

SUBJECT **DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS** **ITEM 7**
REPORT OF Head of Planning & Building Control

APPLICATION NO. P06/E1271
APPLICATION TYPE Full
REGISTERED 11.12.2006
PARISH Henley-on-Thames
WARD MEMBERS Mr Terry Buckett
 Dr Barry Wood
APPLICANT Mrs A Arthur
SITE 31 Belle Vue Road, Henley-on-Thames
PROPOSALS Demolition of existing house and construction of one 4 bedroom detached house and two 2 bedroom semi-detached houses
AMENDMENTS One:- 31 BR/2 Rev C; 31 BR/3 Rev C
GRID REFERENCE 475990/181451
OFFICER Mr T Wyatt

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer’s recommendation conflicts with the views of the Town Council.

The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A)
 1.2 currently comprises a large detached dwelling set within a spacious plot that is considerably larger than the vast majority of the plots within the road.

Belle Vue Road is broadly characterised by a mixture of semi-detached and
 1.3 detached properties of varying age and design although there are consistencies to the built form in terms of the building line and general height of the properties, the vast majority of which are two storey dwellings. Overall the built form within Belle Vue Road has an attractive character and appearance that is enhanced by the spaciousness and environmental quality of the street itself in terms of its width

between building frontages and in terms of the plentiful vegetation lining the street. A further characteristic of the built form relates to the gaps and therefore spaciousness between the properties.

This proposal follows an earlier application, P06/E0965, for the construction of four 1.4 semi-detached houses with attached garages. This application was withdrawn on 30th October 2006 due to the lack of Officer support for the proposal. Copies of the plans associated with this planning application are **attached** as Appendix B.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 This application relates to the construction of three dwellings following the demolition of the existing detached two storey dwelling. The proposed dwellings consist of a pair of semi-detached two bed units and a detached four bed unit. The width of the semi-detached units would be 11 metres whilst the depth of this building would be 10 metres with the height being approximately 8 metres. The detached unit would be of an identical height with its width and depth being approximately 10 metres.

2.2

The proposed development would occupy the majority of the plot width with one metre gaps between the development and the boundaries of the site and between the two new buildings. Amended plans have been received, which have repositioned the buildings slightly so that the development would be more in line with the established building line of the adjoining development. The amended plans also show a reduction in the depth of the dwellings by approximately 1 metre.

2.3

Each dwelling would be served by its own access off Belle Vue Road with two off-street parking spaces being provided for each of the units.

2.4

A copy of the proposed plans is **attached** as Appendix C.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 **Henley-on-Thames Town Council** – The application should be refused as it is considered that the proposal is obtrusive, over intensive, un-neighbourly and out of character with the area.

Henley Society – Objects as the proposal is considered to be overintensive and out of character with the area.

3.3 **OCC Highways Liaison Officer** – No objections subject to conditions requiring access and parking to be provided prior to the occupation of the dwellings.

3.4 **Neighbours** – Thirteen letters of objections have been received, which can be summarised as follows:

- The proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site and would be out of character with the surrounding area.
- Impact on neighbouring amenity through overbearing effects and possible overlooking.
- Insufficient off-street parking
- Increased traffic in the road with implications for highway safety, particularly as Belle Vue Road does not have any pavements.
- Increased pressure on local infrastructure, such as schools.
- Cumulative impact with other developments in Belle Vue Road.
- The two bed units would not be 'affordable'.
- There is no need to demolish the existing dwelling.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P06/E0965 - Demolition of existing house and construction of four semi detached houses with attached garages. Withdrawn prior to determination on 30 October 2006.

4.2 As well as the above planning history of the site, the recent planning history of Number 4 Belle Vue Road is also of relevance as a comparable application within the same road. This site is located some 170 metres to the north of Number 31 but is of comparable size in terms of its width. A planning application, P06/E1071, was submitted for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of one 5 bed dwelling and two 2 bed dwellings. The application was taken to the Planning Committee on 6th December 2006 with a recommendation for approval but was refused due to the overdevelopment of the site, and for being out of keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. For the purposes of comparison, the block plan and street scene elevation drawing relating to this application are **attached** as Appendix D.

