

**SUBJECT**                    **COMMITTEE SITE VISIT REPORTS**                    **ITEM 7**  
                                   **29 OCTOBER 2008**  
                                   Attendance – Verbally updated at Committee

**REPORT OF**            Head of Planning & Building Control

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P08/E0314
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	Full
<b>REGISTERED</b>	26.03.2008
<b>PARISH</b>	Shiplake
<b>WARD MEMBERS</b>	Mr Malcolm Leonard Mr Robert Peasgood
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mr & Mrs N Offley
<b>SITE</b>	House by the Water, Bolney Road, Lower Shiplake
<b>PROPOSALS</b>	Demolition of existing house and erection of a new house and garage.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	Drawings 1022.001; 1022.101f; 1022.102e, 1022.150 and bat surveys and arboricultural method statement.
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	477678/180070
<b>OFFICER</b>	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 Parish Council. The application was deferred at the meeting on 1 October 2008 to enable Members to visit the site.

1.2 The application site, which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A, is one of several residential plots extending between Bolney Road and the River Thames. Bolney Road is generally characterised by large detached dwellings set within spacious plots. The spaciousness of the built form, the abundant vegetation and the river setting have resulted in the built form having a very attractive semi-rural character and appearance.

1.3 Unlike the majority of the plots within Bolney Road, the application site is very narrow and is currently occupied by a relatively modest two storey dwelling fronting the River Thames and an associated double garage fronting Bolney Road.

**2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

2.1 This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a new dwelling and double garage to replace the existing buildings. The proposed dwelling is of a unique, contemporary design. The dwelling consists of a central core with a large rooflight to provide natural light deep into the building. The remainder of the dwelling lies to the east and west of the core and would display a varied building line. The roof of the building would have a single ply membrane over a wave form, which turns up at either end of the building and over the central core.

2.2 The dwelling would be on a very similar footprint to the existing dwelling with its main orientation running east to west due to the constraints of the narrow plot. The length of the building would be very similar to that of the existing dwelling at approximately 30 metres whilst at its widest point the dwelling would approach 8 metres. Due to the central core element and wave form roof, the height of the dwelling would vary between 7 and 8.5 metres.

2.3

2.4 The proposed garage would continue the general design approach of the main dwelling and would be constructed on a similar building line to the existing garage building. The building would be approximately 9 metres in depth, 5 metres in width and 4.3 metres in height.

2.5 A copy of the proposed plans and relevant supporting documentation is **attached** at Appendix B.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Shiplake Parish Council** – The application should be refused due to overdevelopment of the site, not being sympathetic with neighbouring properties – ‘good design, wrong location’.

3.2 **Highway Authority** – No objections. The development is located on a long private street with speed calming measures. There are no highway consequences as a result of the development.

**Environment Agency** – No objections subject to conditions.

3.4 **Forestry Officer** – Following the receipt of amended plans and an arboricultural method statement, there are no objections, however, a condition requiring tree protection should be imposed on any planning permission.

3.5 **Ecologist** – The bat surveys and proposed mitigation measures are sufficient to ensure the protection of an existing bat roost. Conditions should be attached to any permission.

3.6 **Environmental Health** – A condition restricting hours of construction work is recommended.

3.7 **Contaminated Land Officer** – Conditions requiring the investigation and, if necessary, remediation of any contamination are recommended.

3.8 **Waste Management Officer** – Provision of a collection point for waste and recyclables is required.

3.9 **River Thames Society (Middle Thames Branch)** – Objects due to the development being out of keeping with its surroundings.

3.10 **CPRE** – Objects due to the development being out of keeping with its surroundings.

- 3.11 **Neighbours** – Fourteen letters of objection have been received, including eleven repeat objections following the receipt of amended plans. The objections are summarised as follows:
- Impact on neighbouring amenity through overbearing effects and overlooking
  - Overdevelopment of the site
  - Large increase in height and overall size compared to the existing dwelling
  - Design is not in keeping with the character and appearance of the surroundings.
  - Insufficient parking
  - Impact on adjacent protected trees

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P07/E0507 - Demolition of existing house & erection of a new house. Withdrawn prior to determination on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

4.2 P91/S0295 - Change of existing orchid house into domestic accommodation and forming extension/link to existing dwelling. Planning Permission granted on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1991.

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
- T1 – Sustainable Travel
- T2 – Car Parking
- T8 – Development Proposals
- EN1 – Landscape Character
- EN2 – Biodiversity
- EN9 – Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage
- H3 – Design, Quality and Density of Housing Development
- R3 – The River Thames

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
- C1 – Landscape Character
- C3 – The River Thames and its Valley
- C4 – The Landscape Setting of Settlements
- C8 – Species Protection
- C9 – Landscape Features
- EP5 – Flood Risk
- D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness
- D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
- D3 – Plot Coverage and Garden Areas
- D4 – Privacy and Daylight
- D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
- D10 – Waste Management
- H4 & H5 – Larger Villages within the Green Belt and Smaller Villages elsewhere throughout the District.
- T1 & T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

- PPG13 – Transport
- PPS25 – Development and Flood Risk

- 5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance
- South Oxfordshire Design Guide July 2008 (SODG)
  - South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

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. Other material considerations

The Principle of the Development

- 6.2 The application site is located on the edge but within the main built up area of Lower Shiplake, and as such the principle of new residential development is broadly acceptable. The volume restrictions on replacement dwellings as outlined under Policy H12 of the SOLP are only of relevance for the replacement of dwellings outside of the district's villages and towns where the principle of new residential development is not generally acceptable. Therefore, in this case there is no requirement for comparing the volume of the proposed dwelling against the existing in terms of establishing whether the development is acceptable in principle.

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

- 6.3 The site comprises a narrow plot of 8 metres in width, particularly when compared to the width of the majority of the surrounding properties, which generally occupy very large and spacious plots. Like virtually all of the dwellings on the east side of Bolney Road, the plot extends between Bolney Road and the River Thames. The majority of the dwellings, including the existing dwelling on the application site, are well set back from Bolney Road in order to take advantage of their attractive riverside setting.
- 6.4 The existing dwelling is a modest two storey building of traditional appearance with a simple pitched roof and gable end facing onto the River Thames. Its overall size and narrow width are dictated by the small size and constraints of the plot and it is generally dwarfed by the size of adjacent dwellings when viewed from the River Thames. Due to the set back from Bolney Road, there are limited public views of the existing dwelling from the highway with the main views being from the River Thames and a public footpath on the eastern bank of the River. Although there is considerable variety in the design of individual dwellings along Bolney Road, the majority of the dwellings are of traditional appearance and the existing dwelling is generally in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding built form.
- 6.5 The proposed dwelling and its associated garage are of a striking, contemporary design, which has been informed by the constraints and characteristics of the site and surroundings rather than by the design and appearance of the existing dwelling or the general built form along Bolney Road. Evidently the narrow nature of the plot and the proximity to neighbouring dwellings has led to the inevitable east – west orientation of the proposed dwelling with the main windows looking over the River Thames to the east and over the garden area to the west.

