

APPLICATION NO. [P07/E1015](#)

APPLICATION TYPE FULL

REGISTERED 17.08.2007

PARISH THAME

WARD MEMBER(S) Mr David Dodds
Mrs Ann Midwinter

APPLICANT Thomas Homes

SITE Essex House Hotel 149 Chinnor Road and 1 Bridge Terrace
Thame

PROPOSAL Demolition of existing hotel & outbuildings. Demolition of existing single storey lean-to to no.1 Bridge Terrace & provision of private garden. Erection of two new buildings of 2.5 storey comprising 12 apartments with associated parking and on site store.

AMENDMENTS

GRID REFERENCE 471650/205172

OFFICER Mr M.Moore

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is referred to Planning Committee because the recommendation conflicts with the views of the Thame Town Council. The site, which extends to 0.167 hectares, is shown on the **attached** Ordnance Survey extract. The site, lies at the junction of Cotmore Gardens with Chinnor Road, where Chinnor Road bends to the right (south) as it leaves Thame to cross over the former railway line which is now part of the Sustrans cycleway track. On the site at present is a three storey brick building known as the Essex House Hotel. At the rear is a large surfaced car park accessed off Cotmore Gardens. To the south of the hotel is an access track which serves a parking area used by other properties in Cotmore Gardens. It is understood that the building is now no longer in use as a hotel and the condition of the building and its grounds are beginning to deteriorate.

2.0 THE APPLICATION

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing hotel and its outbuildings, the removal of an existing single storey extension to No 1 Bridge Terrace and the erection of two, 2½ storey buildings to provide 12 apartments. Ten of the apartments would be 2 bedroomed and two of them would be 1 bedroomed. Fourteen parking spaces are proposed served by a revised access onto Cotmore Gardens. The boundary between the site and the private right of way at the rear of the site would be removed.

2.2 It is proposed that the apartment buildings would be constructed using red facing brick with a plain clay tiled roof. The application is accompanied by a design and access statement which is **attached** to this report. The application was also accompanied by a bat emergence survey. Subsequently, an energy statement has also been submitted. Copies of the layout plan and elevations are **attached** to this report.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 P05/E1369 This application proposed a similar development to the present application. The detailed elevations of the two blocks was somewhat different and planning permission was refused by decision notice dated 23 March 2006. The Council's concerns related to the size, height, bulk, massing and detailing of the two buildings which were considered to be prominent and out of keeping, the loss of the Essex House hotel, which was considered to be an important landmark building and harm to neighbourly properties.
- 3.2 P06/E0392 Sought planning permission for an identical form of development to the current scheme. Planning permission was refused by decision notice dated 30 June 2006 for similar reasons to the previous application.
- 3.3 The applicant appealed against both refusals and by decision notice dated 15 March 2007 the appeals were dismissed. A copy of the appeal decision is **attached** to this report. In respect of the first application, the inspector concluded at paragraph 12 that the scheme was unacceptable. However, at paragraph 17, the Inspector concluded that the second scheme, which is identical to that currently under consideration, was satisfactory. Although the appeals were dismissed, in respect of the second application, it was only because of the possibility that the buildings were potentially a suitable habitat for bats.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

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| 4.1 Thame Town Council | - Objection. They consider the development is unneighbourly, an overdevelopment of the site, out of character with the area and there are traffic and parking problems. |
| SODC Forestry Officer | - No objection. The tree loss is recognised and requires replanting which will in itself require special measures including tree pits for the replanting to ensure the longevity of any replanted trees. |
| Countryside Officer | - No objection. The bat emergence survey indicated no bats were present within the buildings. However, a condition is required about working practices and to provide 2 bat boxes. |
| Environmental Health | - No objection. Requires contamination conditions. |
| Monson | - No objection. Requires drainage conditions. |
| OCC (Highways) | - No objection in view of appeal history. Requires conditions. |
| Thame Conservation Advisory Committee | - Objection. They object to the loss of the existing building which forms a dignified visual stop on the Chinnor Road and they express concerns about traffic. |
| Neighbours (10) | - Objection. Their concerns are that Cotmore Gardens is |

already narrow and dangerous and there is too little parking within the scheme, the lane at the southern side is private, it is an overdevelopment of the site, the height of buildings is excessive in relation to the surroundings, concerns about the noise during construction, overlooking and they consider that the existing building should be kept.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies:

- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G6 - Appropriateness of development to its site & surroundings
- C1 - Development would have adverse impact on landscape character
- C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- D8 - Conservation and efficient use of energy
- D10 - Waste Management
- H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt
- H7 - Mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet district need
- H8 - Density of housing development in and outside town centres
- H9 - Provision of affordable housing
- EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP6 - Sustainable drainage
- EP7 - Impact on ground water resources
- EP8 - Contaminated land

PPS1 General Policies and Principles

PPG3 Housing

PPG24 Planning and Pollution Control

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 As can be seen from the planning history section above, the appeal earlier in the year has already considered the principle of the development of the site, the design and layout of the scheme, density issues, the impact on neighbours (subject to comments overleaf), affordable housing and mix, density and access and parking issues. Consequently, it is considered that the principal planning considerations in respect of this application are:

- i. Impact on wildlife
- ii. Infrastructure
- iii. Impact on neighbours
- iv. Trees
- v. Sustainability
- vi. Land ownership issues

i) Impact on wildlife

6.2 A bat emergence survey has been undertaken and no evidence of bats have been found. Consequently, the issue discussed at the appeal concerning the impact on wildlife has been resolved.

ii) Infrastructure

6.3 The County Council have required contributions towards:

i) education ii) libraries, iii) waste management, iv) museum resource centre, v) social and health care and public transport. The applicant has indicated their willingness to complete a unilateral undertaking to ensure the payment of these contributions at the appropriate time and work is well advanced in respect of the requirements of the Developer Funding Officer.

iii) Impact on neighbours

6.4 From the appeal decision at paragraphs 18 – 21, the Inspector concluded that the proposals would not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of occupiers of nearby properties, subject to the use of non opening obscure glazed windows on the lower half of sash windows on the rear of Block B. The applicant has indicated his willingness to accept a condition to that effect and a plan has been prepared indicating these. It is considered that this can be covered through the imposition of an appropriate condition.

iv) Trees

6.5 The development will involve the loss of trees and bushes on the site. The Forestry Officer has concluded that none are worthy of a Tree Preservation Order but considers appropriate replacements should be planted to help soften the impact of the development on the surroundings. To ensure the long-term survival

of any replacement trees special measures would be required to be undertaken in planting. The applicant has confirmed that they recognise and accept the special measures which would be required.

v) Sustainability

6.6 Since the appeal decision, draft Government guidance on climate change has suggested that all new development should set high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and material (Policy D8). The applicant has now confirmed that the development has had an eco homes assessment undertaken and the rating prediction is 'very good'. It proposes a number of energy conservation measures and these can be covered by the imposition of an appropriately worded condition.

vi) Land ownership issues

6.7 The ownership of the existing track at the southern end of the site has been disputed by a neighbour. The access track is required to provide adequate manoeuvring area for the users of the proposed car park. The parking and manoeuvring area are fundamental to the scheme but, legal issues that might arise from alleged infringement of property rights, are not a planning consideration. If the application is approved, however, an informative would be added to the decision notice to remind the applicant that the grant of planning permission does not override private property rights.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Having regard to the appeal decision in respect of an identical proposal on the site, issues of principle, design, impact on the area generally, density and parking layout have all been found to be acceptable. The development otherwise complies with the relevant policies of the development plan.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that the grant of planning permission be delegated to the Head of Planning subject to the prior completion of an appropriate planning obligation with the County Council to ensure infrastructure payments are made towards education, libraries, waste management, a museum resource centre and social and health care provision and the following conditions:

- 1. Commencing date 3 years**
- 2. Samples of all materials**
- 3. Windows and external doors to specification**
- 4. Fix and obscure glaze windows**
- 5. Landscaping scheme to include the provision of tree pits to the new trees**
- 6. Surface water drainage scheme**
- 7. Foul drainage scheme**
- 8. Scheme for energy and water conservation to be generally in accordance with the design and access statement**
- 9. No construction works outside the hours of 07.30 to 18.00 Monday to**

Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 on Saturdays. No works on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

- 10. Scheme for lighting**
- 11. Measures to control contamination**
- 12. If contamination found scheme for remediation**
- 13. Layout of parking area in accordance with approved plan prior to first occupation**
- 14. Bat control measures**
- 15. Provision of bat boxes**

In the event that the required planning obligation is not in place by 14 November 2007, then planning permission should be refused for the following reason:

1. That the development will place additional strain on existing community infrastructure contrary to Policy D10 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

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