

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P17/S2516/O</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	OUTLINE
<b>REGISTERED</b>	11.7.2017
<b>PARISH</b>	Kidmore End
<b>WARD MEMBER</b>	Robert Simister
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mr Alan Thorne
<b>SITE</b>	The Piggery, Gravel Hill, Caversham
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Outline application with details of appearance reserved for change of land use from light industrial to residential, demolition of existing workshop and store and erection of two storey detached house, retaining walls and parking area.
<b>OFFICER</b>	Paul Lucas

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The application is referred to the Planning Committee due to Kidmore End Parish Council's objection. Officers recommend that outline planning permission should be granted. This report explains how officers have reached this conclusion.
- 1.2 The application site is shown at **Appendix A**. It is located at the southern edge of the District adjacent to land within the jurisdiction of Reading Borough Council. The site extends to 0.1 hectares and accommodates two single storey buildings – a workshop and a store with a total floor area of 229 square metres. Both have suffered vandalism in recent years and are in a poor state of repair. The site is located near the bottom of a small valley and slopes up from south to north and from west to east. Gravel Hill forms the southern site boundary, with the site following the curve of the carriageway with some trees and shrubs along the frontage boundary. Gravel Hill is a cul-de-sac running east to west along the northern edge of Emmer Green, a suburb of Reading and defines a length of the boundary between Reading Borough Council and South Oxfordshire. The fairly narrow lane provides access to a number of residential properties within Emmer Green, characterised by two storey residential properties of various styles. Informal hedges along the north and west boundaries separate the site from the neighbouring golf course. Kidmore End Bridleway 17 crosses the land on the opposite side of the golf course, about 80 metres to the west of the site. There is a paddock located to the east of the site on higher ground, beyond which lies an established housing estate, about 150 metres from the eastern site boundary. There is also a group of houses located on the south side of Gravel Hill, opposite the application site, some of which front onto the lane and others back onto it. There are no special designations on this site.

**2.0 PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for the change of use of the land from light industrial to residential, demolition of the existing buildings and erection of a two-storey dwelling with details of access, layout, scale and landscaping to be considered at this stage and appearance to be a reserved matter. The proposed development is shown on the plans submitted with the application. The only details not provided at this stage are internal floor plans.

2.2 Copies of the current plans are provided at **Appendix B** whilst other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the Council's website:  
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P17/S2516/O>

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Kidmore End Parish Council** – The application should be refused, because the site should be retained for employment.

3.2 **CPRE Oxfordshire** - We believe that the application is contrary to the current and emerging South Oxfordshire District Local Plans and that, if granted, it would set a dangerous precedent for further housing development on the Reading/South Oxfordshire boundary. This area would then become an urban extension to Reading Borough.

3.3 **Reading Borough Council** – Objection due to precedent for residential development on adjoining land and visual impact on the local landscape character through loss of vegetation. No objection on highway grounds.

3.4 **Highways Liaison Officer (Oxfordshire County Council)** – Unable to comment as the access point and the carriageway within the vicinity is located within Reading

3.5 **Forestry Officer (South Oxfordshire District Council)** - The proposed development will not result in the loss of any trees of arboricultural significance. Therefore subject to the detailed tree protection condition and a landscaping condition being attached I would not have any objection to the proposal.

3.6 **Waste Management Officer (District Council)** – Dwelling would be provided with bins to be emptied from Gravel Hill

3.7 **Contaminated Land Officer** – Preliminary Risk Assessment could be provided through a pre-commencement planning condition

3.8 **Neighbours** – Ten representations of objection and one of support, summarised as follows:

- Contrary to SODC housing strategy and policies
- Poor state of existing buildings is insufficient justification for change of use
- Would set a dangerous precedent for expansion of residential areas onto adjoining countryside and nearby undeveloped land
- Access arrangements would be unsuitable
- Increased traffic using narrow lane and dangerous intersection
- Provision of sightlines resulting in loss of ancient hedgerows
- Loss of wildlife habitats
- Surface water run off onto Gravel Hill
- Units are no longer fit for purpose and uneconomical to repair, encouraging vandalism
- Replacement of eyesores with a dwelling that would blend in
- Prevention of large commercial vehicles returning if light industrial use recommences

The consultation responses can be read in full on the Council's website:

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P17/S2516/O>

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P17/S0764/O](#) - Withdrawn (03/05/2017) following officers' advice that the red line site area was incorrect, the design of the dwelling was inappropriate and loss of vegetation. Outline planning application for the change of land use from workshop to residential and demolition of existing workshop and store buildings and erection of a 2 storey 4-bedroom detached house, and retaining walls, landscape garden and parking area with access, layout, scale and appearance for consideration.

[P08/E0536/LD](#) - Approved (24/06/2008)

Lawful development certificate for the use of land as workshop and associated storage (light industrial use).

