
APPLICATION NO.	P08/E0291
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	06.03.2008
PARISH	Henley-on-Thames
WARD MEMBERS	Mr Terry Buckettt Ms Roswitha Myer
APPLICANT	Blue Space Property Group Ltd
SITE	347-351 Reading Road, Henley-on-Thames
PROPOSALS	Demolition of existing 3 dwellings and erection of six 2 bedroom flats, one 3 bedroom dwelling and two 1 bedroom flats
AMENDMENTS	Drawings 301 B, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308.
GRID REFERENCE	476754/181444
OFFICER	Mr T Wyatt

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer's recommendations conflict with the views of the Town Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) is located on the southern edge of Henley where it lies on the east side of Reading Road adjacent to a variety of commercial and community uses, including Tesco's supermarket. Opposite the site to the west lies an extensive area of two storey housing constructed approximately 10 years ago and a 1.5 hectare area of allotment gardens.
- 1.3 The site is currently occupied by three detached bungalows of no significant historic or architectural merit. The bungalows are served by a single access off Reading Road whilst the remainder of the front boundary to Reading Road comprises thin hedging. The land immediately to the north of the site has extant planning permission (P07/E0585) for an MOT testing station and tyre centre, whilst the adjoining land to the north east and east of the site has extant planning permission (P03/E0450) has extant planning permission for the construction of 6 Class B1 business units. The existing bungalows are somewhat dominated by the surrounding commercial uses both in terms of the scale and the amount of this type of development.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Following receipt of amended plans the application seeks planning permission for the construction of nine dwellings following the demolition of the existing bungalows. The proposed dwellings would comprise 6 two bed flats, 2 one bed flats and 1 three bed dwelling within two separate blocks. 5 of the units would be located within Block A, which would be sited parallel to Reading Road and at its closest point it would be 1.5 metres from the boundary of the site with Reading Road. However, the individual units within the block would be staggered in terms of their front and rear building lines so that Unit 3 of Block A would be 5.5 metres from the boundary with Reading Road.
- 2.2 Block A would have a total frontage of 23.5 metres and a depth of 14 metres, which takes account of the staggered building lines. The height of Block A would vary between 6.5 and 9 metres. The materials for the buildings, including Block B, would comprise a zinc roof with powder coated aluminium coping, red brick walls with seamed copper cladding to high level corner details, aluminium windows and a copper

rainwater system.

2.3 Block B is sited on the southern part of the site where its main elevations would face north and south. The block would comprise four flats and would again be staggered so that the total building would be 15 metres wide, 12 metres deep (allowing for the stagger) and 9 metres high. Blocks A and B are both of a contemporary design with curved monopitch roofs terminating in a higher eaves level to the rear. Large areas of glazing are apparent and generally the size of the window openings varies substantially. Balconies are also a common feature of the development.

2.4 The development would be served by parking to the rear of the site, which would provide 12 spaces. A cycle store would also be provided as part of the parking provision. A communal bin store would be provided adjacent to the single new access, which would be sited at the northern end of the site's frontage to Reading Road. A communal area of external space would be provided between Blocks A and B, which would total approximately 280 m² whilst a small private garden area would be provided to the rear of the only 3 bed unit on the site.

2.5 A copy of the proposed plans and the design and access statement is **attached** as Appendix B. However, it should be noted that the design and access statement was submitted in relation to the original plans.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Henley-on-Thames Town Council** – The application should be refused on the following (summarised) grounds:

- Access too close to the roundabout
- Development is too high and is out of keeping with the area
- The proposal is over intensive and the design does not respect the setting
- Insufficient parking
- Unneighbourly.

3.2 **Henley Society** – The design of the development is inappropriate.

3.3 **OCC Highways** – The access and parking provision are acceptable. Following the amended plans to show the resiting of the access gate further away from the edge of the highway and the resiting of the signs off the highway verge, there are no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions.

3.4 **County Ecologist** – No objections.

