

**SUBJECT            DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS            ITEM 8**

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

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P09/E0927</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL
<b>REGISTERED</b>	04.09.2009
<b>PARISH</b>	THAME
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	D Bretherton Mike Welply
<b>APPLICANT</b>	And Zest Developments
<b>SITE</b>	Whitehound Upper High Street Thame
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Demolition of existing house and outbuildings. Erection of 7 new apartments and serviced offices.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	470959/205687
<b>OFFICER</b>	Mr M.Moore
<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P09/E0928/CA</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	CONSERVATION AREA
<b>REGISTERED</b>	04.09.2009
<b>PARISH</b>	THAME
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	And Zest Developments
<b>SITE</b>	Whitehound Upper High Street Thame
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Demolition of existing house and outbuildings. Erection of 7 new apartments and serviced offices.
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 These applications are being referred to the Committee because the recommendation conflicts with the views of the Thame Town Council.

1.2 On site at present is a nondescript two-storey property with dormers set well back from the road. At the rear is a large double garage erected in the late 1980's and some other older outbuildings, one being two-storey with some inconclusive evidence of a former residential use. Vehicular access is achieved to the rear of the site via a drive at the side which serves a large parking area used by an adjoining office. At the front of the site is a low brick wall through which a pedestrian gate gives access to the front door of the existing property. The site is located at the south-east end of the Market Place within the Thame Conservation Area. To the north-west of the site is an area of traditional buildings in a variety of styles and heights. However, all adjoining properties are constructed with their front elevations immediately adjoining the

pavement. At the rear (north-east) of the site are a variety of office buildings, some served by the existing access from Upper High Street/Park Street and others served from Cooksons Industrial Mews at the rear. To the south-east of the site are frontage ground floor shops with residential above. At the rear of these shops is a converted barn.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 **P09/E0928/CA** seeks Conservation Area consent for the removal of all the buildings on the site.

2.2 **P09/E0927** proposes the demolition of all buildings and the erection of 7 new apartments. They would be provided in a 2½ storey block containing 5 units on the front of the site and a 1½ storey block in the middle of the site with two units. There would be 4 no. two bed flats and 3 no. three bed flats. In addition, at the rear of the site it is proposed to erect a two-storey serviced office building with 180 sq.metres of floorspace. Copies of the location plan and principal elevations are **attached** to this report.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- |     |                                 |   |  |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|--|
| 3.1 | Thame Town Council              | - | Object. Inadequate parking, over development, unsympathetic, traffic and noise generation (they have not been specific in any of the issues).  |
|     | Neighbours (2)                  | - | Object. They consider it represents an over development of the site, they have concerns about lack of parking, its harmful to an adjoining listed building, and would block natural light. |
|     | SODC (Countryside Officer)      | - | No objection.  |
|     | SODC (Forestry)                 | - | No objection.  |
|     | SODC (Conservation Officer)     | - | Development generally acceptable.  |
|     | SODC (Environmental Protection) | - | Conditions required on contamination.  |
|     | SODC (Environmental Protection) | - | Requires further details concerning heat source pumps (see below).   |
|     | OCC (Developer Funding)         | - | Requires contributions towards libraries, museums services, social and healthcare and waste.   |
|     | OCC (Archaeology)               | - | No objection.  |
|     | OCC (Highways)                  | - | No objection. Their comments are <b>attached</b> to this report.   |
|     | Thames Water                    | - | No objection.  |

4.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

4.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies:

- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G3 - Development well served by facilities and transport
- G6 - Appropriateness of development to its site & surroundings
- EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP4 - Impact on water resources
- EP6 - Sustainable drainage
- EP7 - Impact on ground water resources
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D6 - Community safety
- D8 - Conservation and efficient use of energy
- D9 - Proposals for renewable 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
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- CON5 - Setting of listed building
- CON6 - Demolition in conservation area
- CON7 - Proposals in a conservation area

