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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P11/E2228
<b>APPLICATION TYPE REGISTERED</b>	Full 26 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
<b>PARISH WARD MEMBERS</b>	Goring Heath Mrs Pearl Slatter Mrs Ann Ducker MBE
<b>APPLICANT SITE</b>	The Oratory Preparatory School The Oratory Preparatory School, Great Oaks, Goring Heath
<b>PROPOSALS AMENDMENTS</b>	New residential unit (for Headmaster) None
<b>GRID REFERENCE OFFICER</b>	463961/179947 Tom Wyatt

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1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer’s recommendations conflict with the views of the Parish Council.

1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) lies within the grounds of Oratory Preparatory School, which is a long established private school located within the countryside forming part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site is currently occupied by a disused outdoor swimming pool and associated structures. The main complex of buildings associated with the school lie a short distance to the north of the site, including the main school building, which was originally a private residence. The existing headmaster’s house is a post – war bungalow located approximately 60 metres to the west of the application site.

1.3 The southern boundary of the school grounds sits alongside agricultural land, and a public footpath (Goring Heath footpath 29) runs alongside this boundary.

2.0 **THE PROPOSAL**

2.1 The application seeks planning permission for a new headmasters house on the site of the existing swimming pool, which would be constructed at the same level as the existing single storey structure associated with the pool. The proposed dwelling would be a detached two storey dwelling providing four bedroom accommodation with potential for further accommodation within the roofspace. The dwelling would be approximately 8.5 metres high and 11 metres wide and deep. It would be constructed of traditional materials such as facing brickwork, tile hanging and a tiled roof. A double car port is also proposed to serve the dwelling, which would be located alongside a new access drive to the north of the dwelling. The existing headmaster’s house would be demolished as part of this proposal.

2.2 A copy of the plans accompanying the application is **attached** as Appendix B. Other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the council’s website, [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk).

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Goring Heath Parish Council** – The application should be refused for the following reasons:  
-there is sufficient staff accommodation already on the site

- there is no need for the headmaster to live on the site and there is suitable accommodation in the surrounding area
- the site is visually prominent and the dwelling will adversely affect the surrounding landscape
- the disuse of the swimming pool cannot justify the development
- a recent application for extensions to a nearby house was refused

- 3.2 **Countryside Officer** – No objections subject to bat mitigation being carried out.
- 3.3 **Contaminated Land Officer** – A condition should be imposed on any planning permission to investigate for, and remediate if necessary, any contamination on the land.
- 3.4 **Henley and Mapledurham CPRE** – Objects due to the obtrusive nature of the development and the impact on the AONB.
- 3.5 **Neighbours** – Two letters of objection received, which raise the following concerns;
- There is no need for an additional dwelling
  - The dwelling would detract from the setting of the main building
  - The development would be prominent in the surrounding AONB landscape.
  - Potential runoff onto adjacent footpath and field

One letter of support has also been received;

- The existing house has reached the end of its life
- It is important for existing staff to be retained, especially the Head

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P71/H0425 - 3 bungalows for staff quarters. Planning Permission granted on 16 June 1971.
- 4.2 P53/H0182 – Use of land and buildings as a girls' boarding school. Planning permission granted on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1953.
- 4.3 There have also been several other applications for development at the school, many of which relate to classroom accommodation and other general improvements to the school's facilities.

#### 5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):
- G2 – Protection and enhancement of the environment
  - G4 – Development in the countryside and edge of settlements
  - G6 – Promoting good design
  - C1 – Landscape character
  - C2 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - C8 – Species protection
  - C9 – Landscape features
  - EP8 – Contaminated land
  - D1 – Good design and local distinctiveness
  - D2 – Vehicle and bicycle parking
  - D3 – Plot coverage and garden areas
  - D4 – Privacy and daylight
  - D6 – Design against crime
  - D8 – Energy, water and materials efficient design

- D10 – Waste management
- H6 – Locations where new housing will not be permitted
- H12 – Replacement dwellings
- E9 – Institutions in the countryside
- T1 & T2 – Transport requirements for new developments

5.2 Government Guidance:  
-National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance  
-South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008 (SODG)  
-South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (SOLA)

## 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. The impact on protected wildlife species
5. Other considerations

### The Principle of the Development

6.2 The site is located within the countryside where there are strict controls in place with regard to proposals for new housing. Policy H6 of the SOLP states that planning permission will not be granted for new houses in the countryside, in certain defined settlements and on the edge of settlements where the built up area of the settlement would be extended except as specifically provided for under other plan policies. In this regard Policy E9 of the SOLP relates to proposals for extensions to existing institutions in the countryside, such as private schools, to meet the operational requirements of the institution. The supporting text of this Policy states that proposals for staff housing will be considered in relation to Policy E9 as well as to advice in paragraph 15 of Annex A of PPS7.

