

WOODPECKER WOOD, COURT HILL, DAMERHAM SP6 3HL



Proposed conversion of the existing building to form a single residential dwelling with associated access, parking and landscaping

PLANNING STATEMENT

Statement prepared by Victoria Richards, BSc (Hons)
Statement checked by Matthew Holmes, BA (Hons), MA MRTPI

April 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs French and is submitted in support of a planning application for the conversion of an existing building to form a single residential dwelling with associated access, parking and landscaping on land at Woodpecker Wood, Damerham, nr Fordingbridge.
- 1.2 This Statement aims to explain the design approach to the proposed development. The Statement demonstrates how the proposals have been designed to comply with the relevant national and local planning policies and to reflect the local patterns of development and neighbouring buildings in terms of layout and siting, height, scale, materials and landscaping. The proposed development will create a new home through the conversion of an existing building.
- 1.3 The application comprises:
- Completed application form
 - Plans and drawings
 - Arboricultural Report and Method Statement
 - Ecology Report
 - Structural Report
 - This Planning Statement

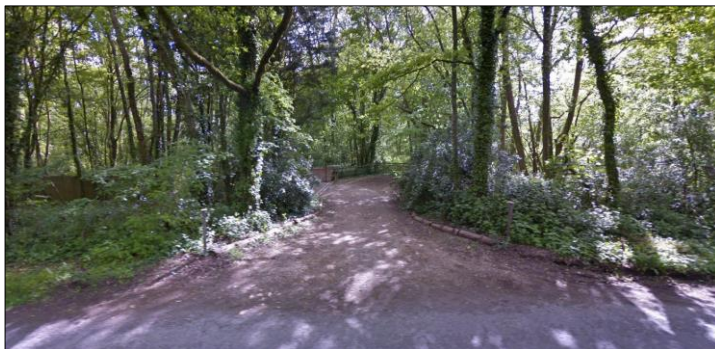
2. Site context

- 2.1 Woodpecker Wood is located in the countryside on the east side of Court Hill on the outskirts of Damerham. The site falls within the Higher Court Wood Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and the Cranbourne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Much of the site is also designated with a Woodland Tree Preservation Order.



Aerial view of the application site (www.google.co.uk)

2.2 The application site consists of a wooded access track that opens out into a larger area of woodland with a central grass clearing. There is a single, former agricultural structure sited on the north boundary of the site and that is of block construction with a corrugated roof. The structure has been surveyed to confirm that it is structurally sound and capable of conversion. It has a pitched roof, window openings and the main double doors on the east elevation.



View of access onto Court Hill shared between Yafflewood (left) and Woodpecker Wood (right) (www.google.co.uk), photo of the existing structure to be converted

2.3 The site is surrounded by agricultural land to the north, west and south. To the immediate east is the residential property of 'Yafflewood' set within an extensive plot. Further southeast along Court Hill there is a mixture of residential properties and agricultural/commercial uses.

2.4 The site is not at risk of flooding and there are no listed buildings within the vicinity. The application site is a sustainable location as it is located a short distance from local facilities within Damerham, and a short driving distance to wider services and employment opportunities in Sandheath and Fordingbridge.

3. Planning History

3.1 There are historic planning applications for residential development within the Higher Court Wood area, which has resulted in the development of the adjacent site 'Yafflewood'. There is no recent planning history for the application site so far as we have seen.

3.2 The Applicants sought pre-application advice from the LPA for the conversion of the existing building in late 2021. The response dated 18 November 2021 confirms that;

- *"whilst we do not currently have any policies relating to the conversion of buildings within the countryside, I am of the opinion that subject to the other considerations outlined below, the reuse of a building could be acceptable providing it does not have any material impact on the character of the area."*

- The Officer has significant reservation about the suitability of converting the building, creation of a residential curtilage and the implications on the sensitive nature of the site.

- External appearance of the building must not appear out of context in its rural location. Rooflights are unlikely to be viewed favourably. The domestic curtilage must not cover the whole site.

- The setting and separation distance is unlikely to adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring residential properties. For future occupants, tree cover could impact on light to habitable rooms and amenity space.

- A single dwelling is unlikely to cause unacceptable impact on highway safety. The site has capacity for parking subject to limited environmental impacts in terms of the SINC and trees.

- An application would need to be supported by an arboricultural impact appraisal and method statement. Non-native landscaping is not supported, and a 10% uplift in biodiversity should be included, such as bird/bat boxes.

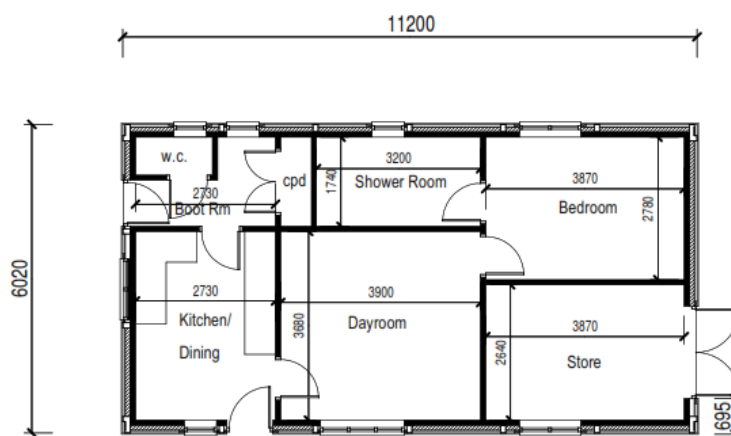
- New residential development requires mitigation for the potential impact on internationally and nationally protected sites. The Council doesn't currently have mitigation projects to address phosphate levels in the River Avon therefore they can't currently permit new overnight accommodation.

3.2 The Applicant has taken into account the advice provided and is submitting a full application for the conversion of the building to form a residential dwelling. The conversion has been carefully

designed to reflect the form of the existing structure and preserve the rural setting. The domestic curtilage is limited to the access track and the immediate surroundings of the structure. Utilities can be provided to the site with minimal environment impact. Biodiversity gains will be provided in the form of nesting boxes, new planting and other measures as set out in the submitted Ecological Assessment.

4. The proposed development

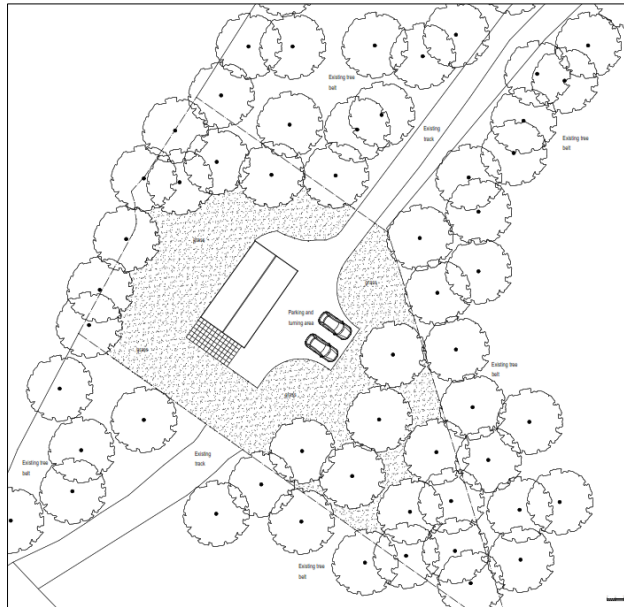
4.1 The planning application seeks planning permission to convert the existing building to form a single one-bedroom dwelling. The proposal is to use the existing structure, form and footprint as the basis for the conversion. Window and door openings will be altered to maximise natural daylight and reflect the internal configuration of rooms. The main entrance and living areas will front southeast, with the bedroom, shower room and boot room towards the back of the building along the northwest elevation. The building will be clad in timber and the roof re-finished in natural slate to ensure the new dwelling has an appropriate appearance for the rural woodland setting.



PLAN - 60m²

Proposed floor plan extract (Adams Planning & Project Services Ltd)

4.2 The existing access onto Court Hill, which is shared with the adjacent 'Yafflewood', will be used and does not require any significant alterations. The new dwelling will exceed the nationally described space standards for a one-bedroom single-storey dwelling and will benefit from storage/garage space that can be accommodated within the existing footprint. There is sufficient space within the proposed domestic curtilage for an outside amenity area and parking/turning area for two cars.



