
APPLICATION NO.	P10/E0649/RM
APPLICATION TYPE REGISTERED	RESERVED MATTERS 24.05.2010
PARISH	THAME
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mr David Dodds Mrs Ann Midwinter
APPLICANT SITE PROPOSAL	David Wilson Homes/Wates (Thame) Ltd Thame United Football Club Windmill Road Thame 59 open market residential dwellings and 20 x 1 bed & 20 x 2 bed extra care facilities with associated works
AMENDMENTS	As amended by drawings accompanying letter from agent dated 8 July 2010.
GRID REFERENCE OFFICER	470553/205425 Mr M.Moore

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Planning Committee at the discretion of the Planning Manager mainly because of the large number of representations received.
- 1.2 The site, which extends to just under 2 hectares (1.97 hectares) is the site of the former Thame United Football Ground. All the buildings and a number of cypress trees have been cleared and the football pitch has reverted to a wilderness.
- 1.3 The site adjoins the Phoenix Cycle Track which is part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, beyond which are allotments and fields. To the west of the site is Arnold Way, an estate of houses built on the former training pitch of the football club constructed in the early 1990's. To the north, is Holliers Close, which was mostly built in the 1970's and Pearces Court, a complex of flats for the elderly around the same time. To the east of the site is a Kingdom Hall for Jehovah Witnesses together with properties of a variety of ages and styles. Windmill Road, on its eastern side, comprises mostly interwar housing.
- 1.3 The site is approximately 400 metres from Thame town centre. Currently access is taken from Windmill Road which is itself linked to the town centre by Nelson Street, Rooks Lane (one way) and Southern Road. The site is generally level and is totally overgrown. There are a number of trees on the southern and eastern boundaries which are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. A site location plan is **attached** to this report.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks reserved matters consent for the construction of 59 private, open market dwellings and a 20 x 1 bed and 20 x 2 bed extra care facility. 'Extra care' housing provides older and disabled people with various care needs with an assured tenancy in a self contained flat in a purpose built building. It is not a 'care home' and does fall within category C3 (dwellings) of the Use Classes Order.
- 2.2 Access is proposed to be taken from Windmill Road close to the existing access point. The extra care facility would comprise a single building of 2½ storeys. The 59 open market housing will be a mixture of detached, semi detached and terraced properties

mostly of two storey height. An area of public open space is proposed in the northern part of the development together with additional open space close to the TPO'd trees on the southern boundary and additional open space along the Windmill Road frontage.

- 2.3 As a result of initial representations received amended plans have been submitted. These seek to clarify and adjust various elements of the scheme as a response to the consultations received. The plans do show an 'optional footpath link constructed to site boundary' to connect the development to the Phoenix Trail. Minor adjustments were made to the road layout to comply with OCC (Highways) requirements and the Forestry Officer's comments in respect of the impact of the roads on TPO'd trees. Other minor adjustments were made in an attempt to overcome some identified impacts on neighbouring properties. Reduced copies of the layout, the extra care facility and typical elevations are **attached** to this report.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 In respect of the application as originally submitted, the following representations were received:

Thame Town Council	-	Recommends approval but requests details of mitigation measures to be taken in relation to highway safety.
OCC (Highways)	-	Holding objection. Many of the comments made have been addressed by the amended plans. Final confirmation of comments awaited. I will report further at the Committee Meeting as necessary.
OCC (Archaeologist)	-	No objection.
OCC (Footpaths)	-	No objection.
SODC (Forestry)	-	Detailed comments made on the roadway. These have been addressed in the amended plans and I will report further as necessary at Planning Committee.
Countryside Officer	-	The amended plans included additional information concerning reptiles and a proposed mitigation plan. No objection raised.
SODC (Waste Management Officer)	-	Collection from care homes satisfy. The roads must be formally adopted for waste collection vehicles to enter the site or an indemnity must be sought.
SODC (Contaminated Land Officer)	-	Standard land contamination condition required.

- Crime Prevention Design Advisor - Objection received. Concern expressed at the proposal to have a footpath link to the Phoenix Trail. This is discussed further below. Also the rear boundary of the care home needs to be reconsidered.
- Environment Agency - No objection.
Thames Water - No objection but request a condition for prior agreement to a drainage strategy.
- Southern Thame Residents Association - Objection. They consider access to the site is very poor, over development of the site, too many open market properties, want to see the care home built as approved not for any other social schemes, concerns over construction traffic, inadequate parking, insufficient parking for visitors to Kingdom Hall, impact on schools and medical care should be considered, preliminary drainage strategy needs to be addressed.
- Neighbours (19) - All object. There have been concerns expressed over the access to the site, they consider Windmill Road, Nelson Street and Southern Road and effectively single lane roads due to on-street parking, overall increase in traffic volume, Pearce Court (a retirement home to the north of the site) will be removed. Danger to elderly residents due to increased traffic, overall lack of parking provision in the area both for existing development and this proposal, generally an overdevelopment of the site. The development will put pressure on infrastructure, schools etc, the site is a haven for local wildlife, the dwellings are of a height, scale and nature not in keeping with neighbouring developments, increased traffic noise, harm to outlook, lighting, privacy and property value.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P08/E0324/O

