

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

**ERECTION OF DWELLING TO THE REAR OF HIGHLAND COURT FARMHOUSE,  
ASH PRIORS**

15250/29270

OUTLINE APPLICATION

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**PROPOSAL**

This outline application is for the erection of a single dwelling within the settlement limits of Ash Priors. The site is accessed from the track which serves the barns to the rear of the site (which have consent to be converted to dwellings) and currently forms part of the garden for the farmhouse. The site is not within the Conservation Area but is adjacent to it. A public footpath runs along the access track.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the site lies within the village of Ash Priors and falls within its development boundary limits. However, facilities and services within the village are poor (no shop or school) and access to public transport is very limited. Residents would be dependant on the private vehicle for their daily needs. This would constitute unsustainable development in terms of transport policy, as the proposal will foster growth in the need to travel and increase reliance on the private motorcar. This is contrary to advice contained within PPG14, RPG10 and the provision of Policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan review. The application is very similar to a proposal to erect a dwelling in Sampford Brett in West Somerset, which also has limited facilities, services and public transport provision. The Highway Authority recommended the refusal of that application which was refused by the Local Planning Authority and the appeal was dismissed on transport policy grounds. Recommend refusal of the application on the grounds that the proposed development would be located where it would be remote from adequate services, employment, education, public transport etc and will therefore increase the need for journeys to be made by private vehicles which is non-sustainable and in conflict with advice given in PPG13 and RPG10 and to the provisions of policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no comment.

CONSERVATION OFFICER character of this part of the Conservation Area is large dwellings with generous curtilages. This proposal would undermine this aspect and hence the character of the Conservation Area. Objection raised. RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER the surface of the access road must not be changed without reference to the Highway Authority. Otherwise the development will not affect the footpath.

PARISH COUNCIL permission should not be granted on the basis that the site is too small to accommodate 2 dwellings with reasonable sized gardens that would fit in with the surrounding properties, taking into consideration that it is sandwiched between Conservation Areas. If permission is granted any dwelling should be single storey construction and with no more than 2 bedrooms. Because of the high water table in the

area which already causes problems for nearby properties, surface water should not be dealt with by a soakaway. Foul water should be dealt with by a treatment plant. In view of the fact that Somerset County Council will gain a great deal of money from the eventual sale of the property and have already done so by the sale of the nearby farm buildings, as part of any permission should not the area be now brought up to local standards and have the very rough muddy access track made up to a county road condition (a local planning gain). The application is for infill and the access to an infill must be from a council maintained road. This is not the case here. Therefore this application comes under the heading of 'backfill' which is not allowed in Ash Priors and the application as it stands must fail. If this is 'backfill' and it is allowed, a precedent would be created and I know of several other similar sites which would then qualify for development.

1 LETTER OF OBSERVATION raising the following matters:- high ground water table and the introduction of a further drainage system will add to the existing problem; the erection of a dwelling would not seem to comply with the intention of the 1991 Structure Plan which designated the area as a Special Landscape Area although the erection of a bungalow on the site would not be so objectionable as a house; query the ownership and maintenance of the access lane.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

The West Deane Local Plan (adopted May 1997) is the adopted local plan for this site. WD/SP/1 defines Ash Priors as a village within which development will be permitted in accordance with the policies and proposals of the Structure Plan and West Deane Local Plan (adopted May 1997). Policy WD/HO/3 permits development provided that the proposal respects the form and character and setting of the settlement and the integrity of the streetscene, conforms with the housing policy for the settlement, important open spaces, views and tree groups are not lost, servicing and highway aspects are acceptable, there is no material effect on neighbouring properties, satisfactory landscaping is provided, and new dwellings are not sited where they would be detrimentally affected by existing or proposed unneighbourly uses. Policy WD/HO/4 discourages proposals for infilling and small groups which unacceptably increase densities and erode the character and amenity of existing residential areas, and policy WD/HO/7 requires that new housing developments will be expected to make use of the existing site features, allow for sufficient space between dwellings so that there is no problem of overlooking and the best possible use is made of natural light, respects the character of the settlement, conforms with policies for access and internal circulation, car parking, utility services, etc. WD/AP/1 requires that new housing in Ash Priors be restricted to infilling within the defined village limits. WD/EC/16 in special landscape areas such as this the Borough Council will exercise strict control of development and encourage positive measures of enhancement.

In the assessment of this application, the following Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit (November 2000) policies are relevant:- S1 (General requirements), S2 (Design), S3 (Energy conservation), Policy H1 (Housing within classified settlements) which permits development within defined limits of settlements provided that there is safe and convenient access by bus or on foot to facilities and employment, provision for

off-site public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities and highway improvements, traffic calming, pedestrian, cycle and bus measures are provided where necessary, there is convenient access and movement for people with impaired mobility, the character or residential amenity of existing residential areas is not eroded, a coherent approach to the overall design is adopted, and existing and proposed dwellings will enjoy adequate privacy and sunlight.

## **ASSESSMENT**

I consider that the plot size (0.07 hectares) is sufficient to provide reasonable amenity space for the existing property and, depending on the detail contained within the reserved matters application there is likely to be sufficient amenity space for the proposed dwelling. The area to the north of the site is relatively loose knit with substantial gardens. However, I do not consider that the integrity of the streetscene is lost at this point. The garden area of Highland Court Farm does not make a significant contribution to the streetscene or contribute to an important view/open space. I therefore do not feel that the development of this site would erode the character of the adjoining Conservation Area or the character or amenity of this part of the settlement. It can be argued that the proposal, being adjacent to the Conservation Area neither enhances nor detracts from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Suitable conditions are recommended to seek design, siting and materials to reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the area and to ensure that details of the proposed drainage system are submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority. I do not consider that it is reasonable to condition that the dwelling be single story and a maximum of 2 bedrooms as this would conflict with the Local Planning Authority's Design Guide and be inappropriate for the locality. Careful siting and design as part of the reserved matters application should ensure that the proposal does not harm the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings or the amenities of the existing property. I do not consider that the proposal would lead to an overloading of the access roads causing any road safety problems or environmental degradation. The developers are being advised to incorporate measures to minimise the use of energy and water in the use of the building and to secure the protection of the public footpath.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limits, details of site levels, materials to be submitted, landscaping scheme, trees to be retained, details of boundary treatment, access, parking standards, meter boxes, services underground, details of a drainage scheme to be submitted, removal of permitted development rights for extensions and ancillary buildings, details of rainwater goods. Notes re access for the disabled, energy and water conservation, Lifetime Homes, good design, use of renewable energy sources, minimise overlooking or loss of privacy to Bryants Cottage, Yscolen or Highland Court Farmhouse.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356462 MRS J HIGGINBOTTOM**

NOTES: