

APPLICATION NO.	P16/S3646/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	7.11.2016
PARISH	WOODCOTE
WARD MEMBERS	Charles Bailey David Nimmo-Smith
APPLICANT	Lord Kerry Hamer
SITE	Chambers Place, Goring Road, Goring Heath, RG8 7SJ
PROPOSAL	Proposed demolition of existing barns and stables and erection of two detached dwellinghouses with associated parking and amenity space provision (access improvements shown on revised site plan received 16 December 2016; additional structural report received 6 March 2017; reduction in scale of proposed dwellings shown on submitted plans accompanying agent's email dated 28th April 2017.)
OFFICER	Simon Kitson

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as the officer's recommendation of approval conflicts with the views of Woodcote Parish Council.

1.2 The application relates to an area of land (shown at **Appendix A**) measuring approximately 0.8ha within the grounds of Chambers Place, a residential property on the southern approach to Woodcote. The site currently accommodates a range of disused equestrian barns, stables and other buildings on land associated with the main dwelling. The access to the land is via a private driveway leading from the B471 and the site is mostly bordered by open agricultural land. In 2012, planning permission for the erection of four dwellings was refused within a plot immediately to the north-east of Chambers Place, primarily on the basis of visual impact. Further to the north, there is a largely contiguous line of ribbon housing development.

1.3 The site falls wholly within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 As detailed in the application submission, consent is sought for the demolition of the range of agricultural and equestrian buildings and the redevelopment of the site in order to accommodate two dwellings.

2.2 The dwellings would be bespoke, of brick and timber construction with slate roof tiles. They would be predominantly single storey, with some two-storey elements. The overall ridge height would range from 4.5m – 6.6m.

2.3 A copy of the proposed plans is attached as **Appendix B** and other documentation associated with the application can be accessed via the council's website, www.southoxon.gov.uk

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Woodcote Parish Council – Objection
8th December 2016

South Oxfordshire District Council – Committee Report – 5 July 2017

- Woodcote is within the AONB and this site is outside the built-up area of the village. The density, at 2 homes per 0.75 hectare is inefficient use of land
- this site does not qualify as 'infill'
- Contrary to the agent's argument, paragraph 14 of the NPPF is not engaged as the site falls within a protected area (AONB)
- the existing access to Chambers Place is substandard. There is also no pedestrian footpath access.
- there are inaccuracies within the submitted statement, relating to geographical location and available facilities within the village

5th January 2017

- Although the application has made some improvements to the proposed access, it does not address any of the Parish council's issues with the proposal

18th May 2017

- the Parish Council would reconsider its recommendation of refusal if a sympathetic scheme for conversion was presented
- a sympathetic conversion would respect the footprints, physical dimensions and rustic look of barns 1 and 2 only.
- The comments raised in the previous responses still apply, particularly the highway and pedestrian safety issues

Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council) - No objection, subject to conditions

- Following the submission of revised plans widening the shared access road, the proposal is considered acceptable from a highway safety perspective

Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse) - No objection, subject to conditions

Health and Housing – Contaminated Land (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse)

- The applicant should submit a contaminated land preliminary risk assessment consultants report. This can be addressed as a condition of consent

Waste Management Officer (District Council) - No strong views

Neighbour Approve (1)

- These buildings have been a derelict eye sore for many years and it makes sense to use the site for more attractive residential housing occupying a similar area

Neighbour Object (1)

- The site is outside of the built-up area of Woodcote and it does not qualify as 'infill'
- Woodcote has an up-to-date neighbourhood plan, affording additional protection from this form of development

Neighbour No Strong Views (1)

- Despite a number of inaccuracies in the submitted supporting statements, no objection subject to conditions on ridge height and restriction on further development.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P03/E0317](#) - Approved (11/09/2003)

Re-building of existing outbuilding in the garden.

[P02/S0841](#) - Approved (20/06/2003)

Single storey extension to house and annexe for parents (as amended by drawing No.12374-02A received on 13 February 2003).

[P98/S0772](#) - Approved (28/12/1998)

Change of use of land to equestrian with new stables to replace barn and new menage.

[P98/S0440](#) - Approved (10/08/1998)

Single storey rear extension, utility room, larder, entrance lobby and boot room.

[P78/S0573](#) - Approved (29/11/1978)

Reconstruction/refurbishment of existing building to form new dwelling

[P76/S0278](#) - Refused (28/06/1976) - Appeal dismissed (31/01/1978)

Demolition of existing dwelling. Erect new four-bedroomed house and double garage.

[P76/S0002](#) - Refused (02/03/1976)

Alterations and extension.