Planning Committee visited the site prior to determining this outline application in September 2008. There were a number of difficulties concerning the Section 106 Agreement and consequently outline planning permission was not issued until 22 December 2009.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies:

G1 – Restraint of development

G2 – Protect district from adverse development

G3 – Development well served by facilities and transport

G5 – Best use of land

- C4 – Landscape setting of settlements
- C9 – Loss of landscape features
- EP1 – Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP2 – Adverse affect by noise or vibration
- EP3 – Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP5 – Area at risk from flooding
- EP6 – Sustainable drainage
- EP7 – Impact on the ground water resources
- EP8 – Contaminated land
- 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
- D10 – Waste management
- D11 – Infrastructure and services secured
- D12 – Public art
- 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
- H9 – Provision of affordable housing
- R2 – Provision of play areas on new housing development
- R6 – Public open space in new residential development
- CF1 – Protection of recreational or essential community facilities
- T1 – Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 – Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

South Oxfordshire Design Guide

- PPS1 Delivering sustainable development
- PPS3 Housing
- PPG13 Transport
- PPS2 Renewable energy

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 With the grant of outline planning permission, the principle of housing was found to be acceptable on this site. The outline application also secured the replacement of the facilities which used to exist on the site (football and social club). The main issues in this case are therefore:

- i) Density/impact on character and appearance of the area
- ii) Housing mix and affordable housing
- iv) Highway issues
- v) Designing out crime
- vi) Drainage
- vii) Impact on trees
- viii) Impact on neighbours
- ix) Sustainable building
- x) Infrastructure contributions

i) Density/impact on character and appearance of the area

6.2 The application as submitted has a density of approximately 50 dwellings per hectare, which is at the upper end of the density which is considered appropriate in urban areas. It is higher than surrounding developments. However, 40% of the units (the extra care

units) are contained within approximately 20% of the site. This means that the 59 open market houses would be constructed at a density of approximately 36 dwellings per hectare, which is more in line with the existing surrounding development. The extra care units require less parking, because the likely occupiers are unlikely to require a car space. The extra care units are sited at the lowest part of the site and although 2½ storeys in height, I do not consider that it will appear out of keeping with the locality. The proposal will appear as flatted development in a similar way to Pearce Court to the north of the application site. The development otherwise complies with normal standards for garden sizes and overlooking distances. Taken overall therefore, I consider that the density of development and its impact on the character and appearance of the area is acceptable.

ii) Housing mix and affordable housing

6.3 On developments of this size, Policy H9 requires 40% of the units to be affordable houses. These would normally be pepper potted round the estate and comprise a variety of house types and styles. However, in January 2008 Oxfordshire County Council produced 'a framework for an Oxfordshire extra care housing strategy' which identified that there was a need for extra care housing of 280 units within the district. This provides an independent alternative to residential care for the increasing number of residents in South Oxfordshire aged 75 and over, for whom there is currently no such provision in the district. To be viable, extra care units need to be grouped together and 40 units represents the lower end of the appropriate range. They should also be in locations readily accessible to all facilities and services. It is my opinion that this site is an ideal location for extra care housing given its proximity to all services in Thame and its generally level pedestrian access. The extra care home proposed would be run and managed by a registered social landlord and in my opinion would assist in fulfilling this vital need for such accommodation. Other sites in the district able to accommodate this level of development are generally further from facilities. I consider that the extra care units proposed fulfil the requirement for affordable housing as they represent 40% of the units proposed. Furthermore, they assist in delivering this much needed form of social housing.

6.4 Policy H7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan requires a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the current and future household needs of the district. The open market housing comprises 21 two bed units (36%), 18 three bed houses (30%), and 20 four bed houses (34%) which does not comply with the housing needs assessment survey. However, this proposed mix has to be weighed against benefits that the extra care units would provide. As the extra care units are, of necessity, within a single block, I do not consider that it would be reasonable to insist upon the provision of one bed open market properties as these would have to be within further apartment blocks which could be out of character with the area. Normally, affordable housing includes a mix of 3 and 4 bed units. However, the extra care units comprise 20 one bed and 20 two bed units. The majority (18) of the 21 two bed open market units are houses with gardens and taken overall, I consider that an objection on housing mix could not be sustained given the benefits associated with the extra care units.

