



# Planning Statement

**Site: Top End, Kingham**

**Proposal: Alterations and extensions to dwellinghouse. Demolition of existing garage and erection of replacement structure for incidental purposes including vehicular parking and additional linked accommodation at first floor**

**November 2023**

This statement outlines the proposal, makes reference to earlier pre-application advice and sets out the planning policy framework relevant to consideration of the application and then assesses the proposal against this framework.

This statement draws on current Government Guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

The dwellinghouse, Top End, was 'created' by the issuing of planning permission in 1986 (LPA reference: W86/1328) for development comprising: "change of use of barn to form a dwelling, construct garage and conservatory.

The main body of the property is original and was formerly a barn of vernacular form but which has been altered and extended to an extent that it no longer reads as an agricultural structure.

The garage is self-evidently a more modern feature and is of no architectural merit. The conservatory is an alien feature to the property which, based on current WODC design guidance, would not be permitted. That said, as noted in the commentary below, it would be permissible to erect a similar structure using Class A permitted development rights.

The dwellinghouse retains its permitted development rights; which would allow for Class A single storey rear extensions to the house and Class E outbuildings – the latter of which would allow largely unfettered buildings in the garden, rather than consolidating space into the house itself as is proposed here.

## **Planning Policies**

The main West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 policies considered to be of relevance are:

Policy OS1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development) states planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy H2 states in respect of additional accommodation on a site, that accommodation that will remain ancillary to existing dwellings is acceptable. If the proposal is for extensions or alterations to an existing dwelling to create a self-contained unit of accommodation may be subject to a condition ensuring the accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling.

Policy H6 states that alterations, extensions or sub-division of existing dwellings will respect the character of the surrounding area and will not unacceptably affect the environment of people living in or visiting that area. Sub-division of existing dwellings in the open countryside and small villages will be limited to large properties where continued residential use cannot be secured in any other way.

Policy EH2 relates to traditional buildings and states that in determining applications that involve the conversion, extension or alteration of traditional buildings, proposals

will not normally be permitted where this would: extensively alter the existing structure or remove features of interest; include extensions or alterations which would obscure or compromise the form or character of the original building.

Policy EH2 (Landscape Character) requires new development should conserve and, where possible, enhance the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive natural and man-made features of the local landscape, including individual or groups of features and their settings, such as stone walls, trees, hedges, woodlands, rivers, streams and ponds.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Principle of residential development**

The WOLP 2031 (Policies OS2 and H2) categorise Kingham as a 'village' for the purposes of housing settlement hierarchy. Policy states that in such locations opportunities for new dwellings are relatively limited compared to other settlements in the District, but the extension and alteration of existing buildings – to facilitate improvements to existing accommodation – will be supported.

The building in question (Top End, Chapel Lane) is clearly within the village envelope.

The property is a long-standing feature in the village, formerly being a barn and more latterly converted to a dwellinghouse which has been extended.

It is a relatively modest sized building and the principal elevation of the house can be seen from public view in small glimpses. The works to extend (to the rear) are hidden from public view and would be solely for the benefit of the occupants. The garage proposed for replacement and modest enlargement, cannot be seen from beyond the immediate confines of Chapel Lane – being set to the side of a neighbouring house and not forward of the elevation of Top End.

As identified on the site layout plan, the plot benefits from ample separation and space around from its neighbours where relating to the rear. The building has a good sized curtilage. The garage is in a more confined space but would occupy the same site location and broadly same footprint.

In so far as extensions to existing dwellinghouses are concerned, the 'general principles' contained within Policy OS2 are the pertinent criteria for assessing this proposal. These, along with Policy H2, take a permissive stance towards alterations of existing properties within villages. In this regard, the proposal to extend and enlarge the accommodation afforded to Top End is compliant with policy requirements, for the following reasons:

- The proposal is proportionate and of appropriate scale to its context, which is characterised by large, spacious dwellings set in an informal courtyard fashion, with primary activity and function of the house secluded to the rear. The extensions to the existing dwellinghouse can be facilitated without significant structural or cosmetic alterations to the remainder of the building. There is no case for a potentially harmful cumulative impact on development

in the locality as the building (the garage) is already in C3 use and the structure has been a fixture in the streetscene for a significant period of time. Similar applies in respect of the rear conservatory.

