

Supporting Statement – Retrospective Householder Planning Application

Pergola at Unit 19, Bulbridge Barns, Bulbridge Farm, Wilton, Wiltshire

1. Introduction

This application seeks retrospective planning permission for an existing freestanding, open-sided pergola erected on the patio of Unit 19, Bulbridge Barns, Bulbridge Farm, Wilton.

The structure was installed in the belief that it constituted permitted development under Class E of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Subsequent advice has confirmed that, because it sits forward of the principal elevation, it falls outside Class E. Permission is therefore sought retrospectively.

2. Site Context and Unusual Layout

Unit 19 forms part of a courtyard-style barn conversion at Bulbridge Farm. All units are accessed solely from either a shared internal courtyard or driveways.

Unit 19 has only one elevation that provides access to the property. That elevation faces the bottom of its garden that overlooks a field, and has access to the main entrance door, and is therefore the properties only useable elevation.

There is no conventional rear elevation. A neighbouring property sits at a right angle, so the opposite side of Unit 19 does not form a rear garden or rear elevation in the normal sense. As a result, the patio immediately in front of the only access door is the sole practical outdoor living space available to the occupiers of Unit 19.

3. Description of Development

The development consists of a freestanding aluminium pergola with the following characteristics:

- Dark grey powder-coated aluminium frame
- Adjustable louvred roof
- Retractable side screens (fabric)
- Fully open-sided when the screens are retracted
- Sited on the existing patio immediately in front and to the side of the main (and only) access door
- Not attached to the dwelling
- More than 1 metre from either side boundary
- Single-storey, modest domestic scale, used for outdoor seating and weather protection incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse

Photographs showing the structure in context are submitted with this application.

4. Planning History and Neighbouring Approvals

The original conversion permission for Bulbridge Farm did not remove or restrict permitted development rights for the individual units.

Two neighbouring units within the same area of driveway development provide important context:

- No. 21 Bulbridge Barns (application PL/2021/05849) has a substantial single-storey glazed extension with a dual-pitched roof that projects significantly further from the main building than the patio on which the pergola at Unit 19 is sited. Photographs of this extension are submitted. The extension is larger, more solid and more permanent than the open-sided aluminium pergola that is the subject of this application.
- No. 22 Bulbridge Barns (application PL/2021/10764) received planning permission for a single-storey open-sided mono-pitched canopy. The case officer's report explicitly describes the structure as "a mono-pitched canopy on the rear elevation" and "a single storey open sided lean-to rear extension" running almost the full width of the rear elevation. This was approved even though Unit 22 has an entrance door on the opposite elevation. The hand-drawn floor plan submitted with that application did not label front or rear elevations. The decision demonstrates that, within this courtyard development, the Council has been prepared to treat a non-primary access elevation as a rear elevation and to approve open-sided canopy structures upon it.

The pergola at Unit 19 is of more modest scale than either of these neighbouring developments, is fully freestanding and is open-sided.

5. Assessment Against Development Plan and Material Considerations

Character and appearance

The pergola is a lightweight, contemporary aluminium structure with an open louvred roof and retractable screens. When the screens are open it has minimal visual bulk and does not enclose space or dominate the black weatherboarded and oak-framed elevation of the barn conversion, it would usually never need to have the screens fully down, just partially on the East and West sides as sunshades when in use. It is consistent in scale and materials with modern domestic outdoor structures and has no material impact on the character of the driveway or the wider rural setting. The previous approvals at Nos 21 and 22 further support the principle that modest (and in those cases larger) permanent structures can be acceptable in this development.

Residential amenity

The structure is more than 1 metre from both side boundaries. It does not reduce light to neighbouring windows, and does not create any sense of enclosure or overbearing impact.

The approach taken by the Council to neighbour amenity in the approval at the neighbouring Unit 22 (PL/2021/10764) is directly relevant. In that case the case officer stated:-

“Core Policy CP57 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 130f) 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 single story canopy area does extend towards the boundary and neighbouring property. As the nature of this proposal is open ended and single storey, it is not thought to be overbearing or result in a significant loss of light to the neighbouring amenity area. The site is partially screened by 6ft timber fencing which helps mitigate any impact on neighbour amenity. As the proposal is open walled, no windows are being installed in this part of the development. No issues of overlooking have been identified.

The proposals are considered to be acceptable in relation to neighbour amenity and to comply with Core Policy 57.”

The pergola at Unit 19 is smaller in scale, freestanding, open-sided, and more than 1 metre from either boundary. Applying the same reasoning adopted by the Council at Unit 22, the structure causes no overbearing impact, no significant loss of light. It therefore also complies with Core Policy 57 and paragraph 130f of the NPPF.

Access and practical living conditions

Because Unit 19 has only one access elevation and no conventional rear garden (due to the right-angled relationship with the neighbouring property), the patio in front of the main door elevation is the only usable outdoor amenity space. The pergola does not affect the shared driveway to the side and bottom of unit 20 or parking arrangements and does not obstruct pedestrian or vehicular movement.

Other considerations

- The development is incidental to the residential use of Unit 19.
- It does not increase the coverage of the curtilage beyond reasonable domestic levels.
- No trees, hedges or ecological features are affected.

- The site is not within a conservation area, AONB or the curtilage of a listed building (as far as the applicant is aware).
- The applicant genuinely believed the structure was permitted development at the time of installation. Following the high summer temperatures and potentially more to come a solution to more comfortable domestic social use of the area was required.

6. Conclusion

The pergola is a modest, open-sided aluminium structure with louvred roof and retractable screens that provides the only practical outdoor amenity space for Unit 19. The unusual layout of the plot (single access elevation and right-angled neighbouring property) means there is no conventional front/rear elevations to denote the garden to. The structure causes no harm to character, appearance, neighbour amenity or highway safety.

The previous approvals at neighbouring Units 21 and 22 — including a larger glazed extension that projects further than the patio at Unit 19, and an open-sided canopy at Unit 22 that the case officer explicitly described as being on the rear elevation and found acceptable under Core Policy 57 — reinforce the acceptability of householder development of this nature at Bulbridge Farm.

Retrospective permission is therefore respectfully requested