3.5 **Forestry Officer** – Concerns regarding the impact of the development on adjacent trees. Conditions regarding tree protection, submission and approval of an Arboricultural Method Statement and a landscaping scheme should be attached to any permission.

3.6 **Environmental Health** – Conditions to require the investigation for and if necessary remediation of contamination should be attached to any planning permission.

3.7 **Neighbours** – No correspondence received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P85/S0402 – Erection of new bungalow. Planning Permission granted on 7th August 1985.

- 4.2 P85/S0018 - Extension and alteration to bungalow; new single garage. Planning Permission granted on 8th May 1985.
- 4.3 P61/H0762 - Erection of dwellinghouse with vehicular access. Planning Permission granted on 23rd November 1961.
- 4.4 P52/H0064 – Site for one caravan. Planning Permission granted on 21st March 1952.

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
- G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision
- T1 – Sustainable Travel
- T2 – Car Parking
- T8 – Development Proposals
- 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
- C4 – The Landscape Setting of Settlements
- C9 – Landscape Features
- EP8 – Contaminated Land
- 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
- D7 – Access for All
- D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
- D10 – Waste Management
- D11 – Infrastructure and Service Requirements Policy
- H1 – The Amount and Location of New Housing
- 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
- PPG13 - Transport

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 this application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. The impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area
3. The impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers
4. Highway considerations

5. The impact on trees and hedges
6. Efficient use of energy, water and materials
7. Other material considerations

The Principle of the Development

- 6.2 The application site is located on the edge of but within the 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. Policy H7 of the SOLP requires that 45% of units in schemes of two or more units are provided as two bed units. In this case, the proposal consists of 6 two bed units out of a total of 9 units, and therefore, the requirements of Policy H7 are met.
- 6.3 The site is in a sustainable location close to the amenities and services within Henley. In light of this the site should in theory be developed to its maximum potential in the interests of the efficient use of brownfield land. In this regard, the proposal represents a density of approximately 70 dwellings per hectare, which represents an efficient use of the land, having regard to the indicative minimum density requirements of 30 dwellings per hectare net.
- 6.4 There is currently a shortfall in the required five year supply of deliverable sites for housing in the District. In light of this Paragraph 71 of PPS3 is relevant where it states:
- ‘Where Local Planning Authorities cannot demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites, for example, where Local Development Documents have not been reviewed to take into account policies in this PPS or there is less than five years supply of deliverable sites, they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in this PPS including the considerations in paragraph 69.
- 6.5 Therefore this application should be considered favourably having regard to the policies set out in PPS 3 and specifically paragraph 69, which this seeks to achieve high quality housing, a housing mix reflecting the requirements of specific groups, the suitability of the site for development including its environmental sustainability, using land effectively and efficiently and ensuring the proposed development is in line with housing objectives’.

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Site and Surrounding Area

- 6.6 Policy H4 of the SOLP, along with several other general Local Plan policies, requires that any new development is in keeping with the design, height, scale and materials of the built form in the surrounding area and that the character of the area is not adversely affected.
- 6.7 The site lies in a visually prominent position on the edge of Henley, particularly in views when travelling along Reading Road towards Henley from the south. The existing development on the site is unobtrusive due to the modest size and height of the development and its set back from Reading Road. The relatively open and unobtrusive nature of the existing development on the site is further enhanced by the presence of the open allotments immediately opposite to the west and the softening effects of several adjacent mature trees, particularly adjacent to the southern boundary of the site and fronting the west side of Reading Road opposite the site.
- 6.8 The proposed development, due to the substantial increase in the footprint of buildings, and the overall height, bulk and massing of the development would have a considerably greater visual impact in views from the public highway than the existing

development and, overall, the development would present a harder edge to the settlement than the existing bungalows, which, in respect of views from the south, are almost entirely screened by the existing vegetation during the summer months. However, officers consider that the increased visual prominence of the built form is not sufficient reason to refuse the planning application in this case.

