
APPLICATION NO.	P11/E1763
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	3.11.2011
PARISH	SONNING COMMON
WARD MEMBERS	Mr Alan Rooke and Mr Paul Harrison
APPLICANT	Linden Homes Oxford
SITE	201 Kennylands Road Sonning Common
PROPOSAL	Demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of 7 dwellings including alterations to the existing access, associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure (Additional information received 17 February 2012).
AMENDMENTS	One – Proposal reduced from 8 to 7 dwellings & footprints altered & additional information; Two – Alterations to Plot 6 & additional information.
OFFICER	Paul Lucas

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee due to a conflict between Officers' recommendation and the views of Sonning Common Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site is shown at **Appendix 1**. It forms part of a triangular residential plot occupied by a vacant 1960's two storey house erected on a former quarry. The dwelling has a very large plot and is located at the southern edge of a group of some 16 dwellings at the southernmost tip of Sonning Common. All of the nearby dwellings are located to the north of the site, with Morumbi, a 1970's detached house on a spacious plot, the only adjoining property, forming the northern boundary. The eastern, western and southern site boundaries are denoted by Kennylands Road and Peppard Road and the junction between them. There are no footpaths in this area. The site is sunken on average 2.5m below road level with steeply sloping sides. The roadside boundaries are densely planted with mostly deciduous trees and shrubs and there are other trees located within the site, including some mature Oaks. These are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO No.07S23). The 14 houses to the north are arranged in a more suburban layout than Morumbi and No.201, which have a semi-rural relationship. The site is accessed via a driveway with a usable access point onto Kennylands Road. There is a redundant secondary access point onto Peppard Road. The driveway slopes steeply down to the house. There are utility cables crossing the site. The TPO is the only special designation covering the site.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling, the erection of seven two-storey dwellings and alterations to the existing access. The proposed units would comprise a pair of 2-bedroom dwellings, four detached 4-bedroom dwellings and one detached 4/5-bedroom dwelling. Some of the proposed on-site parking would be accommodated in carports and some by open spaces, a total of 22 spaces, including two visitor spaces. The red line site area excludes the tree-lined embankments, which are shown within the blue edge area on the location plan. This area would form a wildlife corridor containing the majority of the significant trees covered by the TPO, transferred into the separate ownership of a management company. This area would be segregated by close boarded fencing.

- 2.2 The proposed dwellings would be constructed with red brick facing walls and tile or slate roofs and would comprise a mixture of gable, hipped or half-hipped roof designs. Plots 1, 5 and 6 would contain first floor living accommodation incorporating dormer windows above the attached carports. The carports would have facing walls from black stained timber shiplap horizontal boarding. The parking and turning areas would be constructed from concrete setts with patios at the rear. The private garden areas for the pair of semis would be about 100 square metres, the private garden areas for the detached dwellings would range from about 170 to 420 square metres. The boundaries up to the rear would consist of 1.2 metre high post and rail fencing. The access alterations would involve the widening of the driveway to 4.4 metres, the creation of a 2.4m x 90m visibility splay to the north-west and a 2.4m x 60m visibility splay to the south-east of the existing access point and the formal closure of the existing disused access onto Peppard Road. The application also proposes a footpath along the highway verge to link the access with the southbound bus stop outside Morumbi and the northbound bus stop opposite Morumbi.
- 2.3 The current plans of the proposed development can be found at **Appendix 2**. Other documents associated with the application can be viewed on the Council's website www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 The following consultation responses were received in response to the original application proposal involving 8 dwellings:

Sonning Common Parish Council – Recommend refusal due to conflict with SOLP 2011 Policies:

- G6 – The proposed development is too big and too dense and over development of the site being much denser than the housing to its north. It is also out of keeping with the open countryside around it.
- T1 – We believe that the access is unsafe and inconvenient for a development of eight houses with a combined total of 24 bedrooms whose access is circa 85 metres from the very busy junction of Kennylands Road and the B481, which links Sonning Common and this area of South Oxfordshire to Reading. Visibility for vehicles exiting the proposed development will be impaired, because the road bends away to the left of the exist point towards the junction with the B481. Buses 2A and 2B pass each other close to this access at 30 minute intervals. Any on road parking of vehicles visiting the proposed development will add to the hazard.
- EP4 – The area north of the development already suffers from variable and low water pressure. There is no mention in the proposals of the developers having approached Thames Water to establish if this development could proceed without further detriment.
- Bedrooms should be spread amongst smaller properties.
- If to be approved, builders and service vehicles must be parked on site and after completion, on road parking restrictions should be imposed on both sides of that end of Kennylands Road. Significant payments should be made under Section 106 for the benefit of the whole of the community.