- 6.6 In terms of design the proposed dwelling is a unique response to the constraints of the plot and the opportunities afforded by the attractive river setting. The design of the dwelling, with its central core, wave form roof, window openings and materials, is unlike any other dwelling in the locality and would clearly be at odds with the generally traditional appearance of the majority of the dwellings. Criterion (ii) of Policy H4 of the SOLP seeks that the design, height, scale and materials of proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings, and in this regard the general design and materials of the dwelling appear to conflict with this criterion. However, Government guidance contained within paragraph 38 of PPS1 is of relevance to this proposal where it states:
- 6.7 ‘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.’
- 6.8 Although the majority of the dwellings fronting the River Thames are of traditional appearance, there is considerable variety to the age, design and size of individual dwellings. As such there is no strong degree of uniformity as one may find within a street of Victorian terraced properties for example. Passing along the River Thames or along the adjacent footpath, the variety to the built form is readily apparent. Hence Officers consider that a requirement for the replacement dwelling to conform to a particular form or style cannot be justified in this location.
- 6.9 There are other examples of contemporary dwellings already on the river bank, and Officers consider that such a setting is an appropriate location to encourage innovation and originality as advocated by PPS1 above. Certainly Officers do not consider that a particular architectural style should be imposed in respect of the replacement dwelling.
- 6.10 Like the existing dwelling, the proposed dwelling would be visually prominent from the River Thames and its eastern bank. The dwelling would be viewed in context with the surrounding dwellings, particularly Little Grebe immediately to the south, and Heyeswood House immediately to the north. The dwelling would clearly be at odds with these adjacent properties in terms of its appearance but it would add to the considerable variety of the built form along this stretch of the River Thames.
- 6.11 Although the dwelling would be clearly seen from the River, it would only be prominent from a relatively short stretch and would not be overly dominant, particularly having regard to its narrow width. The size and scale of adjacent dwellings and their plots would remain the more dominant features of the built form. In light of the above Officers do not consider that the development would cause any significant harm to the character and appearance of the setting of the landscape setting of Lower Shiplake or the wider character of the River Thames.
- 6.12 At its highest point, the proposed dwelling would be approximately 8.5 metres above ground level, which is approximately 1.3 metres above the ridge height of the existing dwelling. However, the majority of the wave form roof of the proposed dwelling would be closer to 7 metres above ground level, and therefore, similar in height to the existing dwelling. Due to the design of the dwelling, its overall bulk and massing would be significantly greater and on plan form, the bulk and massing appears to be considerable. However, on closer examination the bulk and massing is broken up

substantially by varying ground floor and first floor building lines in respect of all four elevations but particularly in the case of the most prominent east elevation facing the River Thames. The first floor of the east elevation is set back by over 3 metres from the ground floor and is narrower in width, and crucially this allows the higher first floor element to ‘shrink away’ from the river frontage to reduce the prominence of the building and provide an elevation of considerable interest. The side elevations are broken up and given additional interest by the central core, staggered building lines and the use of different facing materials.

- 6.13 As dictated by the size and shape of the plot, the proposed dwelling is of a similar width to the existing dwelling and is almost identical in terms of length. The bulk and massing caused by the additional volume is effectively broken up through careful attention to the building lines and materials both on the horizontal and vertical planes. In light of the above considerations, Officers do not consider that the height and scale of the development would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding built form. With regard to the height of the dwelling, it should be noted that the dwelling would be considerably lower than the adjacent dwelling, Little Grebe and would be approximately 5 metres narrower than this dwelling. Therefore, in comparison to the nearest dwelling, the overall size, scale, height, bulk and massing of the proposed dwelling would be substantially smaller.
- 6.14 The proposed development also includes a double garage close to the site’s boundary with Bolney Road. This building would effectively replace an existing double garage and would be constructed on the same front (west) building line. However, it would be slightly wider, deeper and higher than the existing garage, and would continue the contemporary design of the proposed dwelling in terms of the roof form and use of materials in particular. There are several examples of large garages close to the boundary with Bolney Road, including a large triple garage/workshop to the front of the adjacent property, Little Grebe. The proposed garage would be no more prominent than this neighbouring garage and would be considerably lower in height and smaller in overall size. The unusual design of the garage would be at odds with the simpler and more traditional form of the majority of the garages fronting Bolney Road, however, Officers do not consider that this would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene. Like the proposed dwelling, the garage building would help to add additional architectural variety and interest to Bolney Road.

#### The Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers

- 6.15 Due to the narrow nature of the plot, the replacement dwelling will inevitably be very close to the boundaries of the site with the adjoining properties. However, this situation is very similar to the siting of the existing dwelling. Indeed, the boundary between the site and Little Grebe is essentially formed by the wall associated with the south elevation of the existing dwelling. A gap of approximately 2 metres is present between the north elevation of the existing dwelling and the boundary with Heyeswood House. Due to the layout of the residential development along Bolney Road, Little Grebe and Heyeswood House are the only two properties directly affected by the proposed dwelling.
- 6.16 The design of the dwelling has taken account of the need to avoid overlooking windows on the north and south elevations of the dwelling although there are windows allowing overlooking of the adjacent properties in the north and south elevations of the existing dwelling. The proposed windows in the north and south elevations of the replacement dwelling are either high level windows or face east and west, where facilitated by the stagger of the side elevations of the dwelling. Flat roof areas are proposed at the east and west ends of the building, however, these areas would not be used as external

amenity areas. In light of the above, Officers do not consider that the proposed dwelling would give rise to unacceptable levels of overlooking towards neighbouring properties.