iv) Highway issues

6.5 Most of the local residents are concerned at the increase in traffic using the local road network. This was carefully assessed by Members when they were considering the outline application. At that time, Oxfordshire County Council (Highways) advised that the application was acceptable subject to payments (which were approved as part of the associated Section 106 Agreement) for the improvements to the local road network. The 40 extra care dwellings will result in a significant reduction in vehicle trips in

comparison to 40 normal affordable housing units. Consequently, I do not consider that an objection on highway grounds could be sustained particularly as the situation represents an improvement with less intensive traffic movements. The open market housing has a total of 116 dedicated parking spaces which equates to 1.96 spaces per dwelling. This is considered acceptable particularly as the internal road network would allow for limited on-street parking. I consider it unlikely that parking from this site would spill out onto the adjoining road network.

v) Designing out crime

- 6.6 In respect of the plans as originally submitted, the Highway Engineer requested a footpath link through to the Phoenix Trail. However, the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor was adamant that she would object to such a link being created. This was based on advice from the local policemen and community policing officers. It is clearly a question of balance between giving people reasonable access to cycle routes whilst preventing opportunities for crime. The applicant is happy with either option. I consider on balance, that the footpath link would be undesirable because of crime and that it should not be provided. This can be covered by a condition. Other issues raised by the Crime Prevention Design Advisor have, to a large extent, been addressed in the amended plans or can be covered by a condition.

vi) Drainage

- 6.7 At the time of writing this report the Environment Agency has not withdrawn their objection although I anticipate this happening shortly. I will report further as necessary at the Planning Committee.

vii) Impact on trees

- 6.8 The road layout has been adjusted to overcome the concerns of the Forestry Officer and I will report his comments on the revised plans at Planning Committee meeting.

viii) Impact on neighbours

- 6.9 Inevitably there will be an impact on the residential amenity of occupiers of adjoining property who have become used to having a vacant site. There can be no doubt that during football games there would have been considerable noise and disturbance. As amended, the development complies with normal overlooking distances and I do not consider that there are sufficient overlooking, overshadowing or general proximity problems with the development sufficient to justify a refusal of planning permission. The normal 25 metre overlooking distances have been achieved in all cases, both within the development and to adjoining properties.

ix) Sustainable building

- 6.10 A code for sustainable homes pre-assessment report has been submitted which demonstrates that all the dwellings on the site will achieve a code score of just over 60 points. This places them in the middle of code level 3 which would comply with policy D8.

x) Infrastructure contributions

- 6.11 At the outline application stage, contributions were secured for education, libraries, waste management, social and health care and a number of highway issues (including over £100,000 towards local highway works to improve traffic flows between the site

and the town centre), replacement of the football club and community facilities and recreation facilities. In addition, 40% affordable housing was secured. This is a reserved matters application and therefore the level of contributions have been resolved and will be paid.

The outline application also secured 40% affordable housing, The present scheme for extra care units, whilst as explained above is preferable than normal affordable units, does require an altered agreement, to ensure that the extra care units are secured for and managed by an RSL. At the time of drafting the report the required revised S106 agreement has yet to be secured although Heads of Terms has been agreed.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The site lies within the well defined confines of the built up part of Thame and there is no objection to the principle of housing development. The proposals comply with normal space standards and given that 40% of the units are for extra care accommodation, the density is considered to be appropriate for the area. The scheme would provide much needed accommodation for older and disabled people in a sustainable location and generally accords with the relevant Development Plan Policies.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the grant of reserved matters consent be delegated to the Head of Planning, subject to the prior completion of appropriate agreements with the South Oxfordshire District Council to secure the provision of 40 affordable extra care units on the site and the following conditions:

1. **Compliance general**
2. **Samples of all new materials**
3. **That prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted, the proposed means of access onto Windmill Road is to be formed and laid out to the approval of the Local Planning Authority, constructed strictly in accordance with the Local Highway Authority's specifications and all ancillary works shall be undertaken.**
4. **That the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as the existing site access has been closed and the footway and verge reinstated to the standard specification of the Highway Authority.**
5. **That the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as the internal layout of the development including all highway geometries has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.**
6. **That the development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as a drainage strategy (SUDS) for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.**
7. **That the development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until the construction of the estate roads serving the development, including footways and verges, has been undertaken in accordance with the standard specification of the Highway Authority.**
8. **A Construction Management Travel Plan must be submitted prior to development. This should be approved in writing by the LPA in**

consultation with the Highway Authority before any works are carried out on site.

- 9. Submitted and approved Travel Plan to be implemented prior to occupation.**
- 10. That notwithstanding any indication given on the submitted plans, the link between the site and the Phoenix Trail shall not be provided.**
- 11. Scheme for foul drainage.**
- 12. Extra care units only**
- 13. Scheme for waste collection to be agreed.**
- 14. Scheme for public art to be implemented as set out in the application.**
- 15. Sustainable building measures**

The applicant will be reminded that all other conditions placed on the outline permission remain of relevance (Commencement date, tree protection, hours of operation, surface water scheme, green travel plan foul drainage scheme and contamination remediation), that a Site Waste Management Plan will be required and that the SUDS may need to be adopted which would require a commuted sum for maintenance.

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