- The building, as identified, would be a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development for the reasons outlined above.
- Being an established plot, contained within the village envelope, the development avoids coalescence or any loss of settlement identity.
- The adjoining uses are residential. The same orientation of the building in respect of both aspects of this proposal, its separation from neighbours, and general siting of openings, means that the proposed extension and dormers within the roofscape of the garage would not be harmful to existing occupants.
- The building is not a readily visible building or feature within the local or wider landscape. The works are largely private and for the benefit of the occupants and would not have a harmful impact on the village setting.
- Whilst of relatively neat proportions, the building has been altered and extended in the past and is not a local building of note. The site is not identified as being open space, nor as making an important contribution to the character or appearance of the area. Nonetheless, the remedial works and upgrading of the building will have a beneficial impact on the Conservation Area it sits within.
- As existing, the site only benefits from parking within the garage. This is of a substandard size and arrangement for modern day vehicles. Consequently, the occupants currently have to park 'on street' as parking on the shared drive is prohibited by covenants and available space of land under the applicant's ownership. The enhanced garage will in fact make the internal space more usable for modern day vehicles.
- The building is set outside of Flood Zone 2 and its extension would be into a further part of the building also within Flood Zone 1.
- The proposal would conserve and enhance the natural, historic and built environment.
- The site has no known history as being important for the safeguarding of minerals.
- The building exists with all necessary infrastructure.

These proposed application works have the potential to improve the functional and visual appearance of the site and the setting in relation to its heritage value (within the Conservation Area). In particular, by removing an un-sympathetic conservatory and replacing with a much improved and traditional styled rear extension.

WOLP policies do not seek to qualify the extent of enlargement which would be acceptable to an individual dwelling, as it is recognised that every site is individual and has its own constraints and opportunities. Some commentary exists insofar as replacement houses are concerned, which states development should be "*of a reasonable scale*". Whilst not directly of relevance, the underlying message about scale is clear that the WOLP does not quantify what would be a reasonable scale for a replacement dwelling. In other words there is no set restriction on how large a house can be in any given situation within the District. Supporting text at paragraphs 5.128 to

5.129 of the Local Plan recognise that existing modest properties are invariably the subject of proposals for substantial extension or rebuild. The text further states that substantial new buildings and associated activity areas should create a positive addition to the landscape and meet sustainability objectives in order to outweigh the loss of existing smaller homes. In this case, the size of the house, whilst larger, would be within acceptable parameters given the context and nature of the enhanced accommodation.

The proposals entail the extension of Top End to the rear in an enlarged form (width and depth) in lieu of the existing conservatory. In the context of policies H2 and H6 this is not considered to be disproportionate. The house, whilst evidently would be larger than existing, could however not be considered disproportionate, particularly when regard is given to the size of the plot and the land the house sits within – and as such can be considered to be of reasonable scale. Notwithstanding the nature of the change, the existing house is modest in scale, architectural proportions and quality. The width of the structure, reduced from that presented at pre-application stage to create an inset from the side of the house, would be permissible to the size now shown and the depth is only marginally greater than Class A permitted development rights would allow.

Taking the WODC Design Guide as a rule of thumb, the scale of the extension will be proportionate to the existing house – as the footprint and volume of the extension will be significantly less than the current property.

The proposed extension would read as single storey height to match the scale and height of the existing structure it will replace and to be subordinate to the house it will attach to – the general design guidance has been considered in respect of stepping in the extensions and setting them back also. The extensions will also have a flat roof and utilise matching materials to assimilate well with the host property and enable a clear differentiation between new and old.

Given the scale of the house in relation to the garage and its subservience, there needs to be a balance between how far this can go and the adverse impact on the use of the roof space (as the rooms would not achieve necessary head heights to work as useable space). Bearing in mind that the ancillary space sought could, via a course of utilising Class E pd rights, eventually result in said accommodation being achieved in an alternative manner, this lifting of the garage roof and making use of redundant volume will enable the house and its internal space to be consolidated.