OCC Archaeological Services – Informative – contact them if any finds.

Crime Prevention Design Adviser – Applicant should apply for Secured by Design accreditation.

OCC Developer Funding Officer – Financial contribution towards County Council infrastructure required.

Countryside Officer – No objection provided recommendations in ecological reports are followed.

Forestry Officer – Objection due to impact of several aspects of development on several important trees.

Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team - No objections.

Waste Management Officer – Provided details of storage areas required for domestic refuse and recycling

Health & Housing - Contaminated Land – Clarification as to methodology of report required.

OCC Highway Liaison Officer – No objection subject to numerous conditions relating to parking and access matters. Also Section 278 Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council required to ensure provision of footpath and financial contribution towards the cost of a bus shelter for one of the nearby bus stops.

Monson Engineering Ltd – No objection subject to standard surface water drainage condition.

Neighbours – six representations of objection, summarised as follows:

- Overdevelopment; out of keeping with character of area and present housing density; 50% increase in dwellings in this part of the village compared with existing planning permission for 3 dwellings
- Encroachment towards boundary with Reading
- Plan of the new junction does not appear to make for good visibility without removal of surrounding hedgerows; close to junction; road is narrow and curved and vehicles drive too fast; lack of visitor parking
- Footpath to bus stop would require removal of hedges
- Construction vehicles parking in road causing serious traffic problems
- Question whether sewerage, drainage and power can cope with increased capacity
- Concern about long term future of trees once development completed
- New development clearly visible and would overlook Morumbi when trees are out of leaf
- one representation stating application ok provided steps are taken to improve local road network
- one representation of support for application which would contribute to lack of suitable housing in the area

3.2

The following consultation responses were received in relation to the amended plans:

Sonning Common Parish Council – Recommend refusal, repeating previous observations – additional comments as follows:

- Conflict with SOLP 2011 Policy C1 – This site is surrounded to the south, east and west by open countryside. By increasing the number of houses from one to seven, this proposed development will urbanise the rural aspect of this area and spoil its landscape character
- These seven dwellings should be included in the number of dwellings to be allocated to Sonning Common in the new Core Strategy Document

Forestry Officer – No further objection subject to some detailed information concerning retaining walls and method statement for installation of service runs

Highway Liaison Officer – Previous comments updated – no objection

Health & Housing - Contaminated Land – Satisfied with additional information

OCC Developer Funding Officer – No change to previous requirements

Neighbours – Three representations of objection reiterating previous concerns and two new representations of support, summarised as follows:

- Maintains the countryside surrounding the village
- Small scheme involving extra houses on existing plot
- Bringing additional income to support the current shops
- Comparable with other successful developments in the vicinity, e.g. Bird Wood Court, Heather Close, Wychwood Court, Brinds Close, Hazel Gardens

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P09/E0935](#) - Approved (11/11/2009) Still could be implemented.

Erection of 2 two storey five bedroom dwellings with extensions and alterations to the existing dwelling. The plan for this development can be found at **Appendix 3**.

[P09/E0333/LD](#) - Lawful Development Certificate Refused (26/05/2009)

Erection of 1.8m high close board fencing.

