

APPLICATION NO. P07/E1461

APPLICATION TYPE Full

REGISTERED 19.11.2007

PARISH HENLEY ON THAMES

WARD MEMBER(S) Mr Terry Buckett

APPLICANT Ms Roswitha Myer

SITE Follett Property Holdings Limited
22 Reading Road, Henley

PROPOSAL Erection of 6 No. two bedroom flats.

AMENDMENTS As clarified by additional Information in e-mail dated 23rd November 2007 and as amended by drawing no 07.202.221 Rev B accompanying letter from Agent dated 12 December 2007 and as amended by drawing no 07.202.220 Rev C and covering letter received 8 February 2008.

GRID REFERENCE 476125/182422

OFFICER Paul Lucas

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee as a result of a conflict between the Planning Manager's recommendation and the views of Henley Town Council.

The application site is shown on the OS extract attached as **Appendix 1**. The site extends to some 0.12 ha and lies on the west side of Reading Road. It accommodates a three storey building that houses a Post Office on the ground floor and offices on the first and second floors. The office building continues in the form of a three-storey flat-roofed structure (for 7 metres) and then a two storey flat-roofed structure (for a further 21 metres) behind the main frontage building to give an overall building depth of some 34 metres. Planning permission already exists for the conversion and extension of the three storey flat-roofed element by a further 9 metres into the space taken up by the two storey office building to form four 2-bedroom flats. There is an electricity transformer and a single storey garage/store building occupying the remainder of the site up to the rear boundary. A private access from Reading Road runs in between No.22 and No.18-20 to the north. The access links into a rear service road running behind the properties on the western side of Reading Road and rejoins the highway between No's 6 and 8. The surrounding units are generally in retail or commercial use on the ground floor with offices or flats above. No.18-20 was redeveloped at the rear in recent years to provide additional residential accommodation, in the form of a two storey building

extending back to the rear service road. The southern boundary of No.22 is formed by the blank two storey wall of the office building which directly adjoins the rear yard at Nos.24-26 Reading Road. This adjoining property consists of a two storey frontage building in commercial/residential use without any extensions at the rear. The site lies within the town centre but outside the main Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area, which lies opposite the front of the site.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the office and store building and the relocation of the electricity transformer (to land at the rear of the site) and the erection of a three storey block attached to the main building containing six 2-bedroom flats. The building would be 24 metres in depth, 7 metres in width and would have a monopitch zinc roof sloping down from 8 metres high to 7.3 metres high from north to south. The building would be constructed from red brickwork on the ground floor and coloured render on the first and second floors. It would have a centrally located glazed communal staircase tower on the northern elevation. Each of the flats would have windows serving a lounge, both bedrooms and a bathroom in the northern wall, with the bathroom and bedroom windows being high-level. The south elevation would contain opaque glass planks serving bathrooms the upper floor flats and two recessed lightwells with opaque glass would allow light to reach the kitchen areas of the flats. The roof would contain two solar panels. The access would be retained with a new gateway set further back from Reading Road, recycling and refuse area, cycle parking and four tandem parking spaces aligned alongside the boundary with No.18-20. The access would be via a one-way system with entry only from Reading Road between No's 18-20 and 22 and
- 2.2 The applicant's supporting design and access statement is attached as **Appendix 2**. The amended plans of the proposed development are attached as **Appendix 3**.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 **Henley Town Council** – The application should be refused due to overintensive, parking, access problems, design and bulk.
- 3.2 **OCC Highways** – No objections subject to condition requiring one-way system and cycle and parking provision prior to occupation and unilateral undertaking providing financial contributions to the Henley ITS and towards public transport infrastructure.
- 3.3 **Environmental Services** – Satisfied with refuse and recycling arrangements subject to standard condition requiring implementation prior to occupation.
- 3.4 **Environmental Health (Noise)** – No objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring a scheme to protect future occupiers from sub-station noise.
- 3.5 **Conservation/Design** – No harm to adjacent Henley Conservation Area, due to site being well screened by existing buildings. Although depth of dwellings exceeds 5 metres as advocated in SODG, removal of overhang on amended plans and inclusion of lightwells would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers. Blank end elevation could be compensated for by high quality materials. Solar panels welcomed, but rainwater harvesting only being considered.
- 3.6 **Crime Prevention Design Advisor** – The potential for anti-social behaviour in

this secluded town centre location would be mitigated by the provision of a new gate and a condition requiring all windows and doors to meet 'Secure by Design' standards.

3.7 **Building Control** – No adverse comments.

3.8 **County Archaeologist** – Informative required.

3.9 **Henley Society** – Overintensive and design completely inappropriate.