5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

- G1 – General Policies for Development
- G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development
- EN1 – Landscape Character
- T1 – Sustainable Travel
- T2 – Car Parking
- T8 – Development Proposals
- H1 – The Amount and Distribution of Housing
- H3 – Design, Quality and Density of Housing Development

5.2 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):

- G1 – General Restraint and Sustainable Development
- G2 – Protection and Enhancement of the Environment
- G6 – Promoting Good Design
- D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness
- D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
- D3 – Plot Coverage and Garden Areas
- D4 – Privacy and Daylight
- D6 – Design Against Crime
- D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
- D10 – Waste Management
- H4 – Towns and Larger Villages outside the Green Belt
- H7 – Range of Dwelling Types and Size
- H8 – Dwelling Densities
- T1 & T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS3 – Housing

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide December 2000 (SODG)

6.0 PLANNING ISSUES

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to these applications are:

1. The principle of the development
Density
2. Housing Mix

2. The impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
3. The impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers
4. The impact on the living conditions of the future occupiers of the development
5. Highway considerations

The Principle of the Development

6.2 The site is located within the main built up area of Henley-on-Thames where the principle of new residential development is broadly acceptable with regard to Policy H4 of the SOLP. The site represents 'previously developed' land for the purposes of the definition outlined in Annex B of PPS3.

6.3 i. Density

The site has an area of approximately 0.09 hectares and the provision of three dwellings would result in a net density of 33 dwellings per hectare. This accords with Policy H8 of the SOLP, which seeks to achieve minimum housing densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare, unless it can be demonstrated that such densities would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. This is also in line with the guidance contained within PPS3, which states that 30 dwellings per hectare should be used as the national indicative minimum density for new housing.

6.4

ii. Housing Mix

6.5 Policy H7 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that a mix of housing is provided on all developments consisting of two or more dwellings. In particular the Council's Housing Needs Survey identified a shortfall in 2 bedroom dwellings and as a result 45% of all new housing on sites of 2 or more dwellings should be provided as 2 bed units. Two of the dwellings (66%) proposed under this application are two bed and therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy H7. Again this is in accordance with PPS3, which encourages a mix of housing and seeks to address identified shortfalls in housing supply.

6.6 In summary it is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable, and therefore it is now necessary to assess the impact of the development on the

character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

6.7 Although Policy H4 of the SOLP does allow for the principle of the development, it requires development to accord with several criteria, including the need to ensure that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with the surroundings and that the character of the area is not adversely affected. Other Policies of the SOLP are also relevant to this issue, including Policies G6 and D1. Policy G6 states that proposals should be of a high quality and inclusive design and Policy D1 seeks the protection and reinforcement of local distinctiveness through the principles of good design. Further reference to this issue can be found in the SODG.

6.8 Government guidance contained within PPS1 and PPS3 is also relevant to this issue as this guidance places a strong emphasis on the need for high quality and inclusive design. This is one of the central tenets of the increasing emphasis on the need for sustainable development in both location and form. However, PPS3 does warn against rejecting a proposal for the sole reason that the density of the development would be against the prevailing character of the area. Density represents a quantitative value whilst it is the qualitative matters of design that need careful consideration in relation to the impact on the surrounding area. Thus Paragraph 50 of PPS3 states:

6.9 ‘Density is a measure of the number of dwellings which can be accommodated on a site or in an area. The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.’

6.10 Belle Vue Road is an established residential street in the main built up area of Henley. It has an attractive appearance largely derived from the generous size of the individual plots, the gaps between dwellings and the consistent front building line of the built form, which runs parallel to, but some distance back from the edge of the road. The straightness of the street also serves to emphasise the spacious character of the built form, as there are unobstructed views up and down the road. The spaciousness of the built form has allowed vegetation to become an established feature of the street scene and this makes a significant contribution to the attractiveness of the built form.

Although displaying a consistency to the building lines, height and general scale of development, the built form in Belle Vue Road does display considerable variety in terms of the design, age and size of individual dwellings. This variety has also resulted in inconsistencies in the spacing between dwellings, so that whilst there is a strong element of spaciousness to the built form, it is not derived from even sized gaps between dwellings. Indeed, in some cases there are no physical gaps between individual dwellings. This is particularly the case in respect of the built form to the south of the application site.

6.11

The depth of the application site is consistent with the majority of the individual plots in Belle Vue Road; however, its width is considerably greater. For example, the width of the site is approximately 25 metres whilst the width of the combined plots of Numbers 33, 35, and 37, which lie immediately to the south of the site is approximately 28 metres. As such, the proposed density on the site is roughly comparable with the adjoining development and as such in quantitative terms, the development would be consistent with the adjoining built form. In light of this, it is considered that there is little justification for arguing that the construction of three dwellings on the site would represent an overdevelopment of the site per se.