[P08/E0101/O](#) - Outline Planning Permission Approved for a third dwelling on the site (29/07/2008)

[P06/E0846/O](#) - Outline Planning Permission Refused for a second dwelling on the site (03/10/2006) Appeal subsequently allowed in 2007.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 policies;

C1 - Development would have adverse impact on landscape character

C4 - Landscape setting of settlements

C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity

C8 - Adverse affect on protected species

C9 - Loss of landscape features

D1 - Principles of good design

D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles

D3 - Outdoor amenity area

D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers

D6 - Community safety

D7 - Access for all

D8 - Conservation and efficient use of energy

D10 - Waste Management

D11 - Infrastructure and services secured

EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration

EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting

EP4 - Impact on water resources

EP6 - Sustainable drainage

EP7 - Impact on ground water resources

EP8 - Contaminated land

G2 - Protect district from adverse development

G5 - Best use of land/buildings in built up areas

G6 - Appropriateness of development to its site & surroundings

H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt

H7 - Mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet district need

T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users

T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance:

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 – Sections 3, 4 & 5

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment – Character Area 10

5.3 Government Guidance:

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS3 – Housing

PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPG13 – Transport

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 Taking account of the previous planning permissions on this site, the proposed dwellings would be located within the built-up area of Sonning Common, where there is a presumption in favour of residential development. Consequently the proposal would be assessed primarily against the criteria of Policy H4. The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether the development would:

- cause the loss of an open space or view of public, environmental or ecological value;
- be of a scale and appearance in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the preservation of protected trees;
- safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers and the development would provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers;
- result in an unacceptable deficiency of off-street parking spaces for the resultant dwellings or other conditions prejudicial to highway safety;
- provide an appropriate mix of housing; and
- incorporate sufficient sustainability and waste management measures;
- provide appropriate contributions towards local infrastructure; and
- generate any other material planning considerations.

Loss of Open Space

6.2 Criterion (i) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view spoilt. Although it was a former quarry, the site has formed part of the private garden of No.201 since this property was built in the early 1960's. The Countryside Officer is satisfied that any ecological value held by the tree-lined embankments or potential bat habitats in the existing dwelling would be preserved provided the recommendations in the submitted ecological reports are followed. There are some public views of the site from the main roads on either side and from a public footpath crossing the open fields to the west of the site. In these views the numerous mature trees would remain the dominant feature. This criterion would therefore be satisfied.

Visual Impact

6.3 Criteria (ii) and (iii) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 seek to ensure that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings and the character of the area is not adversely affected. Policy C4 states that development will not be permitted if it would damage the attractive landscape setting of the District's settlements, including the impact on any local landscape features. Policy C9 requires that development preserves important trees. The proposed dwellings would result in a higher density of development on the site (of about 18 dwellings per hectare), when compared with the previous planning permission P09/E0935 and established dwellings to the north. However, Paragraph 50 of Planning Policy Statement 3 explains that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form and that imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment. Although it would involve only three dwellings, the existing planning permission on the site would give rise to a combined footprint for the approved dwellings and garages of about 610 square metres. In comparison, the footprint of the proposed seven dwellings and carports would be about 670 square metres, an increase of less than 10%.

- 6.4 The contemporary modern and striking design of the approved dwellings would have predominantly mono-pitch roofs with heights ranging from 6 to 8 metres above site ground level. In contrast, the proposed dwellings would generally reflect a traditional form of residential development that would be representative of the local vernacular. The main ridge heights of the proposed dwellings would range from 8.2 to 8.6 metres and the secondary ridge heights for the living accommodation above the car ports would range from 6.4 to 7.1 metres. Whereas the approved dwellings would mainly comprise external materials of cedar boarding and ivory painted render, the proposed dwellings would instead employ red brick walls with horizontal timber boarding for carport elements and a mixture of tile and slate roofs. The amount of hardstanding required for the proposed development would be significantly increased in comparison with the approved development as a result of the need to provide an adequate level of off-street parking and turning for the increased number of future occupiers of the site.
- 6.5 The proposed means of access and the establishment and retention of visibility splays in either direction along Kennylands Road would be similar to the approved arrangements. Following extensive negotiations, the Council's Forestry Officer is satisfied that the amended plans would enable the development to safeguard the important trees on and around the site. The Forestry Officer also finds the relationship between the rear gardens and the protected trees, albeit shaded, to be sufficient to prevent future pressure from residents for their removal and/or pruning. The majority of the mature trees would be located within the wildlife corridor, separated from the development site, where a detailed management plan could be imposed. This was not a feature of the previous planning permission where the majority of the trees were within residential plots. The proposed public footpath would be installed along the highway verge using a 'no dig' form of construction to the Forestry Officers' satisfaction. The landscape plan includes the replacement of a recently wind-damaged Cedar with a Maidenhair Tree and native boundary shrub planting along the eastern site boundary, including the section alongside the proposed footpath.
- 6.6 In spite of the proposed development, the site would continue to be characterised by its sunken nature and the extensive screening around the roadside boundaries. Whilst they would be noticeable in some public views, particularly in the winter months, the proposed dwellings would not appear unduly prominent in the locality. Some of the established dwellings nearby to the north of the site, which are built at road level and do not have such extensive boundary screening would continue to be more obvious in public views from the footpath to the west. Although the current application would involve four more dwellings onto the site, the visual impact of these would generally reflect the local vernacular and would be less striking than the modern appearance of the large approved dwellings. Due to the site levels being located below the road level, the extensive hardstanding areas would only be noticeable at relatively close quarters. The site would continue to appear as part of a defined and contained area of built development clearly separated from surrounding fields and as such neither the character of the site, the landscape setting of Sonning Common, nor its relationship with the surrounding countryside beyond the enclosing roads would be significantly altered. In light of this assessment, the proposed development would comply with the above criteria and policies.

