
APPLICATION NO.	P08/E1328
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	11.12.2008
PARISH	SONNING COMMON
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mr Paul Harrison Mr Alan Rooke
APPLICANT	Mr David Bridges
SITE	22 Reades Lane Sonning Common
PROPOSAL	Erection of 2 No. semi-detached chalet bungalows and associated access.
AMENDMENTS	
GRID REFERENCE	470390180055
OFFICER	Ms P.A.Fox

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee because the recommendation conflicts with the views of the Parish Council.
- 1.2 The site is outlined on the OS plan **attached** as Appendix A. 22 Reades Lane is a detached bungalow, which lies between two houses and forms part of a traditional linear development fronting Reades Lane. The property has a long rear garden, like its neighbours to the west 24 Reades Lane, and the properties to the east. Ashford Avenue and Pages Orchard lying to the west and north respectively comprise residential development built at a higher density and mainly semi-detached properties.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application seeks permission for the construction of a pair of 2 bedroom semi-detached chalet bungalows within the property's garden. The new properties would be accessed off the existing turning head at the southern end of Pages Orchard. Two off street parking spaces would be provided for each dwelling.
- 2.2 Extracts from the submitted plans are **attached** as Appendix B. The Design and Access Statement is **attached** as Appendix C. The application is also accompanied by a code for sustainable homes Pre-Assessment report which indicates code level 3 would be attained.
- 2.3 The submission follows the dismissal of an appeal for 3 dwellings last year. This scheme differs to the appeal scheme in the following ways:-
- The scheme does not include a replacement dwelling on the Reades Lane frontage
 - The semi-detached properties are now two bedroomed (rather than three)
 - The footprint of the properties has been reduced from 8 x 8 metres to 8.4 x 6 metres.
 - The distance to the side boundaries has been increased from 1m to 2.5 metres
 - The height of the semis has been reduced from 7.9 to 7.27 metres
 - The design of the dwelling has been amended with a reduction in the size of dormers

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Sonning Common Parish Council - Object on the grounds of overdevelopment, out of keeping, unneighbourly and will aggravate existing access and parking problems in Pages Orchard.
- OCC Highways - No objection. The development would provide an appropriate level of off street parking and the provision of a turning head would negate any need to manoeuvre on the highway. No objection subject to conditions.
- Environmental Services (Environmental Protection Officer) - Recommend restriction on working hours in view of the potential for noise and dust from demolition and construction.
- Environmental Services (Contaminated Land Officer) - Conditions should be imposed requiring the potential for contamination to be investigated.
- Waste Management officer - No objection.
- Forestry Officer - The majority of trees on the site have a low arboricultural value and should not be a restraint to development. The conifers to the east should be protected. No objection subject to conditions.
- Sonning Common Society - Objects – the building line in Reades Lane and the chalet bungalows would be out of keeping.
- Neighbours - Letters from 11 residents raising objections on the following grounds:-
- Changes do not address previous concerns
 - Will aggravate parking and congestion in Pages Orchard
 - Will detract from the character of the area
 - Properties are out of keeping
 - Scheme is unneighbourly – loss of privacy, daylight and overbearing
 - Noise and disturbance
 - Overdevelopment
 - Removal of attractive shrubs and hedges
 - Precedent for backland development changing the character of the area

A petition with 40 signatures objecting to the proposal has also been received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P07/E0574 – Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 3 houses and relocation of vehicular access – withdrawn.
- P07/E1344 – Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 1 detached and a pair of semi-detached houses and relocation of vehicular access. Refused December 2007. This application was refused for the following reasons:
1. The proposal relates to the construction of one 5 bedroom, and two 3 bedroom dwellings. This is contrary to Policy H7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, which seeks to ensure that any new residential development consisting of two or more dwellings meets the identified housing need for smaller two bedroom dwellings in the district. As the proposal does not address housing need it is also contrary to guidance contained within PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, and PPS3: Housing.
 2. The proposed development, due to the siting, size, scale, height, bulk and massing of the dwellings would result in a form of development, including backland development, that would fail to respect the established character and appearance of the site and the surrounding built form. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies G2, G6, D1, and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS3: Housing, and the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2000.
 3. The proposed dwellings would be in close proximity to the boundaries of the site with existing residential development. Due to the siting, size, scale, height and bulk of the development, it would have an overbearing impact on Numbers 20 and 24 Reades Lane to the detriment of the amenity of the occupiers of these properties. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies D4 and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

An appeal against this refusal of planning permission was dismissed and a copy of the Inspector's decision letter is **attached** as Appendix D.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:
G1 - General Policies for Development
G2 - Improving the Quality and Design of Development
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
C1 - Landscape Character
D1 - Good Design and Local Distinctiveness

D2 - Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
D3 - Plot Coverage and Garden Areas
D4 - Privacy and Daylight
D7 - Access for All
D8 - Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
D10 – Waste Management
H4 - Towns and Larger Villages
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 2008 (SODG)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The key planning issues in this case are:

- i) the acceptability of the principle of development
- ii) the impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area
- iii) the impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers
- iv) highway and car parking considerations
- v) other issues including housing mix and sustainability issues

The principle of development

6.2 This site lies within the built-up area of Sonning Common which is classified as one of the District's larger villages outside of the Green Belt. Policy H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan allows for the construction of housing subject to compliance with five criteria including that an important open space is not lost, the development is in keeping with the character of the area and, that if the proposal comprises backland development, it would not create problems of privacy and access.