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

CSEM4 - Supporting economic development

CSEN1 - Landscape protection

CSM1 - Transport

CSQ2 - Sustainable design and construction

CSQ3 - Design

CSR1 - Housing in villages

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;

C4 - Landscape setting of settlements

C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity

C9 - Loss of landscape features

D1 - Principles of good design

D10 - Waste Management

D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles

D3 - Outdoor amenity area

D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers

E6 - Loss of employment uses

EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment

EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration

EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting

EP4 - Impact on water resources

EP6 - Sustainable drainage

EP8 - Contaminated land

G2 - Protect district from adverse development

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

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

T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.3 Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan – an area designation has been submitted for consideration, but this carries no weight at this stage.

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016) – Section 7 – Plots and Buildings

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (SOLA) – Character Area 10 Chilterns

Plateau with Valleys

- 5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)  
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether the development would:

- result in an acceptable change of use of the land and buildings to a non-employment use;
- be in accordance with the Council's strategy for housing development in rural areas;
- result in the loss of an open space or view of public, environmental or ecological value;
- be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surroundings;
- safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers and would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers of the development;
- demonstrate safe and convenient access and adequate off-street parking provision for the development; and
- give rise to any other material planning considerations

6.2 Principle of Development - Loss of Employment

Policy E6 of the SOLP 2011 explains that proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of redundant land or buildings in employment or service trade use to non-employment uses will be permitted outside the District's towns if the existing use is no longer economically viable and the site has been marketed at a reasonable price for at least a year for that and any other suitable employment or service trade uses. The current light industrial land use for the site received a Certificate of Lawfulness in 2008. The premises were used as a carpentry workshop for many years, but have been vacant since the proprietor retired in 2012. Since the buildings on site were vacated, the applicant has been unable to find a tenant to take them over and the buildings have become a target for vandals, accelerating their deterioration. Having inspected the poor condition of the buildings and discussed with the Council's Economic Development Team, in this particular situation, officers are satisfied that the extensive works required to bring the buildings back into a light industrial use would be very unlikely to make this site economically viable for future commercial occupants. As such, it would not be reasonable to require the applicant to go through the full 1 year marketing exercise in order for officers to support the proposed loss of an employment use.

6.3 Principle of Development – Housing Strategy and Policies

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan currently comprises the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) and the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011).

- 6.4 Policy CSS1 of the SOCS sets out the overall distribution strategy for the District. This distribution strategy is followed through in Policy CSR1 of the SOCS which addresses housing in identified villages and indicates that limited infill development and redevelopment proposals would be considered favourably in these settlements. Although the site falls within the definition of previously developed land and the proposed development would constitute a redevelopment, the site resides outside of the built up confines of any settlements and adjoins undeveloped countryside. As such, the proposed redevelopment with one dwelling would not be in accordance with Policy CSR1 and in conflict with the Council's housing strategy.

6.5 Loss of Open Space

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 spoiled. The site is private land and is not accessible to the public. The Council's Countryside Officer has confirmed that there would be no ecological implications arising from the proposed development. The site is visible from the road, but only from relatively close quarters, because the topography, vegetation on adjoining land and curved nature of Gravel Hill obstruct wider views. There are views of the site from the public footpath through gaps in the foliage, where the existing structures are largely screened in the winter months by established trees. As such the proposed dwelling would not obstruct any important public views and the above criterion would therefore be satisfied.

6.6 Visual Impact

Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS aims to protect the District's distinct landscape character from inappropriate development. Criterion (ii) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings and criterion (iii) requires that the character of the area is not affected. Policies CSQ3 of the SOCS and D1 of the SOLP 2011 seek to ensure that good design maintains local distinctiveness. The proposed dwelling would be taller than the existing single storey buildings and would be positioned about 15 metres closer to the road. However, the dwelling would still be about 23 metres back from Gravel Hill, which would compare favourably to the dwellings on the south side of the lane, that are about half this distance. Officers acknowledge that the proposed dwelling would be elevated above the road. This would be offset somewhat because the dwelling would be set into the rising land to the north and east and as a result it would be designed to fit in with the site constraints. The proposed elevations show that it would be seen against a backdrop of established retained foliage both on and off-site. The Council's Forestry Officer is satisfied that important trees could be retained through a detailed tree protection planning condition. As such, the outline of the dwelling would be unlikely to significantly break the skyline when viewed from Gravel Hill. The proposal would also enable some of the frontage trees to be retained to the east of the access and the proposed layout shows that there is scope for additional planting in front of the dwelling, specific details of which could be secured through a detailed landscaping planning condition.

6.7 In views from the public footpath to the west, the dwelling would be more visible than the existing buildings. However, due to being positioned on a lower part of the site than the existing buildings, the proposed elevations demonstrate that the dwelling would be screened in the foreground by offsite hedging and seen against the backdrop of the tree-planted rising land to the east. Therefore the appearance of the dwelling would be softened and would not break the skyline from these public vantage points. Although appearance is a reserved matter, the scale of the dwelling is fixed by this application. The outline of the dwelling demonstrates a floor to ridge height that would mean first floor accommodation would be contained within the roofspace with dormer windows. This would result in a modest-sized dwelling with an appropriate design approach, where traditional external materials could be secured at the reserved matters stage to ensure that it would be in keeping with the South Oxfordshire vernacular and complementary to the variety of dwellings in this part of Emmer Green. This would be in contrast to the poor external appearance of the existing buildings, which is likely to continue to deteriorate over time. As such, the proposal would comply with the above policies.