Living Conditions

- 6.7 Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. The only dwelling directly bordering the site is Morumbi, where its plot forms the northern site boundary. There are numerous trees and shrubs along this boundary. The only significant gap would be filled by the tree to replace the Cedar. Nonetheless, the occupiers of Morumbi are concerned that the proposed development, particularly Plots 1-4 would overlook Morumbi when the trees are out of leaf. The closest window to window distances would be about 35 metres between Morumbi and the proposed dwelling. This would exceed the recommended standard of 25 metres, as set out in the SODG 2008 and consequently loss of privacy would be unlikely to occur. The distance from the rear windows of Plots 1-4 to the boundary would be about 15 metres. Taking into account the extensive garden surrounding Morumbi, there would be unlikely to be any significant loss of privacy to the outdoor areas either, particularly as these would be more likely to be in use when the boundary trees would be in leaf.
- 6.8 The proposed 2-bedroom houses would have garden areas of about 100 square metres, double the recommended standard of 50 square metres in the SODG for dwellings of this size. Most of the 4-bedroom detached houses would have in excess of 200 square metres, more than double the recommended standard of 100 square metres for dwellings of this size. These generous private garden areas would somewhat compensate for their shaded nature due to the surrounding tree cover. As stated above, the Forestry Officer is satisfied that the layout would not result in future pressure to fell or prune protected trees. The overall layout between the proposed dwellings would ensure that the individual plots would have a satisfactory relationship with one another reflected by typical standards of light, outlook or privacy. On the basis of this assessment, the proposed development would meet the above criterion.

Access and Parking

- 6.9 Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. Many local residents have expressed concerns about the impact of the use of the access by seven dwellings in terms of highway safety. However, the Highway Liaison Officer considers that the proposed parking and access arrangements are acceptable. The proposal would provide sufficient on-site parking to meet the maximum adopted standards, including two dedicated visitor spaces. Combined with sufficient turning area, this would prevent on-street parking from occurring and implementation could be secured through a planning condition. The existing, but disused access onto the B481 (Peppard Road) would be permanently closed. The widened access, allowing cars to pass each other would incorporate vision splays of 2.4 metres x 90 metres to the north-west and 2.4 metres x 60 metres to the south-east. These splays are the same as previously permitted under application P09/E0935 and the Highway Liaison Officer considers them acceptable for the more intensive use of the access. The provision of a footpath to provide a link to the nearby bus stop and the requirement to provide a financial contribution towards a bus shelter is a benefit of this proposal when compared with the approved scheme and would encourage public transport use. The proposed development would therefore satisfy the above criterion.

Housing Mix

- 6.10 The sub-text to Policy H7 of the SOLP 2011 requires developments of 2 or more dwellings to comprise 45% 2-bedroom units. The proposed development would involve a net gain of 6 dwellings. The strict application of Policy H7 requires that 3 of these should have 2-bedrooms in order to comply with the 45% requirement. The proposal would instead provide two 2-bedroom dwellings, 33% of the scheme.