Proposed site plan extract (Adams Planning & Project Services Ltd)

5. Relevant planning policies

National Planning Policy: The National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined as encompassing economic, social and environmental factors. The economic involves building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The social role entails supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by creating a high-quality built environment. The environmental role requires protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 5.2 The NPPF confirms that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 5.3 Paragraph 38 requires councils to 'approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way... and work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve

the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible’.

- 5.4 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF supports the Government’s objective of ‘significantly boosting the supply of housing’, stating that ‘it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay’.
- 5.5 Paragraph 69 promotes the development of small and medium-sized sites, which ‘can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly’.
- 5.6 Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that *‘in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs’*. Paragraph 79 goes on to state that *‘to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby’*.
- 5.7 The NPPF makes clear that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land. Paragraph 124 states that development should take place at appropriate densities, making *‘optimal use of the potential of each site’* (paragraph 125).
- 5.8 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF confirms that the creation of high-quality 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 helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 5.9 Paragraph 134 goes on to state that ‘development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design’. Conversely great weight should be given to development that does reflect the local design guidance and/or introduces ‘outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability’.
- 5.10 Section 15 of the NPPF ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and AONBs. The scale and extent of development should be limited.

5.11 Paragraph 180 requires that planning permission is refused if the development will result in significant harm to biodiversity that cannot be adequately mitigated. Opportunities to improve biodiversity and secure net gains should be integrated as part of the design. Paragraph 182 states *“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site”*.

New Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy (2020), the Core Strategy (2009) saved policies, the Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (2014) saved policies and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

5.12 Policy STR1 ‘Achieving sustainable development’ expects all new development to make a positive social, economic and environmental contribution to community and business life in the Plan Area.

5.13 Policy STR2 ‘Protection of the countryside, Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the adjoining New Forest National Park’ states that development should not have an unacceptable impact on the special qualities of these designated areas and their settings. Great weight will be given to ensuring the character, quality and scenic beauty are protected and enhanced.

5.14 Policy STR5 ‘Meeting our housing needs’ aims to deliver at least 10,420 additional homes in the Plan Area between 2016-2036.

5.15 Policy ENV1 ‘Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation Sites’ confirms that development will be permitted where the Council is satisfied that any necessary mitigation, management or monitoring measures are secured in perpetuity. For residential developments of 49 or less there is a financial contribution towards the provision of recreational mitigation measures.

5.16 Policy ENV3 refers to design quality and local distinctiveness and states that all new development will be required to contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place, being appropriate and sympathetic to its setting in terms of scale, height, density, layout, appearance, materials, and its relationship to adjoining buildings and landscape features, and shall not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shading, noise, light pollution or other adverse impact on local character and amenities.

- 5.17 Policy ENV4 'Landscape character and quality' requires development to retain landscape features (such as woodlands and hedgerows that contribute to green infrastructure and wildlife corridors, features that screen existing development and areas of tranquillity or intrinsically dark skies) through sensitive design, mitigation and enhancement measures to successfully integrate development into the local landscape context.
- 5.18 Policy HOU1 'Housing type, size, tenure and choice' aims to ensure that all residential development helps to address the diversity of housing needs by providing a mix and choice of homes by type, size, tenure and cost.
- 5.19 Policy IMPL2 'Development standards' require new development to meet certain standards to minimise their environmental impact and/or to be adaptable to the future needs of the occupants, such as accessibility, water use efficiency, high speed fibre broadband connection and electric vehicle charging points.
- 5.20 Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (2014) saved policy DM2 will not permit development which would adversely affect the integrity of designated protected areas. Developments will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, retain and where possible enhance nature conservation within the site.
- 5.21 The parking standards SPD (adopted April 2022) indicates 1 bedroom dwellings require 2 car parking spaces and 1 secure cycle storage space.
- 5.22 The Council's Residential Design Guide for Rural Areas (1999) recognises that conversions are possible subject to policy constraints. From a design perspective a conversion should demonstrate a minimal and subtle change, with simple enclosures and external definition, rooflines should be kept simple, with the use of sturdy materials and details avoiding ornament or pretension.

