**PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

**ON BEHALF OF**

**NEIL WIFFEN**

**REGARDING A PROPOSAL TO FORM AN ACCESS**

**ONTO MILL LANE, BLACK BOURTON OX18 2PF**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Neil Wiffen and his family recently obtained permission to convert an outbuilding situated rear of The Old Farmhouse into two holiday cottages.

1.2 When gaining this permission it was thought that access via the existing drive to The Old Farmhouse might be adequate for both their home and the holiday cottages. On further examination, it is clear there are valid concerns regarding the safety of this combined access use, and so we are seeking permission for an access onto Mill Lane, dedicated to the holiday cottages.

1.3 Having obtained at least 20 holiday cottage permissions in WODC District, it seems from speaking with my clients that while busy, they don’t always generate as much traffic ass permanent dwellings. They are indeed popular, but they are almost never completely booked out. This results in days when they are empty and so few if any traffic movements on those days. Guests aren’t commuters, and so they often stay at the holiday destination for a day and more relaxing, on such days they may not venture out. It’s difficult to provide clear figures, but the assumption is that overall they may generate less traffic than a similar number of dwellings.

1.4 Mr Wiffen and his wife have young children, and feel that anyone, future home owners of The Old Farmhouse included, would be rightly concerned about the occasional traffic movement from guests using the established access that runs alongside The Old Farmhouse. Children and traffic don’t mix. This is a serious, potential safety hazard, one that they would wish to avoid.

1.5 In addition, they feel that the impact upon the listed building would be reduced if a modest, separate access, restricted to holiday cottage use, is created in Mill Lane.

1.6 It is assumed that Mill Lane is an unclassified road, and if The Old Farmhouse was not listed, an access to serve that dwelling, onto Mill Lane would not normally require permission. This may indicate that an access onto this minor road, is not seen as a major issue in highway safety terms by the Highway Authority. There is a 2,1 metre (7 feet) wide grass verge at this point, the lane is narrow and so traffic is slow along it, reduced speeds means a higher degree of highways safety for local users.

1.7 The remainder of this statement, supported by the attached drawings, sets out the case for the proposed access.

**2. KEY PLANNING ISSUES**

2.1 In our view the key planning issues are

a) The principle of an access to serve the proposed holiday cottages.

b) The details of the scheme in relation to the listed dwelling.

c) The visual impact upon the site and its surroundings.

**3. ASSESSMENT**

**a) The principle of a dedicated access, solely to serve the proposed holiday cottages.**

3.1 The suggested point for the access has visibility to the end of Mill Lane, where it meets Burford Road, from the wall edge the view is from 2.1 metres back from the carriageway edge.

3.2 In many cases a private access for a dwelling onto an unclassified road such as this one does not require permission.

3.3 There is a need for this access, all factors being considered, and so we ask that the principle of an access be accepted, subject to all other planning criteria being satisfied.

**b) The details of the scheme in relation to the listed dwelling.**

3.4 A full description of the features as mentioned regarding the listed dwelling have been presented to the Council in previous applications. Suffice to say that there is no mention of this wall, which does not mean it has no merit, it just isn’t considered worthy of mention in the listed building description.

3.5 The location of the access is a considerable distance from The Old Farmhouse and should therefore have little or no impact upon the setting of the listed building.

3.6 A small number of large evergreen trees that were planted many years along the whole, inside face of the wall, will need to be removed. These have little bio-diversity merit, and either side of the access, new trees are to be planted to soften the look of the access opening.

3.7 Should the WODC planning team feel that more landscaping is required, I feel sure my client would positively consider that request.

3.8 The proposed drive and car spaces are also not close to the listed building. They are to be gravelled, and so the visual impact should be minimal.

**c) The visual impact upon the site and its surroundings**

3.9 The wall is very traditional, a dry stone wall of mixed vintage. Some parts to be older, but between the mid-20th century and more recent times there seems to have been major re-building. This can be ascertained by looking at the coursing, the inclusion of cement mortar, particularly around the coping that tops the wall.