6.11 However, the fallback position is unusual in that the 3 approved dwellings all have 5 bedrooms. This is because the original permissions were obtained separately and did not trigger housing mix as a consideration. Also, the footprints agreed at the outline stage were of a scale usually associated with larger dwellings with more than 2-bedrooms and it would have been impractical to insist on a 2-bedroom layout, as the size of the rooms would have meant that they would have been easily subdivided at a later date. A reduction in the scale of the footprint of the dwellings may also have been possible, however, subsequent applications to extend the dwellings would have been difficult to resist, given the space available on the plots and consequently it would have been difficult to restrict the number of bedrooms through that means also.

6.12 In comparison with the fallback position, where all three dwellings on the site would be large 5-bedroom dwellings, the overall mix of dwellings would be more balanced. Moreover, the original plans for the current proposal included an additional pair of 2-bedroom semis, which were removed due to the conflict between the smaller gardens and the established trees. Taking the fallback position into account, where no 2-bedroom dwellings would be provided, officers consider that the current proposal would lead to an improved mix of dwellings, in compliance with the thrust of Policy H7.

Local Infrastructure Contributions

6.13 Policy D11 of the SOLP 2011 requires developments to provide any on or off-site infrastructure and other services and facilities. Oxfordshire County Council has requested a financial contribution towards improvements to local infrastructure based on the demands that the occupiers of the development would place on services and facilities. A legal agreement would be drawn up with Oxfordshire County Council to ensure that the impact of the development on local infrastructure would be satisfactorily mitigated in accordance with the above policy. Any resolution to grant planning permission is to be delegated to the Head of Planning, subject to the completion of the agreement.

Sustainability Measures and Waste Management

6.14 Policy D8 of the SOLP 2011 requires proposals to incorporate sustainability measures in terms of energy, water and materials efficient design. Section 4 of the SODG 2008 recommends that development involving seven dwellings reach at least Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Policy D10 requires the provision of waste collection facilities. The application contains details on both aspects, in particular, a Sustainability Statement and Code for Sustainable Homes Strategy has been submitted to demonstrate how the dwellings would achieve Level 3. The collection point for waste storage would be provided in the form of a communal collection point on the left hand side of the access using a gravel surface and no-dig construction method. The implementation of these measures can be secured through planning conditions.

Other Material Planning Considerations

6.15 Concerns about water pressure would be dealt with by Thames Water who can upgrade their systems as a statutory undertaker without requiring planning permission. Thames Water has not commented on this application. Matters relating to construction traffic management, surface water drainage, crime prevention design and archaeology could be dealt with through planning conditions or informatives. The investigation into potential on-site contamination has been agreed by the Council's Contaminated Land Officer and no remediation is necessary.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed development would not materially harm the character and appearance of the area, including protected trees or the living conditions of nearby residents, would safeguard protected species, would not result in conditions prejudicial to highway safety, would provide an acceptable housing mix and contributions towards local infrastructure and would comply with sustainability objectives.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the grant of planning permission be delegated to the Head of Planning, subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to secure financial contributions towards local infrastructure.

Subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard time limit**
- 2. Implementation in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Levels in accordance with approved plans**
- 4. Materials as agreed**
- 5. Removal of permitted development rights – extensions, roof extensions, porches, outbuildings, hardstandings**
- 6. Sustainable measures as approved statement**
- 7. Waste management strategy as agreed**
- 8. Secured by Design accreditation to be achieved prior to occupation**
- 9. Details of Fire Hydrants prior to occupation**
- 10. Provision of footpath prior to occupation in accordance with separate s.278 agreement with OCC**
- 11. Details of closure of existing access to B461 Peppard Road prior to first occupation/use of approved access**
- 12. Implementation of parking and turning areas in accordance with approved plans**
- 13. Implementation of visibility splays prior to occupation and thereafter retained as such**
- 14. Construction Traffic Management Plan & Construction Method Statement as agreed**
- 15. Hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment as agreed**
- 16. Tree protection measures as agreed**
- 17. Landscape management plan for wildlife corridor prior to occupation**
- 18. Implementation of recommended ecological mitigation as agreed**
- 19. Surface water drainage prior to occupation**

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