[P60/H0492](#) - Refused (05/09/1960) - Appeal dismissed (29/03/1961)

Site for dwellinghouses or bungalows

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) policies;

H10 – Infill Housing in the AONB

T1 – Traffic Congestion

T7 - Pedestrian Footways

T8 - Residential Car Parking Spaces

5.2 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies

CSEN1 - Landscape protection

CSQ3 - Design

5.3 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP) policies;

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

G2 - Protect district from adverse development

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

T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues in this application are as follows:

1. The principle of the development
2. The impact of the scale and design upon the character of the site, the street scene and the wider AONB
3. The ecological and environmental impact
4. The impact upon the local highway network
5. The impact upon neighbouring amenity

Principle of redevelopment

6.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan currently comprises: the WNP, the SOCS and saved policies within the SOLP. The emerging Local Plan for South Oxfordshire 2032 is at an early stage and cannot be given any material weight at this time.

6.3 Woodcote is classed as a 'larger village' under Appendix 4 to the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS), a settlement allocated additional housing under the Core Strategy and where infill development is allowed under SOCS Policy CSR1 and WNP Policy H10. Redevelopment is also permitted subject to compliance with other Development Plan policies. The housing policies within the WNP currently carry full weight following the written ministerial statement by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning which strengthens adopted neighbourhood plans.

6.4 Whilst it is noted that the site falls within the administrative area of Woodcote and the existing dwelling at Chambers Place is at the end of a residential frontage on the approach to the settlement, it is accepted that the property does not fall 'within' Woodcote, for the purposes of H10 and CSR1. The site appears to share more characteristics with the sporadic, piecemeal pattern of development towards Goring Heath and it appears to be separated from the built-up, more linear housing development to the north by agricultural land. This is not a site allocated for housing within the current Neighbourhood Plan. It is however noteworthy that the Parish Council are considering the site as part of their allocations for a forthcoming new Neighbourhood Plan, taking account of the greater housing requirements for the District.

6.5 Although the site is not currently within a location where the erection of new housing would ordinarily be supported, officers accept that in this instance there are significant material planning considerations which arguably support the principle of the redevelopment of the site. This focusses primarily upon the potential of the buildings to be converted to residential uses in broad compliance with Policy E8 of the SOLP and guidance within the NPPF. This agent contends that this is a compelling and realistic fallback position which should be considered alongside the potential improvements to the appearance of the land arising from its redevelopment.

Residential conversion

- 6.6 SOLP Policy E8 takes a relatively permissive stance to the conversion of rural buildings, provided that: they are capable of conversion without substantial works of reconstruction; the character is in keeping with the surroundings; there are no overriding amenity, environmental or highway objections; and other uses have been explored.
- 6.7 Although the buildings appear in a poor condition externally, this application is accompanied by a detailed structural inspection report (Chris Sreeves Consulting, 24 February 2017) which concludes that the two main buildings are in a reasonable structural condition and are capable of conversion to residential use without requiring substantial re-construction. Although the buildings are not of sufficient architectural merit to warrant special protection, their conversion would not impact adversely upon the character of the area and there are no overriding environmental, amenity or highway issues which cannot be overcome by appropriate conditions.
- 6.8 Although alternative uses have not been thoroughly considered in this proposal, officers accept that a residential use would be appropriate, considering the proximity to the main dwelling at Chambers Place. The principle of residential conversion also accords with the guiding principles of the new permitted development allowances which apply to existing agricultural buildings. This is supported by national guidance in the NPPF, which places a strong emphasis on the provision of sustainable forms of development and the importance of re-using redundant rural buildings. Paragraph 55, which seeks to direct new housing away from isolated countryside locations, allows for exceptions where a development would ‘re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting’.
- 6.9 Although the site is within an out-of-settlement location, it is by no means ‘isolated’, having regard to the proximity to the nearest bus stop, Co-op store, village hall and schools. Having regard to the general sustainability of the site, in terms of the proximity to key services and facilities, the current condition of the buildings and the absence of other demonstrable impacts, officers consider that the principle of the residential conversion of the buildings would be acceptable. This is a view shared by the Parish Council, who indicate that they would be supportive of such a scheme.
- 6.10 Officers accept that this ‘fallback position’ should be afforded some weight in the planning balance, alongside the benefits associated with the removal of the cluster of disused equestrian buildings and storage containers within the site. The key to a successful outcome of a redevelopment proposal is the extent to which the scheme responds positively to the defining characteristics of the site and the wider context.