6. Design

Use

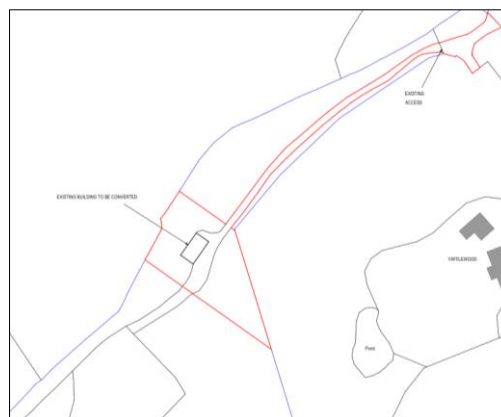
- 6.1 As noted above, the site is largely covered by woodland and with an existing single structure associated with a former agricultural use. The structure already has an electricity supply. The proposal is to convert the structure to a home with one-bedroom. The building has been surveyed and is considered structurally sound for the conversion to residential use. Given this

and that other homes already exist along this section of Court Hill it can be considered that the proposal to convert the building to residential use is consistent with the neighbouring use and will contribute towards the supply of housing as per Local Plan policy STR5.

- 6.2 The Development Plan does not contain any specific policies regarding the conversion of rural structures to residential dwellings in the countryside. The application site falls within the Cranborne Chase AONB and the Higher Court Wood SINCR where new residential development is generally restricted. However, in this case the building already has large windows and a pitched roof and therefore the Applicants consider that the proposed change of use can be achieved with only a minimal visual impact on the local character and landscape. Indeed, the conversion works should serve to improve the appearance of the building.

Amount

- 6.3 The proposal will result in a net gain of one residential dwelling. The density of development is low as a substantial portion of the site remains undisturbed as woodland. The proposal has been led by the scale and form of the existing structure and as a conversion the overall amount of built form on the site will not change. Existing separation distances from surrounding buildings will ensure the development retains a spacious appearance.
- 6.4 The converted building will exceed the nationally prescribed minimum space standards for a one-bedroom home. The plans provided also show that the external amenity and domestic curtilage has been restricted to the area immediately adjacent to the building as suggested in the pre-application advice. Nevertheless, the garden size will still be appropriately proportioned for the expected occupancy of the property. This confirms that the development will provide a high standard of residential amenity for its residents and helps to confirm that the quantum of development is appropriate for the site.



**Proposed block plan extract, domestic curtilage outlined in red, whole site in blue
(Adams Planning & Project Services Ltd)**

Layout

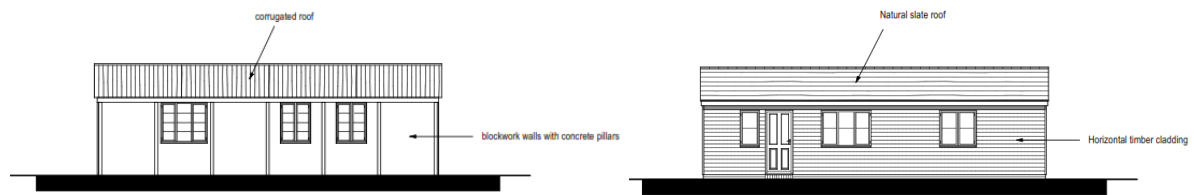
- 6.5 The proposed layout of development on the site has been informed by the existing site configuration and the need to preserve the woodland and the character of the area. To that end the footprint of the building will remain unchanged, with the new front door located on the southeast elevation. The new water supply will be installed along the existing access route which will be resurfaced but in a manner appropriate to prevent any impact to existing tree roots. There will be sufficient space for parking for two cars and turning space without causing any impact on the trees.
- 6.6 The nearest existing homes are far enough away from the converted building that the works will not impact on neighbour amenity in accordance with Policy ENV3. In terms of the amenity of future residents, the proposed elevation plans demonstrate that the dwelling has been carefully designed to incorporate windows on three elevations to maximise natural light. The residents will have the benefit of ample garden space within the domestic curtilage as well as direct access to the existing grass clearing and nearby open countryside. The existing boundary hedgerows and trees already provide a degree of natural screening and privacy.
- 6.7 As a single storey dwelling, the floorplan and layout provides an accessible dwelling that can potentially meet the future needs of all occupants.