- 6.9 The site is not part of the countryside and is immediately adjacent to large commercial developments to the east and north and dense residential development to the west, and the site is clearly part of the urban environment. The amended plans submitted as part of this application have reduced the number of units proposed by one and have consequently reduced the amount of built form on the site. The amended plans have also introduced staggered building lines to the front and rear in respect of the two blocks and varying roof lines and heights. The amended details have retained and increased a proposed area of open space in the south western corner of the site, which is the most prominent part of the site when viewed from the Reading Road to the south of the site.
- 6.10 The amended details through varying the design, height and siting of the individual elements of the two blocks have helped to break up the bulk and massing of the development and helped to provide more visual interest to the buildings. The design of the development is certainly not traditional either in the visual appearance of the buildings or the proposed materials. The principle of contemporary design is acceptable and is becoming increasingly common as developers and individuals seek to carry out unique developments with little reference to traditional forms of architecture. In this regard guidance contained at Paragraph 38 of PPS1 states:
- 'Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design.'*
- 6.11 Although within the urban grain of Henley, the application site is not located adjacent to existing residential development but adjoins commercial development to the east and north. The commercial development to the east is sited on lower ground than the application site but the individual buildings, most notably that relating to Tesco's, are substantial in size and display considerable variation in terms of age and design. As outlined above, extant planning permission also exists for two large commercial buildings immediately to the north and east of the site. The housing opposite the site is of a traditional form, however, it is of no particular architectural merit and is located further from the site than the commercial development against which the proposed development would be viewed when travelling along the Reading Road.
- 6.12 Having regard to the scale and general design of the adjoining commercial development, the contemporary design approach adopted in relation to the proposals is considered broadly acceptable. The development would not be viewed in close proximity to the traditional forms of the residential development to the west and there is no requirement to reflect the nondescript functional design of the adjacent commercial development. As such officers consider that there is scope for a uniquely designed development on the application site.

- 6.13 The proposal would add considerable visual interest to this prominent site, particularly when arriving at the edge of Henley from the south. The development on the site will represent a much harder edge to this part of the settlement than the existing bungalows, and this is not deemed to be inappropriate given the transition from the semi-rural and largely open land alongside Reading Road to the south of the site and the much denser urban form of development immediately after the roundabout serving the Tesco supermarket.
- 6.14 The retention of an open area of ground to be used as a communal garden area in the south west corner of the site is an important element of the scheme. This area, with proposed planting would further help to soften the south elevation of Block A and the west elevation of Block B in views from Reading Road, and would, along with the retention of the off-site trees to the south of the site, help to improve the environmental quality of the development.

The Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers

- 6.15 There are no neighbouring residential properties to the site and as such the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on residential occupiers in the locality. This is borne out by the lack of objections to the proposal. The site borders commercial development to the north and east and it is not considered that the proposal would prejudice the occupiers of the adjacent commercial development or the future viability of the businesses.
- 6.16 The amenity of the future occupiers of the development is also an important consideration. Guidance within the SODG generally seeks to provide at least 25m² of communal open space per flat. In this case an amenity area of approximately 280m² is being provided in a single space in the south west corner of the site. This equates to approximately 30m² per unit. This includes provision for the proposed three bed dwelling, which has a small private garden area of its own. The communal gardens are adjacent to Reading Road and this would somewhat detract from the amenity of the space. However, the area is south and west facing and would therefore receive good levels of sunlight and would be separated from the adjacent public highway by trees and hedging.

Highway Considerations

- 6.17 The Highway Liaison Officer originally raised concerns with the application proposal based on the lack of and positioning of some of the parking spaces and the position of the proposed access. Amended plans have been received that have moved the proposed access slightly to the south away from a pedestrian crossing and have provided the parking in a more user friendly layout. The reduction in one unit from the original scheme has enabled the retention of 12 parking spaces to serve the development. As a result of the amended plans, the Highway Liaison Officer is satisfied with the parking layout and access to the site in relation to the amount of parking and the impact of the development on highway safety.
- 6.18 The parking is provided to the rear of the site where it will be discreetly behind the development. As such the parking areas will not be a dominant feature of the site as advocated by guidance contained within the SODG.