3.10 **Neighbours** – One representation of objection and one of comments raising the following points:

- Overdeveloped and cramped.
- Lightwells enable overlooking of No.24/26.
- Windows on south elevation should be opaque.
- Lack of parking would cause pressure on service road and would obstruct access – suggested 2 more spaces should be provided.
- End elevation should be improved with a pitched roof to prevent further storeys being added.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 P07/E0038 – Planning permission for demolition of existing building and erection of seven 2-bedroom flats was refused in March 2007 for the following reason:

“That having regard to the scale, bulk and height, the proposal would represent an undesirable overdevelopment of the site that would appear cramped, out of character with surrounding development and unacceptably overbearing in the outlook from numbers 24 and 26 Reading Road. In addition, having regard to the limited amount of light entering the new flats, it is considered that the proposal would provide an unacceptably poor residential environment. In this way the proposal would be contrary to policy G2 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, policies G2, G6, D1, D4 and H4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and advice contained in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide.”

4.2 P06/E0798 – Planning permission for demolition of existing ancillary accommodation and erection of four 3-bedroom mews houses was refused in September 2006.

“That having regard to the scale, bulk, height and inappropriate detailing, the proposal would represent an undesirable overdevelopment of the site that would appear cramped, out of character with surrounding development and unacceptably overbearing in the outlook from numbers 24 and 26 Reading Road. In addition, having regard to the limited amount of light entering the new dwellings and to the lack of any private amenity space to serve the future occupiers of the new dwellings, it is considered that the proposal would provide an unacceptably poor residential environment. In this way the proposal would be contrary to policy G2 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, policies G2, G6, D1, D3, D4 and H4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and advice contained in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide.”

A subsequent appeal was lodged and a Public Inquiry took place in February 2008, with the Inspector's decision being awaited.

- 4.3 P06/E0616 – Planning permission for change of use and extension of first and second floors from existing B1 office use to four 2-bedroom flats was granted in July 2006.
- 4.4 Development at No.18-20: P05/E0845 – Planning permission for change of use and extension of first floor from B1 office to C3 residential use and development of 4 flats. Single storey extension to provide disabled toilet and provision of parking for the flats was granted in September 2005 (amendment to an earlier permission).
- 4.5 Development at No.14: P06/E0834 – Planning permission was granted for the erection of four self contained studio apartments with associated access in November 2006.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

G1 – General Policies for Development

G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development

G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision

T8 – Development Proposals

H1 – The Amount and Distribution of Housing

H3 – Design, Quality and Density of Housing Development

5.2 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies:

G2 – Protection of the Environment

G5 – Making the Best Use of Land

G6 – Promoting Good Design

CON7 – Development Affecting a Conservation Area

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

D11 – Infrastructure and Service Requirements Policy

H4 – Towns and Larger Villages Outside the Green Belt

H7 – Housing Mix

H8 – Dwelling Densities

T1 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance:

South Oxfordshire Design Guide – Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

5.4 Government Guidance:

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS3 – Housing

PPG13 – Transport

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The proposed residential use would be located within the built-up area of Henley and consequently the proposal falls to be assessed against the criteria of Policy H4, which sets out a presumption in favour of residential development. The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether:

- The development would not result in the loss of an open space or view of public, environmental or ecological value;
- The size and appearance of the proposal would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- The living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers would be compromised and the development would provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers;
- The development would result in an unacceptable deficiency of off-street parking spaces for the resultant dwellings or other conditions prejudicial to highway safety; and
- The development would have an appropriate mix of housing types; and The proposal would incorporate sufficient sustainability measures.

Loss of Open Space

6.2 Criterion (i) of Policy H4 of the adopted SOLP 2011 requires that an important

open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view spoilt. The site is already developed and occupied by buildings. This criterion would therefore be satisfied.

Character and Appearance

6.3 Criteria (ii) and (iii) of Policy H4 of the adopted SOLP 2011 explain that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings and the character of the area is not adversely affected. The existing office building is functional in appearance and makes little contribution to the character of the surrounding area. The surroundings are of varied character with a mixture of established buildings and modern additions in a variety of uses. The site is dominated by the development at the rear of No.18-20 to the north. The proposed building would be of an innovative modern design. The building would be well set back from the road and as such would not be visible from the nearby Henley – Reading Road Conservation Area. The development would be approximately 2 metres higher than the main roof of the existing building on the northern elevation, but stepped down by 0.5 metres from the extant planning permission for the three storey element (P06/E0616). The previous applications that were refused, involved buildings that were stepped up 1.5 – 2 metres higher. The wall to window ratio and the mixture of materials and stairwell feature would create a well balanced contrast to the original building. The current wall on the southern elevation is a bland brick wall, whereas the proposed wall would be broken up by recessed lightwells and opaque high-level glazing. The rear elevation would be a blank wall, but with two contrasting materials. This is dictated by the need to protect future occupiers from noise from the rear access and the substation to the west. As documented in Section 4 above, a recent apartment development has been granted at No.14, in addition to the earlier permission at No.22 and the residential development that has been implemented at No. 18-20 so this form of development would be relatively common in the surrounding area. In light of this assessment, the proposed development would comply with the above criteria.