6.3 In assessing the recent appeal on the site the Inspector accepted the principle of development in this location but proceeded to dismiss the appeal on the basis that it would have failed to provide an appropriate mix of units, it would have adversely affected the character and appearance of the area and caused harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of adjacent properties. Those issues are considered below and overleaf.

The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the areas

6.4 The application site is surrounded by residential development to the north, east and west. Whilst Reades Lane comprises detached properties in substantial plots the development to the west and north comprises terraced houses and semi-detached dwellings set within relatively small plots. In dismissing the appeal scheme the Inspector expressed some concerns about the principle of backland development and the change to the pattern of development with the proposal being at odds with the long rear gardens of other detached properties fronting Reades Lane. However, in paragraph 9 he refers to advice in Planning Policy Statements 1 and 3 which favours making better use of existing developed land in built up areas, and he concluded "the principle of some form of residential development here is acceptable". At paragraph 10 he comments, "in townscapes terms, I consider the principle of a form of semi-detached bungalows would not be inappropriate at the end of Pages Orchard and would form a reasonable enclosure to the cul-de-sac and an appropriate transition between the bungalows on one side and the houses on the other".

- 6.5 The Inspector then went on to criticise the scale of the development commenting that the width of the block of semi-detached properties is too great and there would be inadequate space to the side boundaries of the site. For this reason he felt the proposal would be seriously at odds with the established pattern of development and would harm the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.6 This proposal would allow for greater distance to the side boundaries, the gap would now be 2.5 metres rather than 1 metre. The height of the properties has also been reduced from 7.85 metres to 7.27 metres which means that they would be lower than the existing two storey properties in Pages Orchard.
- 6.7 The plans **attached** as Appendix E illustrate the effect of these changes in comparison to the appeal scheme. In your Officers' opinion the reduction in the scale of the semis would result in a development that would now sit more comfortably at the end of Pages Orchard and would not materially harm the established character of the area. The design of the semis, with their steeply pitched roof, is quite distinctive and would not draw on the features of any properties in the immediate vicinity. It would, however, generally respect advice in the Council's Design Guide and given the wide variety of designs in the area the properties are considered to have an acceptable appearance.

The impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers

- 6.8 In his criticism of the appeal scheme the Inspector's main area of concern was the impact of the replacement dwelling on the Reades Lane frontage. He did not specifically criticise the impact of the semi-detached properties on the surrounding properties. Inevitably the proposal would have an impact on both neighbours, 20 and 24 Reades Lane, and to a lesser extent 12 and 18 Pages Orchard. The new building would be seen from the rear garden of No 24, in particular, but with a gap of 2.5 metres to the boundary your Officers have concluded it would not appear unduly overbearing. In addition the proposal would not result in any direct loss of privacy or light.

Highway and car parking considerations

- 6.9 Many of the objectors raise concerns about the parking and vehicular access arrangements. The access to the new properties would be via the existing turning head in Pages Orchard where some parking currently occurs. Residents draw attention to the loss of this area and consider that it will exacerbate existing car parking problems. Whilst it is acknowledged that the area suffers from high levels of on street parking the Highway Authority have confirmed that the turning area does not provide official parking space and should be kept clear. Therefore the loss of this area for parking could not form a reason for refusal.
- 6.10 Two off street parking spaces are provided for each property and the Highway Authority have confirmed that this provision is acceptable. With this level of parking provision the development should not exacerbate the acknowledged existing parking difficulties in respect of Pages Orchard. It is also relevant that the Inspector commented he had no material evidence before him to establish a real highway problem with the appeal scheme.

Other matters including housing mix and sustainability issues

- 6.11 The semi detached properties are two bedroomed rather than three and as a result the scheme now accords with the requirements of Policy H7.

- 6.12 Policy D8 of the SOLP requires all new development to demonstrate high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials. A pre-assessment accompanies the submission confirming that the dwellings would meet Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. A condition is recommended which will secure this.
- 6.13 The proposed private garden areas would meet the recommended standards outlined within Policy D3 of the SOLP and the SODG. There are no significant trees on the site and the Forestry Officer has commented that the vegetation should not be a restraint to development. He comments that whilst the row of conifer trees to the east (within the garden of 20 Reades Lane) are not of good quality they provide an effective screen and should be protected. A condition has therefore been imposed to cover this.
- 6.14 The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has taken a precautionary approach to the issue of contamination and has requested appropriate conditions be attached.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 Through a reduction in the size of the semi-detached properties and the provision of two rather than three bedroomed dwellings, the proposal has in your Officer's opinion addressed the three issues raised by the Inspector.
- 7.2 The scheme now generally complies with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and, subject to the attached conditions, the proposal would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area, prejudice highway safety or cause any undue harm to the amenity of the area.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement – standard 3 years**
2. **Samples of all external materials**
3. **Details of soft and hard landscaping to be submitted**
4. **Details of fencing/all means of enclosure to be submitted**
5. **Details of finished ground and floor levels to be submitted**
6. **New access to be in accordance with OCC specification**
7. **Provision of parking and turning areas prior to occupation and retention of parking thereafter**
8. **Sustainability measures to be implemented**
9. **Details of refuse and recycling facilities to be submitted**
10. **Contaminated land assessment to be approved**
11. **Contaminated land remediation to be implemented if necessary**
12. **No additional windows to be installed**
13. **Permitted development rights for alterations, extensions and outbuildings to be restricted**
14. **Hours of construction to be restricted**
15. **Protection of the conifer trees running along the eastern (side) boundary**

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