- 6.17 The main concern regarding the impact of the development on the amenity of the adjoining occupiers stems from the increased size, height and bulk and massing of the dwelling compared to the existing. Although the existing dwelling is very close to the north and south boundaries of the site, its impact is reduced by a relatively low eaves line (4.5 metres) and a single storey element to the rear. The side walls of the proposed dwelling would be increased in height from 4.5 metres to approximately 7 metres along the majority of the building. Therefore, the single storey element of the existing dwelling is being replaced by a two storey element. Evidently the majority of the height increase stems from the design of the dwelling, however, it should also be noted that the increased height, in part, stems from the required flood mitigation measures to raise the floor level of the dwelling above the flood plain.
- 6.18 From the south elevation and garden area of Heyeswood House, the proposed dwelling would be much more prominent than the existing due to the increased height and bulk of the dwelling and siting closer to the boundary with Heyeswood House. However, Heyeswood House itself would be approximately 20 metres away from the proposed dwelling and will not experience any harmful levels of overshadowing from the development. Heyeswood House benefits from large spacious grounds, and whilst the proposed dwelling would undoubtedly have a considerable impact on the southern outlook of the property, Officers do not consider that the development would cause significant harm to the amenity of Heyeswood House. It should also be noted that a substantial boathouse exists within the curtilage of Heyeswood House alongside its southern boundary. The presence of this building would help to partially screen and soften the visual prominence of the proposed dwelling in views from the garden area and southern elevation of Heyeswood House.
- 6.19 The impact on the adjoining property to the south, Little Grebe, is of a greater concern due to the proximity of the proposed development to the side elevation of this property. Indeed, like with the existing dwelling, the southern elevation of the proposed dwelling will in part be constructed up to the boundary of the site with Little Grebe at a distance of approximately 1.5 metres from the northern elevation of Little Grebe. However, unlike the existing dwelling which displays a consistent building line along the boundary with Little Grebe, the southern elevation of the proposed dwelling is staggered so that the easternmost part of the dwelling for a length of approximately 12 metres would be set back in by over 2 metres from the shared boundary. This set back is a clear benefit over the current physical relationship between the two properties. However, the eaves height of the existing dwelling alongside the boundary with Little Grebe is approximately 4.5 metres whilst in relation to the proposed dwelling, the southern elevation of the building at or close to the boundary with Little Grebe would be approximately 8 metres.
- 6.20 The length of the proposed dwelling would be very similar to the existing, and therefore, it is only through the additional height, bulk and massing that the occupiers of Little Grebe would be affected to a greater degree. Where the proposed dwelling projects beyond the rear and front building lines of Little Grebe, it has been designed so as to be set away from the boundary at first floor level in respect of the west elevation and ground and first floor levels in respect of the east elevation. Therefore, the part of the proposed dwelling effectively on the boundary between the two properties is generally restricted to the part immediately alongside the north elevation of Little Grebe.

- 6.21 Little Grebe is a substantial dwelling and would remain higher to its ridge than the proposed dwelling. However, due to its pitched roof construction and east-west orientation, the eaves of the dwelling, in respect of its north elevation, would be substantially below (4 metres) the height of the proposed dwelling. The majority of the openings within Little Grebe face east and west and would not be significantly overshadowed by the proposed development. However, there are also windows in the north elevation of Little Grebe. From observations on site and through an examination of the approved drawings in relation to the planning permission granted for Little Grebe, it is apparent that there are ground and first floor windows in its northern elevation. However, none of these windows appear to relate to principal rooms, with the ground floor window relating to a utility room and the two dormer windows relating to bathrooms. At ground floor level, Little Grebe has a relatively open layout which is well lit through large areas of glazing in its east and west elevations. Officers therefore do not consider that the overshadowing of a small utility room window would result in any significant loss of amenity. Furthermore, the additional overshadowing of the bathroom dormer windows would also not result in a significant loss of amenity.
- 6.22 The proposed dwelling would not have a significant impact on the general eastward and westward outlook from Little Grebe, although in general terms it would be more overbearing than the existing property. Nevertheless, careful attention to the building lines of the proposed dwelling along with the design and use of materials would help to reduce this impact, and Officers do not consider that the dwelling would be unduly overbearing on the occupiers of Little Grebe.
- 6.23 The proposed garage would be built on a similar footprint to the existing and, although close to the boundary with neighbouring properties, this building would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity.