Scale and Design

- 6.11 This is a particularly sensitive site, outside the built-up limits of the nearest settlement where there is a strong need to preserve the historic rural character of the site and the special open landscape qualities of the wider AONB. The building in plot 2 has a relatively low-key form and the building in plot 1 has some features of interest, in terms of its varied ridgeline and its strong agricultural appearance. Officers would strongly resist generic forms of housing in this location and any proposal which would significantly increase the volume of built development within the site.
- 6.12 It is pertinent to this application that both buildings would be of a bespoke, high-quality design and that the overall height would be kept very low, with both buildings predominantly single storey. The proposed dwellings would also be sited in the same

position as the buildings which could be converted and the footprints would be similar, albeit incorporating some of the volume of the buildings which would be demolished.

- 6.13 Following dialogue with the agent, the scale of the proposed dwellings has been further reduced and the forms simplified so that they are more in keeping with the distinctively agricultural vernacular of the site. The dwelling in Plot 2 would also have some visual subservience to the dwelling in Plot 1, preserving the existing hierarchy. Officers now accept that the new buildings would have an enhanced design quality relative to the existing buildings and there are opportunities here for the buildings to be more energy and water efficient as new builds, having regard to the broader range of sustainable technologies that could be incorporated. Officers are satisfied that the applicant has gone to some length to find an acceptable design solution which preserves the essential character of the buildings within the site and the proposal would broadly improve the appearance of the land. There is only limited visibility of the site from public vantage points and officers accept that the proposal would not impact adversely upon the openness and rural character of the wider AONB.
- 6.14 Given the sensitivity of the site, officers consider it essential that the Council maintains control over future development within both properties. If the Planning Committee is minded to grant approval, this should be subject to a condition revoking permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings.

Ecology and environment

- 6.15 The Council's Countryside Team raise no objection, subject to the development being implemented in accordance with the scheme of mitigation and enhancement, as stated in section 7 of the supporting Bat Assessment and Bat Mitigation Strategy (Ecosupport Ltd, 21/10/2016).
- 6.16 The Council's Environmental Health Team request further information regarding the potential risk of land contamination as a result of the previous uses of the land. Officers are satisfied that this can be addressed as a condition of consent, requiring a phased approach to the development with details of any identified contaminants and appropriate mitigation measures to be approved at each stage.

Residential amenity

- 6.17 There is a reasonable distance to the main dwelling at Chambers Place and both properties would benefit from an adequate amount of private amenity space in accordance with the standards recommended under Section 7 of the SODG.

Highways

- 6.18 The proposal can provide adequate parking provision in accordance with the higher requirements set out under Policy T8 of the WNP.
- 6.19 Following the submission of a revised site plan improving the site access arrangements, the Local Highways Authority consider that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the highway network. The vehicle movements associated with the proposal in terms of the previous/existing usage of the site does not present "severe harm" as required in the recent Government guidelines in the NPPF.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 6.20 This proposal is CIL liable.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Whilst the site lies outside the built-up limits of Woodcote, within an area where there are strict controls over the provision of new housing, this is a relatively sustainable location having regard to the proximity to key services and facilities and the presence of existing agricultural structures which have been demonstrated to be capable of residential conversion without substantial works of reconstruction. On balance, officers are satisfied that the alternative redevelopment scheme would be sympathetic to the defining agricultural character of the site and its setting within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Viewed in conjunction with the general improvements to the appearance of the land, the scheme broadly complies with the principles of sustainable development set out within the National Planning Policy Framework and there are no overriding highway, ecological or environmental issues.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

To grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.**
- 2. That the development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans.**
- 3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a schedule of all materials to be used in the external construction and finishes of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**
- 4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order), no extensions or outbuildings as described in Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A, B and E of the Order shall be erected within the curtilage of the dwellings without obtaining planning permission for the Local Planning Authority.**
- 5. Prior to the first occupation of the development, the existing means of access onto Goring Road shall be improved and laid out and constructed strictly in accordance with the local highway authority's specifications and all ancillary works specified shall be undertaken.**
- 6. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, the parking and turning areas shall be provided in accordance with drawing no. 16/395/03, Rev A, and shall be constructed, laid out, surfaced, drained and completed to be compliant with sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles, and shall be retained unobstructed except for the parking of vehicles associated with the development at all times.**
- 7. The development hereby permitted shall be implemented in accordance with the scheme of mitigation and enhancement, as stated in section 7 of the supporting Bat Assessment and Bat Mitigation Strategy (Ecosupport Ltd, 21/10/2016), submitted with the application in all respects. Any variation shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority before such change is made.**

8. **Prior to the commencement of the development a phased risk assessment shall be carried out by a competent person in accordance with current government and Environment Agency Guidance and Approved Codes of Practice. Each phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

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