6.3 PPS7 has been cancelled by the introduction of the NPPF, but this new guidance still allows for housing in the countryside where there are special circumstances such as ‘the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside’ (Para. 55).

6.4 There are several staff dwellings at the site already, including a headmaster’s house, which is located approximately 60 metres to the west. The supporting documentation with the application explains that this timber clad bungalow dating from the 1940s was originally designed as a convent in the 1940s and is not suitable for the Headmaster due to its substandard construction. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing dwelling and as such there will be no increase in the number of staff accommodation units on the site. On this basis I consider that the principle of a replacement headmaster’s dwelling to meet the operational requirements of the school is broadly acceptable.

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

6.5 The application site lies adjacent to the southern boundary of the school, which adjoins open farmland. The site is located within the Chilterns AONB and Policy C2 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development preserves the natural beauty and special

landscape quality of the AONB. Policy C1 of the SOLP is also relevant as in general terms it seeks the conservation, and where possible, the enhancement of the landscape of the district.

- 6.6 The proposed dwelling would be constructed on the site of an existing unused outdoor swimming pool and associated structures. The dwelling would be clearly visible from the land to the south, and particularly from a public footpath, which runs along the field edge immediately alongside the southern boundary of the school. The dwelling would only be about 13 metres from the footpath at its nearest point. However, the views of the dwelling from the footpath would be softened by the boundary hedging along the southern boundary of the school. Approximately 100 metres to the east, the footpath enters woodland where views back towards the site are obscured by trees. Where views of the dwelling are possible the new dwelling would be viewed against the backdrop of the main school buildings, which sit on slightly higher land to the north. Therefore, the dwelling would not appear as an isolated and incongruous form of development in this rural location but very much as part of the built form associated with the school.
- 6.7 The existing headmaster's house is similarly located close to the southern boundary of the school, and although this dwelling is single storey its demolition would help to mitigate the visual impact associated with the proposed dwelling. Furthermore, the existing dwelling is somewhat more detached visually from the main school buildings, and therefore, the removal of the dwelling would allow for a greater consolidation of the built form on the site compared to the existing situation.
- 6.8 The proposed dwelling is two storey with potential accommodation within the roof. It is of traditional design and would utilise traditional brick and tile facing materials. A modest car port building would be sited further to the north of the dwelling adjacent to existing staff bungalows and this structure would have a low visual impact when viewed from adjacent public vantage points.

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

- 6.9 The dwelling would have no discernible impact on any occupiers not associated with the school. The dwelling would overlook the rear elevations of the adjacent staff bungalows but a reasonable separation distance would be retained.

#### The Impact on Protected Wildlife Species

- 6.10 Bat surveys have been carried out and submitted for consideration as part of the proposal. The surveys indicate that there is a bat roost in the existing headmaster's dwelling to be demolished. As the existing bat roost will be removed, the applicant is proposing to provide bat roosting opportunities within the proposed dwelling to mitigate this loss, and this is acceptable to the council's Countryside Officer.

#### Other Material Considerations

- 6.11 A Pre-Assessment Report against the Code for Sustainable Homes has been submitted with the application. This indicates that the dwelling can achieve Code Level 3, and as such the proposal would meet the requirements for sustainable design and construction set out in the SODG and Policy D8 of the SOLP.

6.12 The proposal would not result in any intensification in terms of traffic generation to the site, and there are no other highway impacts as a result of the development. Some minor vegetation would need to be removed to create the access into the site and this would have little impact on the appearance of the site.

## 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 development would respect the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **Commencement – 3 years**
2. **Development to be in accordance with approved plans**
3. **Samples of materials to be agreed prior to commencement of development**
4. **Landscaping scheme, including fencing and hardsurfacing to be agreed prior to commencement of development**
5. **Levels to be agreed prior to commencement of development**
6. **Contaminated land assessment**
7. **Details of surface water drainage to be agreed**
8. **Existing dwelling to be demolished within 3 months of the occupation of the new dwelling**
9. **Withdrawal of permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings**
10. **Bat mitigation to be carried out as agreed**
11. **Sustainable design and construction to meet Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes**
12. **Use by staff employed at Oratory Preparatory School only**

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