The Impact on trees and hedges

- 6.19 There are several trees on the boundaries of the site, the majority of which are just beyond the eastern and southern boundaries. In particular the trees beyond the

southern boundary make an important contribution to the environmental quality of the area, and help to soften views towards the site from the south in particular. The Council's Tree Officer raised concerns in respect of the original submission due to the likely impact of the development on adjacent trees, and a full tree survey of the adjacent trees was requested.

- 6.20 A tree survey and arboricultural report has now been submitted. In addition the amended plans have also moved the development slightly further away from the site's southern boundary thereby reducing the potential impact on the adjacent trees. As well as providing an accurate survey of the trees, the Arboricultural Report also provides details of the root protection areas, and tree protection measures including 'no-dig' areas of construction in relation to the development. The Report illustrates that the development would cause any significant harm to the long term retention and sustainability of adjacent trees worthy of retention providing that the protective measures within the Report are adhered to.

Efficient Use of Energy, Water and Materials

- 6.21 Policy D8 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that all new development demonstrates high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials. This Policy has recently been afforded greater weight by the Government's Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change, which was published in December 2007. This Statement is a supplement to PPS1.
- 6.22 The design and access statement outlines measures to provide for the conservation and efficient use of energy and water such as high levels of insulation, including sheeps wool, solar heating, rainwater harvesting, hemp crete and ground source heat pumps. A pre-assessment of the development under the Code for Sustainable Homes has been submitted in relation to the proposed development and this indicates that the development can achieve Code 3, which is equivalent to being 25% more energy efficient than a home built to the 2006 Building Regulations standards, and to using no more than approximately 105 litres of water per person per day. A condition is proposed to ensure that the development meets Code 3 through construction and this can be ascertained through a post-construction review.

Other Material Considerations

- 6.23 Policy D11 of the SOLP requires that infrastructure, and other services and facilities made necessary by development are provided for as part of the development. In this regard Oxfordshire County Council has requested financial contributions towards local services and infrastructure including education, libraries, health care, fire and rescue and highways. The contributions are to be secured by way of a Section 106 Planning Obligation.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application proposal is broadly in accordance with the relevant development plan policies and national planning policy, as, subject to conditions and a S106 Planning Obligation, the proposal would not cause any significant harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, and would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that the grant of planning permission be delegated to the Head of Planning subject to the prior completion by 5th June 2008 of a Section 106 planning obligation with the County Council to ensure infrastructure payments are made towards education, transport, libraries, waste management, the museum resource centre and social and healthcare provision.

1. Commencement – 3 years
2. Samples of materials to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing
3. Tree protection details to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing
4. Landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing
5. Details of any external lighting to be submitted and approved prior to the occupation of the development
6. Details of finished floor levels in relation to existing and proposed ground levels to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing.
7. Permitted development rights excluded for extensions and outbuildings (Unit 1).
8. Parking provided and retained in connection with the development in accordance with the approved drawings
9. Formation of new access prior to the occupation of the development
10. Existing access to be closed up prior to the occupation of the development
11. Cycle parking to be provided in accordance with details to be submitted and approved prior to occupation of the units and thereafter retained
12. All dwellings designed and constructed to meet Code 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. A Post construction review in relation to Code 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes to be submitted prior to occupation.
13. Details of surface water drainage to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing.
14. Details of the refuse and recycling collection point to be submitted and approved prior to first occupation.

Should the Section 106 Planning Obligations fail to be completed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority by 5th June 2008, it is recommended that the refusal of planning permission be delegated to the Head of Planning for the following reason:

The development fails to provide an appropriate scheme of works or on and off-site mitigation measures to accommodate the impact of the development on local infrastructure, services, or amenities. The proposal is therefore contrary to government advice, and Policy G3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and Policy D11 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

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