South Oxfordshire Design Guide

PPS1 Delivering sustainable development

PPS3 Housing

PPS7 Sustainable development in rural areas

PPG13 Transport

5.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

5.1 In respect of **P09/E0928/CA** the principal consideration is the impact the loss of the buildings currently on the site would have to the character, appearance and setting of the Thame Conservation Area, and whether there is an acceptable scheme for replacement. In this case, it is my opinion that the existing building does not contribute positively to the setting of the Conservation Area being set so far back and being of the style which is not in keeping with the properties on either side. Its loss would not detract from the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area and, provided all materials were removed from the site within a reasonable time period, it is my opinion that the open space which would result would make a neutral contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area. Consequently, in this particular case, I do not consider that it requires an acceptable scheme for replacement to be in place prior to demolition in order to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

**P09/E0927**

5.2 The following are considered to be the principal issues in respect of the determination of the planning application.

- i) Principle
- ii) H4 criteria issues
- iii) Impact on Conservation Area and surrounding listed buildings

- iv) Mix of units
- v) Sustainable design issues

**Principle**

- 5.3 Thame is one of the principal towns in the district where new residential development would normally be allowed subject to the criteria set out in Policy H4.

**H4 criteria issues**

- 5.4 i) That an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost. As indicated above, it is my opinion that the current development on the site does not enhance the character, appearance and setting of the area and, under these circumstances, provided development is acceptable in all other respects, the development of the site is acceptable.
- 5.5 ii) Design, height and bulk in keeping with the surroundings. The site lies on the edge of the town centre of Thame at the end of the Market Place. Development in the area is all frontage development tight to the back edge of the footpath. This is typical of all the market towns in the district. The development now proposed follows this design principle. I consider that the design follows the curve of the road in an acceptable fashion and that the height and bulk is in keeping with the surroundings, given the various heights of the surrounding buildings. The development of the site in depth is also considered to be in keeping with the surroundings. Many of the surrounding areas are part of the old burgage plots which did typically have fewer buildings in backland locations. I understand that the site had been a farmyard in historic times but it still has similar characteristics to a burgage plot. The buildings proposed at the rear of the site are smaller than the frontage buildings and, in my opinion, fit in well with the surroundings. The office building at the back of the site relates to the surrounding office and industrial buildings and again is of a scale and bulk in keeping with its surroundings.
- 5.6 iii) That the character of the area is not adversely affected. Given the above comments, I consider that the closure of the existing gap will actually positively impact on the character of the area. At the rear of the site, is a reasonable area of shared gardens which also accommodates cycle and bin stores. Given its town centre location, I consider that the area is adequate for the dwellings proposed and, with the oblique views afforded to the rear of the site through the vehicular entrance to the parking area next door, it will give the appearance of spaciousness.
- 5.7 iv) Amenity, environmental or highway objections. To the rear of the frontage land would be an area of some 200 sq.m. of shared community space, incorporating a cycle and bin store. The Design Guide suggests the 175 sq.m. of shared amenity space would be appropriate - several of the flats also have outside balconies. Although not private, I consider the amenity area for the flats is adequate.

- 5.8 v) Neighbour impact. Adjoining properties to the south-east do not have windows facing towards the site other than a dormer window at third storey and it is not considered that the proposal would have an undue impact on their residential amenity. The building to the north-east is in use as a range of offices. The removal of the existing property Whitehound will, to some extent, improve the situation. However, the new block on the front will be only some 5 metres away from secondary windows serving the meeting room. On balance, I consider that the loss of light to these office windows would be insufficient to justify a refusal of planning permission.
- 5.9 Highway issues – in this case no vehicle parking is proposed. In most circumstances this would be unacceptable. However, regard has to be paid to the sustainable location of the site. There is easy access to a full range of shops and services. It is within 200 metres of good bus services which gives access to the surrounding areas and to the railway station. The whole development is, in effect, car free with no allocated parking within it. However, adjacent car parks in the centre of Thame on weekdays have spare capacity in the evenings. Should residents or office workers of the new development opt to either own a car or travel to the site by car they will need to make alternative arrangements for parking. The site has a full range of facilities within easy walking distance with public transport available for shorter and longer distances. The Oxfordshire County Council, as Highway Authority, have accepted that the site is well suited to a car free development given the range of facilities available in close proximity. Whilst the Town Council have raised concern about non provision of parking facilities, the proposals in their current form would be in accordance with government advice on sustainable development. I would wish to stress that this view would be different if the location was further from the town centre.
- 5.10 Access for emergency services would be available to the site from the adjoining access. I understand that the Fire Authority can service properties for a distance of some 45 metres from the nearest access point. In these circumstances, the whole of the site can have fire access from the adjoining car park.
- 5.11 vi) Backland development issues. The proposals involve the construction of two residential units and the serviced office in a backland location. However, the development does not demonstrate the normal problems associated with backland development. Because of the lack of vehicular access only pedestrian access will be gained.