#### The Impact on Trees

- 6.24 There are two ash trees located on the western part of the site, which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The Council's Forestry Officer originally raised concerns regarding the lack of information to demonstrate the impact of the proposed garage building on these trees. Consequently, the applicant has submitted an Arboricultural Method Statement, which includes a Tree Protection Plan for the retained trees, including the two protected ash trees. The Council's Forestry Officer has considered this information and has no further concerns with regard to the development, subject to a condition to require tree protection to be carried out as part of the development.
- 6.25 Apart from the two protected ash trees to the front of the site, there are few other trees of any significance within the site. A silver birch lies close to the site of the proposed dwelling on land within the cartilage of Heyeswood House, and concern has been expressed that the development may have a detrimental impact on this tree. The Council's Forestry Officer has considered the impact on this silver birch and is of the opinion that the tree is in a poor condition and in decline. As a result of this, Officers do not consider that it would be justifiable to refuse the application based on a possible adverse impact on the silver birch tree.

#### Highway Considerations

- 6.26 The proposed garage has been designed to accommodate two vehicles although the internal dimensions of the building would make this very tight. The garage would be on a very similar footprint to the existing garage building with a matching front building line. As such the garage would be the same distance from the edge of Bolney Road. The Highway Authority has raised no objections in relation to highway safety.



### Other Material Considerations

- 6.27 The application is accompanied by a pre-assessment report indicating that the proposed dwelling would achieve Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, which is greater than the level required having regard to the SODG. As such, the proposal complies with Policy D8 of the SOLP in relation to the efficient use of water, energy and materials.
- 6.28 The proposed development would largely replicate the siting and footprints of the existing development. As such the garden area between the proposed garage and dwelling would be retained, and would provide an adequate external amenity area. Of course, the property benefits from an enviable position alongside the River Thames in any case.

### 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, the proposal would not cause any significant harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, the health and sustainability of protected trees and would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

### 8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

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

1. **Commencement – 3 years**
2. **Samples of materials to be submitted and approved prior to development**
3. **Details of colour washed render to be submitted and approved prior to relevant part of the development**
4. **Details of hardsurfacing and fencing to be submitted and approved prior to relevant part of the development**
5. **Details of any external lighting to be submitted and approved prior to installation**
6. **Permitted development rights removed for extensions and outbuildings**
7. **No additional windows in north or south elevations**
8. **No use of the roof areas**
9. **Tree protection details to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing**
10. **Post construction review to be submitted and agreed to ensure Code 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes is met**
11. **Use of garage accommodation for parking of vehicles only**
12. **Hours of work restricted to between 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturday**
13. **Development to be implemented in accordance with the scheme of mitigation to protect bats**
14. **Further bat survey to be undertaken if the development is not commenced within one year of the date of the planning permission**
15. **Contaminated land assessment to be carried out**
16. **Any unsuspected contamination encountered during the development to be brought to the attention of the LPA**
17. **Development to be designed and constructed in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment**
18. **No raising of existing ground levels on the site**
19. **No spoil or materials to be deposited or stored on that part of the site lying within the area of land liable to flood**

- 20. Any walls or fencing shall be designed to be permeable to flood water**
- 21. The garage shall be floodable and floor levels shall not be raised above the existing ground level**
- 22. No soakaways deeper than 1.5 metres and shall not intersect the water table**
- 23. A minimum of a 1 metre unsaturated zone to be maintained between the base of any soakaway and the maximum seasonal water table**
- 24. Soakaways designed to receive clean roof water to be kept separate from those receiving surface water runoff from highway or parking areas**
- 25. Details of bin storage facilities and arrangements for the collection of waste to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing**

**Author:** Mr T Wyatt  
**Contact no:** 01491 823154  
**Email:** [planning.east@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:planning.east@southoxon.gov.uk)