6.12 Evidently, the design and size of the proposed dwellings are important factors in terms of the impact on the surrounding area. As already stated there is considerable variety to the design of individual dwellings in Belle Vue Road, therefore it is not considered that the proposed development needs to slavishly ape any of the existing dwellings in terms of design. The proposed dwellings are of a simple design with the main part of the dwellings being the front gables, which reflect the design of Numbers 27 and 29 Belle Vue Road to the north. The dwellings would consist of lower elements projecting from the side of the main gable where the first floor accommodation would be provided within the roof space. These side elements would also be set back from the front of the main part of the dwelling. This would help to reduce the bulk of the development and would ensure that the part of the development adjacent to the boundaries of the site would be clearly subordinate to the main body of the dwellings.

6.13

Gaps of one metre would be retained between the dwellings and the boundaries of the site and between the proposed dwellings themselves. This represents a significant reduction in terms of the space afforded to the sides of the existing dwelling; however, it is not considered that the erosion of this space would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene. As already noted,

6.14 many of the dwellings on Belle Vue Road are built up to or very close to the side boundaries of the plots, and as such the proposed development would not be out of keeping with the existing built form in this regard. The lower elements of the dwellings to the side and their set back within the plot would reduce the bulk and

massing of the development considerably and would help to retain an element of spaciousness to the sides of the plot.

6.15

The height, scale and overall size of the proposed development would be consistent with that of the adjoining buildings. Belle Vue Road slopes gently down from south to north and the development would follow the line of the slope at a consistent height to the neighbouring dwellings, therefore, ensuring that the scale and height of the development would not be incongruous in the street scene given the local topography.

Overall, it is considered that the development complies with the relevant criteria listed under Policy H4 of the SOLP and other relevant policies of the SOLP,

6.16 including G6, and D1.

The Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers

The proposed development would be in line with the adjoining dwellings to the north and south, Numbers 29 and 33 Belle Vue Road. As the development would not project to any significant extent beyond the front or rear building lines of the neighbouring dwellings it is not considered that any significant overshadowing would result from the development to the windows or garden areas of the neighbouring dwellings. Any overbearing effects would also be mitigated by the positioning of the dwellings, the relatively low height of the dwellings alongside the boundaries of the site and the retention of gaps to the side boundaries along with the further gaps to the main side elevations of the neighbouring dwellings.

6.17

No windows are proposed in the north west elevation of the development. As such no direct overlooking to the side of Number 29 would be possible. A first floor roof light is proposed in the south east side elevation; however, this relates to a bathroom and would be obscurely glazed to reduce the possibility of overlooking to the side of Number 33. The distance between the rear elevations of the proposed dwellings and the rear elevations of the existing dwellings in Cromwell Road to the east is substantially in excess of 25 metres, which is the recommended 'privacy' distance between the private side of dwellings as outlined in the SODG. As such it is not considered that the increased overlooking from the rear of the development would cause any material harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

6.18

The Impact on the Living Conditions of the Future Occupiers of the Development
6.19

Similarly to the existing built form in Belle Vue Road, the proposed dwellings would be provided with generous gardens extending to 21 metres and between 7 and 10.5 metres in width. Thus, the area of private garden space would vary between approximately 150 and 220 square metres, which substantially exceeds the minimum suggested garden areas outlined in the SODG. Furthermore the individual rear gardens would be similar in size to many of the existing rear garden areas in Belle Vue Road.

There is no significant conflict between the proposed new dwellings in terms of their physical relationship to one another and any derived negative impacts such as overlooking, overbearing effects or overshadowing. This is largely because the dwellings would be sited in a linear form in line with the existing built form. In light of this, it is also not considered that the existing adjoining dwellings would have any significant impact on the future occupiers of the development.

Highway Considerations

The proposal includes two off-street parking spaces for each dwelling. This level of parking would be sufficient and should ensure that parking on Belle Vue Road would not be necessary. The visibility at the proposed accesses to the site is sufficient and will ensure that vehicles can enter and leave the site without any significant implications for highway safety. Conditions requiring the provision of the new accesses and parking areas prior to the occupation of the dwellings are proposed.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal accords with the relevant development plan policies and national planning policy. Subject to the attached conditions, the development would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area or on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement of development (3 years)**
- 2. Samples of materials to be submitted and approved**
- 3. Fencing/means of enclosure to be submitted and approved**

4. **Details of finished floor levels in relation to existing ground levels to be submitted and approved**
5. **No extensions to be erected without planning permission (removal of permitted development)**
6. **Window at the first floor level in the south east elevation to be obscure glazed. No further windows at first floor level in south east or north west elevations (removal of permitted development)**
7. **Access to be constructed to OCC specification prior to occupation**
8. **Parking to be provided and thereafter retained in accordance with approved plans prior to occupation**
9. **Details of bin storage to be agreed prior to development commencing.**

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