#### **Impact on Conservation Area and Listed Buildings**

- 5.12 As already indicated, the majority of the surrounding development within the Conservation Area is frontage development. The current site is an incongruous gap which does little to enhance the setting of the area. I consider that by closing the gap with an appropriately detailed building would be an enhancement to the Conservation Area.
- 5.13 No 30 Upper High Street adjoining the site to the north-east is a listed building. The construction of the new frontage building would, in my opinion, enhance the setting of the listed building by removing the existing incongruous property (Whitehound).

#### **Mix of Units**

- 5.14 Policy H7 seeks to secure a mix of housing units in accordance with the identified local need. The 2008 Housing Needs Assessment Study, suggested that 10% of

units should be 1 bed, 60% 2 bed, 10% 3 bed and 20% 4 bed and above. However regard has to be had to the site's location in a Conservation Area and the type of development proposed. In this particular location I consider that flat development is appropriate. The majority of the units are two bed flats which has been identified as the greatest need. If more larger units were proposed, there would be greater potential for 'family' accommodation where there is more likelihood of car ownership. With the size of units proposed, I consider that the housing mix to be acceptable having regard to the greatest need being for small units together and absence of any parking.

#### **Sustainable design issues**

- 5.15 Policy D8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan seeks to ensure that all new developments demonstrate high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials. In respect of the housing a Code for Sustainable Homes Pre-assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates Code 2 will be reached. The applicant is currently examining the possibility of using air source heat pumps as well. This had led to some concerns that these could be noisy. The pre-assessment demonstrates that the appropriate code level will be reached without the heat source pumps and consequently I consider that the matter can be dealt with adequately by condition.

#### **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The site lies in a highly sustainable location close to existing facilities and in such a location, it is considered that development with no parking provision is acceptable. Subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions, the proposed development would respect the historic character of the Conservation Area and adjoining listed buildings and would not significantly detract from the amenities of adjoining properties. The proposals otherwise comply with relevant Development Plan policies and national planning policy.

#### **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 **It is recommended that the grant of planning permission be delegated to the Head of Planning subject to the prior completion of an appropriate agreement with the County Council to ensure infrastructure payments are made towards libraries, waste management, museum resource centre and social and healthcare provision and to the following conditions:**

##### **Planning application ref. P09/E0927**

- 1) Commencement 3 years.**
- 2) Samples of all materials**
- 3) Details of all windows and external doors to be agreed**
- 4) No additional windows, other openings, extensions or roof extensions without planning permission**
- 5) Landscaping scheme**
- 6) Details of closure of frontage alleyway to be agreed**
- 7) Provision of cycle store**
- 8) Provision of waste and recycling store**
- 9) Sustainability measures to have regard for Code for Sustainable Homes and BREAAM ratings**
- 10) Contamination investigation**
- 11) Contamination (remediation and validation)**
- 12) Lighting to be agreed**
- 13) Limits of hours of construction**

6.2 **And in respect of application ref. P09/E0928/CA Conservation Area Consent be granted for the demolition of all existing buildings on the site subject to the following conditions:-**

- 1) **Commencement Conservation Area consent 3 years**
- 2) **Limit on hours of demolition**
- 3) **If demolition takes place in advance of a contract to build the flats the scheme for landscaping shall be agreed and implemented within 3 months of the commencement of work.**

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