In formulating these proposals, the content of the Design Guide, in particular the sections which relate to domestic extensions, are acknowledged and referenced as appropriate. Whilst the Guide forms part of the suite of documents produced by the Council, it does not form part of the statutory Development Plan and, as such, is guidance only.

Policy H6 further refers to the existing dwelling to be removed needing to be of no historical value. In this instance, whilst not being removed, the relevance of the house having limited historical value is important. Because whilst the existing dwelling is, on the whole, neat and well-formed, it is of a fairly undistinguished appearance and contributes little to the character and appearance of this part of the approach to the settlement, partly due the lack of sense of arrival and the degree of screening of the rear from fields beyond the settlement. Whilst it is recognised that the existing

conservatory and garage would, on the face of it, have a lessened presence on the site, as it stands, when considered as a whole the enhanced design would result in significant improvement to the site and setting.

Unlike the previous Local Plan (2011), the development plan policies are not prescriptive in respect of additional accommodation. Policy H2 confirms that enlarged accommodation is acceptable, subject to a condition ensuring the accommodation remains as such to the main dwelling. Nor does the policy require a justification for the accommodation. The accommodation has been achieved without the need for the erection of a new building, making best use of existing redundant structures (replaced and enhanced in this instance), and with minimal alteration to the building visualisation or change to the site.

### **Landscape and Design Considerations**

This proposal seeks to enlarge the accommodation offered to the existing dwelling by consolidating and extending to utilise the floor area of the building. Rather than unduly harming the character of the barn conversion, bedroom accommodation is proposed at first floor level in the replacement garage, which in its current form is a modern intervention of no architectural merit.

As detailed on the presented plans, the proposed external changes are minimal in order to achieve a better functional use of the building for the proposed purpose of the applicant and their family (the building has not been modernised since the late 80s). There will be no perception of increase in scale, nor significant increase in activity as the works are to the secluded rear and within the body of the new garage. Thus, the changes are within the spirit of the form of the existing building, enhancing its appearance and making the use more conducive to the needs of the applicant.

The changes proposed are purely architectural and cosmetic considerations, which have been conceived to change the general appearance of the barn to restore an enhanced farmhouse vernacular with additional contemporary elements. The conservatory was a regrettable addition which an opportunity now exists to put right.

Where views are available, the context is always one where other buildings are seen in conjunction with or before the application site, and the existing landscaping surrounding the site.

There will be no increased perception of bulk and the scheme continues to enable the applicant to achieve additional bedroom space without needing to vastly extend the physical footprint of the house.

In short, the design seeks to provide a modern and sustainable dwellinghouse whilst adapting a vernacular form and avoiding the need for extensive alterations and enlargement. The building will have a low-key exterior which would relate to the rural nature of the site and does not compromise the agricultural appearance of the building. It is therefore considered that the proposed scheme would comply with Policy OS4, in providing a high quality, sustainable design, incorporating measures for resilience to climate change and enhancing local green infrastructure and biodiversity.

In landscape terms, the proposals are considered to address the requirements of Policy EH2, by enhancing the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive natural features of the site and local landscape.

In our view, the works to the building are minimal and do not excessively alter the form and appearance. The sustainability improvements should be encouraged and supported as well.

The proposed rear extension to the building would be single storey to match the scale and height of the existing structure, but with an enhanced architectural form and appearance.

WOLP policy and the design guide seeks, in considering the conversion of vernacular buildings (*only partially relevant here as the building has already been converted*), to preserve the existing structure and minimise the extent of works and alterations to a building. In so far as is necessary to allow the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of the property, the extent of new openings and external alterations has been kept to a minimum, such that the proposed extensions would neither:

- a) Extensively alter the existing structure or remove features of interest; or
- b) Include extensions, or an accumulation of extensions, which would obscure the form of the original building.

Openings are proposed to facilitate the reasonable use and enjoyment of the building, but no other significant alteration is required. It is also relevant to note that, through locating works to the rear, views from outside the site of the building will be unaffected as the scale and aesthetics of the extension, and its surrounding landscaping remain broadly the same and well screened. Additionally, the new extension will have less glazing and will create reduced light spillage.