3.10 Nonetheless it has a strength of character and we would not wish to detract from that with some form of ornate or grand style opening in it, simply a modest and limited access with tradition yet not over fussy solid, wooden gates.

3.11 There is a larger opening a short distance to the west, accessing into the rear of the premises owned by L.A Lockhart Limited. Our proposal is smaller and thus would have less visual impact.

3.12 The drive leading from the access would be surfaced with gravel, and lead to no more than 4 car spaces with turning facility, set well away from Mill Lane. These spaces would be located such that even if the gates were to remain open, they would not be directly visible from the street.

3.13 The suggested access location is chosen so that it has no effect upon the other accesses across the road.

3.14 The chosen location could be moved if that is required by the WODC planning team, our intention is to safely take visiting cars away and off the lane, in such a way their visual effect is also negated.

**d) Local Planning Policy**

3.15 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 is now the adopted plan. The following is a short list of some of the planning policies that may apply; officers will advise if more should be referred to:

* *EH9 Historic Environment*
* *EH11 Listed Buildings*

3.16 For the purposes of this application, we do not propose to discuss these or other policies in detail, that being for the case officer to mention in their own assessment report.

3.17 The assessment of all schemes with reference to the NPPF and Local Plan policies is paramount. We quote here a number of extracts from the Local Plan policies that seem relevant to this case:

* Under 2031 Local Plan Policy OS2 applies, and under General Principles, it states that all development will be located where: *“It protects or enhances the local landscape and the setting of the settlement”…*
* Under 2031 Policy OS3, prudent use of resources, including *“making the most efficient use of land and buildings, whilst having regard to the character of the locality.”*

**e) West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016/National Design Guide 2019**

3.18 The Design Guide broadly requires that any development should respect the character and appearance of its setting. Our proposal is modest and typical of many other accesses made through traditional stone walling, in this and other streets in the village. There is no other proposal to make an access in this wall, no precedent for more openings, only this one is requested. The existing wall will otherwise remain in its present form.

3.19 The following are relevant extracts from the 2019 National Design Guide which state that:

Good design is set out in the guide under the following (4 of the original list of 10) characteristics:

* Context
* Identity
* Built form
* Movement

3.20 Briefly put, the traditional context is to be protected by minimising the width and design of the opening and the gates as now proposed.

3.21 Similarly, the 2016 WODC Design Guide advises regarding the character of the area, and that new proposals should preserve and enhance existing traditional settings; these aims have informed us as to the design as now submitted.

f) **The National Planning Policy Framework**

3.22 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies nationally, the purpose being to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Reference is made here to sustainable development, and certain extracts from the NPPF considered directly relevant to this proposal.

3.23 There are 3 dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, which are further described in section7 of the NPPF, and they are "mutually dependent".

3.24 The aim of Mr Wiffen’s proposal is to preserve the setting of The Old Farmhouse and the street scene outside the site, while reducing safety issues that are important to his family, in a way that does not as we see it, affect the amenities of other nearby residents.

**4. CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 We believe that forming a modest access as proposed that has little impact upon features of importance in the street scene accords with all other relevant planning criteria.

4.2 Examples of other accesses of this nature, and larger openings such as that serving LA Lockhart Limited, taken through the stone boundary walls are found through Black Bourton.

4.3 Economic investment in the District is generally encouraged, tourism is seen as a vital part of the overall range of work generated business on which this District’s economy is based. A separate access for the holiday cottages will enhance the stay and thus their viability.

4.4 The details of the scheme were carefully prepared to ensure there be no significant impact upon the street scene and the neighbours.

4.5 We seek planning permission and listed building consent for this change, which has a modest yet in our view positive effect upon the street scene, will add interest to it. Subject to any planning conditions the council see fit, we hope you will support this application and grant planning permission.