Scale

- 6.8 The converted building will retain the pitched roof, single-storey height and form of the existing structure. This is considered an appropriate design response for the site and is the correct approach in terms of respecting the scale of the existing structure and minimising the visual impact on the landscape character of the AONB and the woodland setting.

Appearance

- 6.9 The existing structure is constructed with blockwork walls and concrete pillars with a corrugated roof. It is structurally sound, but the appearance is somewhat utilitarian. The proposal is to use timber cladding and natural slate to soften the appearance of the structure and enhance the visual impact of the building within the context of the AONB landscape and the surrounding woodland in accordance with Policy STR2. The simple design and use of high-quality materials will ensure the converted building is sustainable and easy to maintain for future residents.



Existing and proposed front elevation extracts (Adams Planning & Projects Services Ltd)

Landscaping

- 6.10 The conversion will cause minimal disturbance to the existing environment. The Arboricultural Report confirms that the proposed development can proceed with “*no adverse impact on the ancient woodland*”. The Ecological Assessment confirms that the conversion of the building can be achieved with appropriate mitigation measures, an appropriate Construction Environment Management Plan and a Woodland Management Plan to ensure it will not adversely impact on the integrity of the habitats site in accordance with NPPF paragraph 182 and Policy ENV4.
- 6.11 The open space to the south of the building is sufficient to provide external amenity space and parking without having to encroach on the wider site helping to preserve wildlife habitats. Bird and bat boxes will be installed across the site, amongst other features, in order to achieve an environment net gain as per Policy STR1 and saved policy DM2. The retention of boundary treatments and landscaping will also help preserve the setting of the site when viewed from various vantage points and ensure the development successfully integrates into the local landscape in compliance with policy ENV4.

7. Access

- 7.1 Vehicle and pedestrian access will be via the existing access onto Court Hill. The track will be re-surfaced as per the Arboricultural method statement. There is sufficient open space to the south of the existing building for the installation of a septic tank that can then be serviced by the existing access track. There is sufficient turning area to ensure vehicles can exit in forward gear, preserving highway safety. Parking provision includes 2 parking spaces, and the proposed storage/garage will be large enough to accommodate secure cycle storage without the need for additional structures.
- 7.2 It is not anticipated that there will be significant additional traffic generated by the proposed development that will adversely affect road safety or the ability of the transport infrastructure to accommodate the traffic.

7.3 An internet search has shown that high speed fibre broadband (average download speeds of at least 36 Mbps) is available from multiple service providers for this area. Therefore, the proposed dwelling will have the option to benefit from a high-speed internet connection.

7.4 In terms of the accessibility of services, Damerham is a small rural settlement that offers limited facilities. The application site is within 2km of Sandleheath and 3.5km of Fordingbridge which provide a wider selection of services and employment opportunities such as supermarkets, post office, schools, nurseries, health services, banks, restaurants, cafes and connections to bus routes. There is suitable day to day services and facilities within close enough proximity to the application site such that the proposed dwelling will enjoy an appropriate level of accessibility. The site can therefore be considered sustainable on that basis.

8. Renewable and low Carbon Statement

8.1 The location on the structure surrounded by woodland restricts the installation of renewable energy solutions, however the re-use of an existing structure will have a lower carbon impact on the environment compared to constructing a new dwelling.

9. Planning Obligations

9.1 The proposal to create a residential dwelling creates a need for the development to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy upon the commencement of works. The Applicant is aware of that requirement and an assumption of liability form accompanies the planning application.

9.2 The applicant also notes the need for financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on Internationally designated sites as per Local Plan policy ENV1.

10. Conclusion

10.1 In accordance with the NPPF consideration needs to be given as to whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development. In this case the development is sustainable for the following reasons:

- The proposal will provide a new residential dwelling that is of an appropriate design and will respond well to the character of the area,

- The proposal preserves the setting of the local area, the AONB and the surrounding ancient woodland, and
- The proposal will make efficient use of an accessible site.

10.2 It is therefore considered that the planning justifications and design rationale identified in this Planning Statement demonstrate that the development is acceptable.