Living Conditions

6.4 Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the adopted SOLP 2011 requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. The flats to the north at No's 18-20 do not have a southerly aspect and would not be impacted upon by the proposed development. No's 24 & 26 to the south have a rear outlook across their yards and would be affected by the proposal. The sloping roof would mean that the height of the proposed building at the rear would be 7.3 metres on the southern boundary. This would be about 1.3 metres higher than the existing flat-roofed structure and would also extend further back along the boundary by some 12.5 metres. However, the existing wall is a very overpowering structure and this would be replaced by a new wall of modern materials of a more pleasing construction, which would compensate for its extra height and it would still be stepped down from the permitted extension to the main building, by 1 metre on the southern boundary. The additional building footprint would be towards the rear of the site, at a distance of some 23 metres due west from the rear windows of No's 24 & 26 Reading Road. The lightwells and glazing would be arranged so that the occupiers would not be able to look out towards the neighbouring properties. The previous planning applications that were refused involved buildings that had a fourth storey and with rooflines that would have been 1.5 to 2 metres higher than the three storey flat roof. Whilst there would

be some impact on the light and outlook at the rear of No.24 & 26 Reading Road, the orientation of the proposed building would not interfere with sunlight received by the rear of Nos 24 & 26. On balance, it is considered that the impact of the current application would not be so significant so as to justify refusing planning permission. The proposal would be designed so as to be compatible with the layout of the flats in the extant permission for the conversion and extension of the three storey element of No.22, where future occupiers would also have a northerly aspect. There are no residential occupiers to the west who could be affected by the development. The Council's Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that the living conditions of the future occupiers of the scheme would not be compromised by the location close to the substation, provided noise protection measures are implemented through the imposition of a planning condition. The internal room sizes for the resultant flats would be acceptable and well served by external openings. The innovative use of lightwells would provide additional light sources and ensure that the flats would not be single aspect, thus addressing the problems with the internal layout of the earlier refused planning applications. Although no external garden areas would be provided for these flats, they lie in a town centre location with good access to public open spaces and this is not considered to be an unacceptable situation. On the basis of this assessment, the proposed development would meet the above criterion.

Highways and Parking

- 6.5 Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the adopted SOLP 2011 also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. The proposal would retain the existing access arrangements with a formal one-way system being imposed and four off-street parking spaces in a tandem arrangement. Although adopted standards require one space per flat and therefore 6 spaces for this development, in a town centre location with good public transport links, the Highway Authority have considered that it would be acceptable to relax the standards in this particular instance. The proposal would also provide an area of cycle parking. Moreover, at the request of the Highway Authority the applicant has agreed to make a financial contribution, via a unilateral undertaking, towards the Henley ITS and public transport provision. The proposed development would therefore satisfy the above criterion.

Housing Mix

- 6.6 Policy H7 of the adopted SOLP 2011 requires a suitable mix of housing to be provided and the sub-text indicates that the Council will seek to ensure that developments of a net gain of two or more dwellings would contain 45% 2-bedroom dwellings. The proposal would provide six 2-bedroom dwellings, which would equate to 100%. In combination with the extant permission for four 2-bedroom flats, this would make a valuable contribution towards the shortfall of smaller dwellings in the District. Although the development would only contain smaller units, this is considered to be acceptable as the lack of private garden areas would make the units unsuitable for larger family accommodation.

Sustainability Measures

- 6.7 Policy D8 of the adopted SOLP 2011 requires proposals to incorporate sustainability measures in terms of energy, water and materials efficient design. The proposal involves an innovative design where modern energy efficient materials can be employed, such as the zinc roof and the opaque "Regit Plank" panels which have high insulating properties. The proposal also incorporated two solar panels. Rainwater harvesting to provide grey water is also being considered.

A planning condition is recommended requiring further details to demonstrate how the proposed development would accord with the provisions of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Recycling facilities are also proposed in accordance with Policy D10, thus making a contribution to the objectives of Policy D8.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions and completion of a legal agreement, the proposed development would not materially harm the living conditions of nearby residents or the character and appearance of the area or result in conditions prejudicial to highway safety.

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 a unilateral undertaking with Oxfordshire County Council to secure financial contributions towards the Henley ITS and local public transport infrastructure.**

Subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 Year Time Limit

2. Samples of Materials

3. External Windows and Doors to Secure By Design Standards

4. Windows shown as opaque glazing to be retained as such and hinged to open

inwards

5. Details of gate to entrance prior to commencement

6. Provision of circulation route, parking and cycling prior to occupation

7. Refuse and Recycling facilities implemented as approved prior to occupation

8. Scheme to protect future occupiers from sub-station noise prior to commencement

9. Details of Sustainability Measures in compliance with Code for Sustainable Homes prior to commencement

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