Species and development: advice for local planning authorities (updated in 2025). This latter guidance note indicates that (extract):

2. Assess the information provided with the planning application

You should check the developer has:

- submitted enough information for you to fully consider the effect on protected species and their habitats
- as far as possible, planned to avoid harm or disturbance to protected species and their habitats with the location, layout, design and timing of the development

If the information is not adequate you should ask for further information, such as further surveys or mitigation measures.

You can refuse planning permission if surveys:

- are carried out at the wrong time of year
- are not up to date
- do not follow standard survey guidelines without appropriate justification
- do not provide enough evidence to assess the likely negative effects on protected species

Planning conditions

You should not usually attach planning conditions that ask for surveys. This is because you need to consider the full impact of the development proposal on protected species before you can grant planning permission. You can add an 'informative' note to the planning permission to make it clear that a licence is needed.

In exceptional cases, you may need to attach a planning condition for additional surveys. For instance, to support detailed mitigation proposals or if there will be a delay between granting planning permission and the start of development. In these cases a planning condition should be used to provide additional or updated ecological surveys to make sure that the mitigation is still appropriate. This is important for outline applications or multi-phased developments.

The CIEEM guidance document gives advice on protected species surveys and the length of time they can be valid for (see attached). This advice suggests that if data was collected over 18 months ago, the results can be considered to be no longer be valid. In this case, the original surveys date from 2022, some 3 years ago.

The Council's Ecologist has also confirmed that further surveys required **cannot be secured by condition** because the Local Planning Authority, in its statutory function, must be reasonably sure that the proposal will not result in significant adverse effects on protected habitats or species. The mitigation measures proposed must therefore be based on up-to-date evidence that accurately reflects the current ecological baseline. Similarly, the Council's own guidance states that additional surveys cannot be secured by condition, as the necessary mitigation strategy may depend on the results of those surveys.

Members should note the above extract from the guidance that planning conditions **should not be used to require further ecological surveys**. This is because officers are required to consider the full impact of the development proposal on protected species before planning permission can be granted.

This particular case is not considered to be an "exceptional" case as outline by the above guidance, and furthermore, the imposing of a condition requiring surveys to be undertaken would, in officers opinion, set a precedent for similar future conditions on similar applications.

Summary

Paragraph 11d and footnote 7 of the NPPF indicates that proposals should be approved unless there are strong reasons to refuse the proposal. One the main areas listed by the paragraph is development impacts on the AONB and habitats related matters.

Whilst it is noted that the scheme would provide some on site ecological/biodiversity enhancement as outlined above, this does not outweigh the matters raised around the out-of-date reptile and phase 2 bat surveys.

As such surveys cannot be secured by a suitable planning condition, and in the absence of up-to date surveys for reptiles and phase 2 bat surveys, the LPA cannot be reasonably certain that the development will not result in significant adverse effects to protected habitats or species in fulfilling its legal duty under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). On this basis, officers have no option but to recommend refusal of planning permission for this development proposal.

9.5 Parking/Highway Safety

Core Policy CP60 states: *The council will use its planning and transport powers to help reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and support and encourage the sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and through Wiltshire.*

Core Policy CP61 states: *New development should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.*

The site benefits from the existing access/egress at the north western corner of the site onto the A354 Homington Road and this access/egress is not to be altered.

The Council's Highways Officer has assessed this proposal with full comments detailed in the consultee response section of this report. Subject to the imposing of a condition requiring the parking places to be in situ prior to the occupation of the replacement dwellinghouse, no objection is raised. On the basis of this, the proposal is unlikely to have any adverse impact on highway safety or highway users that would warrant the refusal of planning permission.

10. Conclusion and Planning Balance

The comments received from the Parish Council and members of the public in support of this proposal are duly noted and have been carefully considered

This proposal seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwellinghouse and the erection of 1 self-build residential dwelling, access, parking, landscaping and associated work. Whilst the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, the provision of a replacement dwelling on the site is considered by officers to be of limited or no weight and of neutral benefit.

The matters raised around heritage and the status of the existing dwelling being considered as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) as outlined in the withdrawn application, PL/2024/09612 have now been addressed for the purposes of this application. Within the submitted information for this application and consultee comments response of the Conservation Officer, it is confirmed that the existing building is not listable, is not considered to be a NDHA and therefore, does not make a positive contribution to the area. As such, this matter has now been addressed.

It is noted that the design of the replacement dwellinghouse is considered to be acceptable in terms of design, scale and the setting of wider area. If Members are minded to approve this scheme, a condition can be imposed to secure details of the materials to be used in the construction of the works in order to mitigate any impact to the setting of the Conservation Area and Cranborne Chase National Landscape. Furthermore, should this application be approved, the applicants have agreed to enter into a legal agreement to secure the replacement dwellinghouse as a self-build proposal.

It is evident that there are modest benefits of this scheme that would see a site with a dilapidated building brought back into use with the enhancement of this by way of the replacement dwellinghouse proposed. These carry modest weight.

However, Members are advised to have regard for paragraphs 187(a), 192(b) and 193(a) of the NPPF that specifically relates to plans protecting priority species and states that planning permission should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be adequately mitigated. This is reflected in paragraph 11d footnote 7.

As there are ecological concerns raised to this scheme by the Council's Ecology Team on the basis of the out-of-date ecological surveys for reptiles and bats identified within the site that have been submitted within this application, the wording of the NPPF is of relevance. Furthermore, protected species such as bats and their roosts are afforded stringent protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and as such are a material consideration within the planning consultation process and places a legal duty on the Council. Whilst the applicants have sought to address this matter by way of a pre-commencement condition and/or a financial contribution to any perceived ecological harm secured by a legal agreement, this identified harm outweighs the benefits of this application. The imposing of a condition requiring surveys to be undertaken would set a precedent in officer opinion. Members should be aware that Government guidance specifically refers to this matter in that planning conditions should not be used to require further ecological surveys. In the absence of up-to date surveys for reptiles and phase 2 bat surveys, the LPA cannot be reasonably certain that the development will not result in significant adverse effects to protected habitats or species. This harm is considered to significantly outweigh any modest benefits resulting from the proposal.

On this basis, the proposal by virtue of the out of date ecological surveys and the refusal of the applicants to provide the required surveys prior to the determination of this application is contrary to the requirements of Core Policy CP50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, NPPF and Government guidance. This particular case is not considered to be an “exceptional” case where planning conditions could be imposed regards the surveys, and furthermore, the imposing of a condition requiring surveys to be undertaken would, in officers opinion, set a precedent for similar future conditions on similar applications.

11. RECOMMENDATION: THAT PERMISSION BE REFUSED for the following reason(s):

The applicants have failed to submit up-to date bat and reptile surveys to enable the Local Planning Authority to be reasonably certain that the development will not result in significant adverse effects on protected habitats or species identified within the site. As this is not an exceptional case whereby a condition may be capable of being imposed to secure revised surveys, the lack of updated information means that the proposal does not adequately demonstrate how protected species will be mitigated for and consequently, does not meet the legal requirements of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The proposal is therefore contrary to the requirements of CP50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, is in contravention of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and paragraphs 187(a), 192 (b) and 193 (a) of the NPPF guidance and Government guidance.