6.8 Residential Amenity Impact

Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. Policy D4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that all new dwellings should

be designed and laid out so as to secure a reasonable degree of privacy for the occupiers. There are no immediately adjoining residential occupiers who would be directly affected by the proposal in relation to light, outlook or privacy. The proposed garden would exceed the recommended minimum of 100 square metres for dwellings of this size. On the basis of the above assessment, the proposed development would accord with this element above criterion.

6.9 Access and Parking

Policy CSM1 of the SOCS explains that proposals should not give rise to highway safety issues and Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. Reading Borough Council are the Local Highway Authority for Gravel Hill. Whilst many local residents are concerned about the impact of traffic associated with the proposed development on existing users of Gravel Hill, the LHA has confirmed that the existing use as a workshop is likely to generate similar vehicle movements to that of the proposed dwelling and is likely to reduce the number of larger vehicles travelling to and from the site, therefore the principle of the development is acceptable in transport terms. In relation to the access arrangements, the LHA considers these to be acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions related to the improvement of the access surface with a bonded material and the provision of appropriate visibility splays. On this basis, the proposal would be in compliance with the above policies.

6.10 Other Material Planning Considerations – The Planning Balance

The Council currently cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing. Paragraph 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), makes it clear that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' should be applied. The mechanism for applying that presumption is set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF. This advises that where relevant policies are out-of-date then (unless material considerations indicate otherwise) permission should be granted, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, or where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. Notwithstanding the assessment under Paragraph 6.3 and 6.4 above, as the SOCS Policies CSS1 and CSR1 are relevant to the supply of housing they are now regarded as not up to date.

6.11 As discussed above, officers have found that the environmental impact of the development on the locality compared with the authorised commercial use of the site through its physical form, relationship to neighbours and traffic generation would be limited. The addition of a single household into this area would not result in a disproportionate increase to the local population and lead to any significant additional pressure on local infrastructure. The proposed dwelling would be located a similar distance from facilities within Emmer Green as the occupiers of the existing dwellings in the locality, which would be within reasonable walking and cycling distance. The future occupiers would also have similar access to public transport connections to Reading and beyond. As such, officers consider it reasonable to regard the site as being in a sustainable location and this level of connectivity would bring about social and economic benefits through the occupiers having the option to support local services and facilities without necessitating journeys by car and that would weigh significantly in favour of the proposed development.

6.12 There would also be some modest economic benefits from job creation during the construction process and the provision of even a single dwelling would make a slight contribution towards the overall shortfall in housing supply. In overall terms, the limited

environmental impact of the proposed development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF when taken as a whole. Consequently, the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development, and therefore the presumption in favour of development at Paragraph 14 of the NPPF directs that outline planning permission should be granted.

6.13 Other Material Planning Considerations – Precedent

Many third party representations raised concerns that granting planning permission for this application would set an undesirable precedent for the development of other land at the edge of Reading. However, it is an established planning principle that each application must be assessed only on the basis of its individual merits. In any event, the application site differs from most other parcels of land adjacent to Reading, both in terms of the amount of residential development it can accommodate and the fact that it contains an established commercial use. Consequently, the circumstances of this proposal, particularly its environmental impact, are likely to be quite different to any other applications for major scale residential development at this end of the District.

6.14 Other Material Planning Considerations - Conditions

Matters related to surface water drainage and contaminated land could be dealt with through a planning condition. A planning condition restricting permitted development rights is also considered necessary to enable the Council to exercise control over any future householder development that might otherwise result in harm to important trees and/or local landscape character. A planning condition requiring details of any external lighting to be agreed is also necessary to safeguard local landscape character.

6.15 Community Infrastructure Levy

As an outline application, the proposal is not CIL liable at this stage, but in the event of a future application for reserved matters or a full application being submitted, the dwellings would require a payment based on £150/square metre (index-linked).

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Whilst the proposed development would conflict with the Council's housing strategy as set out in Policies CSS1 and CSR1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, officers have concluded that it would represent a sustainable form of development when assessed against Paragraph 14 of the NPPF, which then directs that outline planning permission should be granted. Subject to the conditions below, the proposal would also have an acceptable visual impact on the local landscape character, would not be harmful the living conditions of nearby residential occupiers and future occupiers of the development and would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

**To grant outline planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. Commencement of development within three years or two years of approval of reserved matters.**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans.**
- 3. Demolish existing buildings prior to commencement of new development.**
- 4. Levels to be provided in accordance with the approved plan.**
- 5. Schedule of materials to be agreed prior to commencement of development.**
- 6. Surfacing of existing vehicular access prior to occupation.**
- 7. Vision splays to be provided in accordance with the approved plan.**
- 8. Landscaping scheme (trees and shrubs only) to be agreed prior to commencement of development.**
- 9. Tree protection details to be agreed prior to commencement of development.**

- 10. Contaminated land (preliminary risk assessment) to be agreed prior to commencement of development.**
- 11. Details of any external lighting to be agreed prior to commencement.**
- 12. Surface water drainage works (details required) to be provided prior to occupation.**

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