The extension has also been designed to remain clearly secondary and subservient to the principal building in terms of footprint and volume. The proposal represents a well-designed and well-executed extension and ensures that it can be clearly differentiated from the existing structure. The proposed extension has a low visual and physical impact due to its apparent lack of mass and discrete and logical siting within the site.

A partially glazed link connection between the remodelled house and new outbuilding is also proposed. By its very nature, this would permeable and as such the extension would neither dominate nor overwhelm the building. In this context, the link would be a low level single storey structure and in space terms would effectively infill a gap between the two buildings. This cannot be construed as disproportionate over and above the size of the original buildings.

The content of the Design Guide, in particular the sections which relate to domestic extensions and the conversion of agricultural buildings, are acknowledged and referenced above. The weight to be afforded to its advice needs to be considered in the context of each individual site. The Council will be aware of appeal decisions across the District, including at both Old Dairy Barn, Main Road, Cote and Meetings Farm Barn,

Little Tew. The most significant outcome of these being where the Inspector confirmed that the Council's approach to extensions to agricultural conversions was not endorsed by local or national planning policy, which, contrary to the Council's position, do allow for further sensitive evolution of a converted agricultural building.

Whilst the dwelling has been extended previously - the enabling consent did not remove permitted development rights for alterations, including the addition of outbuildings and rear extensions. The applicant has an evident desire to amend and alter the configuration of the dwelling and site setup to provide further bedroom space and leisure facilities and this should set the frame of reference against which this 'fallback' position should be assessed. It is therefore considered that an application to approve a sympathetically designed structure would be a more desirable alternative to the fallback of less sightly outbuildings in an uncontrolled fashion.

The site is well contained and surrounded by mature planting. The building form is in many respects identical to the existing garage, save for the alterations to the roofscape. It will occupy the same position on the site and will essentially have the same footprint. To facilitate the better use of floor space at first floor level, the ridge line will be marginally altered but it would not have a perceptible difference – either in close views or the wider landscape. At no point does it sit on a skyline or is it seen without a backdrop and the modest proposed changes would not alter that.

The building will retain its current form. There is no increased perception of bulk and amending the roof form with dormers enables the applicant to achieve additional space without needing to extend the physical footprint of the house.

The pitch roof dormers on the south western elevation of the garage (2 no. in total) have been kept to a minimum size and projection for the sole purpose of providing internal head room.

The Council's Design Guide states that dormer windows are an important feature of traditional buildings in the District. It further explains that they form typical examples of local building craft and give a distinctive appearance and character, as well as being an attractive and practical way of bringing light into attic spaces. Whilst the building will be modern it adopts traditional forms and a vernacular palette of materials. As such it is considered that the introduction of these gabled forms, which are uniform in arrangement, small and sympathetic and related to the setting and building design, would be an appropriate addition.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Policies OS2 and H2 take a permissive stance towards extending dwellinghouses and making better use of existing, traditional buildings. This proposal seeks to extend the existing dwellinghouse function within the frame of the existing building and provide a small enlargement, too.

There will be no change in residential unit numbers on the site.



Alterations to the building would respect the original agricultural form of the building whilst using high quality materials and adopting sustainable building techniques.

It is considered that the proposal would be consistent with Policy OS2, OS3, OS4, H2 and EH1 as well as the design based policies contained in the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 and the NPPF which promote high quality design.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that good design is indivisible from good planning and is about achieving high quality design for all developments including individual buildings.

The proposed alterations and extensions respect the existing plan form of the building and the material palette for the extension reflects the transition between traditional and contemporary. The location of the proposed extension to the rear of the building ensures that, from the public domain, the original structure can be appreciated in its entirety and originality with little by way of visible further adornment to the building frontage. The proportions of the extension are wholly subservient and secondary to the existing building and are positioned to ensure that the more historic elements of the barn are preserved.

Furthermore, the conversion scheme and creation of new garage has been designed so that it is clearly secondary and subservient to the original building's character.