
APPLICATION NO.	10/01907/OUT
APPLICATION TYPE	Outline
REGISTERED	08.10.2010
PARISH	Sutton Courtenay
WARD MEMBER(S)	Gervase Duffield
APPLICANT	The Granite Partnership
SITE	Amey Roadstone Ltd, Appleford Road
PROPOSAL	Outline application for residential development and associated access (Re-submission of withdrawn application SUT/19470/8-X)
AMENDMENTS	Additional information dated March 2011
GRID REFERENCE	451063 194249

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is an outline application seeking approval of the principle of residential development on the site and the detailed of the means of access into the site. All other matters (appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale) have been reserved for later consideration. The illustrative plans indicate a development of approximately 140 dwellings.
- 1.2 The application site lies to the east and the north-east of the village of Sutton Courtenay and is located on the south side of Appleford Road (B4016). The site is approximately 500m from the centre of the village and borders a run of ribbon development and some scrubland with two lakes which separates the site from the main village. To the south of the site lies the Appleford and Sutton Courtenay Millennium Common, an un-manicured, semi-natural recreational area with footpath links into the main village.
- 1.3 The site comprises 6.44ha. The majority of the site is laid to a hard surfaced apron which has been used for vehicle manoeuvring and for open storage of construction minerals. A number of office and storage buildings stretch across the middle and north-western parts of the site. The site is fenced on all boundaries, with the roadside having a hedgerow screen running along the majority of the boundary apart from three gated access points.
- 1.4 The site lies within the Lowland Vale (policy NE9) and an Area for Landscape Enhancement (policy NE11). It is also subject to a site specific policy for employment retention (policy E12). The western edge of the site lies relatively close to, albeit physically separate from, the Sutton Courtenay Conservation Area boundary.
- 1.5 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for residential development of this employment site with the means of vehicular access taken from the north boundary off the B4016 Appleford Road. Vehicular access is proposed adjacent to 2-Morrow Court, a small office building to the north-east of the site, with a secondary access proposed midway along the north boundary. Other access points are shown for pedestrian use and link into the Millennium Common area.

- 2.2 The submitted scheme suggests that up to 140 dwellings could be provided in two-storey and two-and-a-half storey buildings. An illustrative layout plan shows a possible arrangement on the site with a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced units. The illustrative layout only indicates the number of units that the site could accommodate.
- 2.3 In support of the application is an updated Planning Position Statement (March 2011) to the original Planning Statement (October 2010), a Design and Access Statement (October 2010), a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (October 2010), and an Archaeological Evaluation Report (December 2009) have been submitted.
- 2.4 Extracts from the application plans are **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Sutton Courtenay Parish Council: Objects to the application as it believes there is a significant lack of infrastructure to support the proposed development. Their comments are **attached** as appendix 3.
- 3.2 County Engineer: “The new footway to the roadside of Appleford Road should be 2m in width and visibility splays will need to be provided in line with the speed limit to be applied to the road.”
- 3.3 Highways Agency: No objection.
- 3.4 Environmental Protection: “The site investigations undertaken to date show no evidence of industrial, chemical or domestic refuse waste has been identified within the site and only limited volumes of putrescible materials that would be capable of generating large volumes of soil gases. Furthermore, the data includes readings over a range of atmospheric pressures and based on local weather conditions from Benson at least two measurements have been carried out at falling atmospheric pressures.”
- 3.5 Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions being imposed to provide a risk assessment to control water contamination; a remediation strategy be carried out; various conditions relating to potential land contamination, including no piling of foundations; surface water drainage; and implementing the flood risk assessment as submitted.
- 3.6 Drainage Engineer: Conditions requiring the implementation of approved surface water and sewage drainage schemes and adherence to the flood risk assessment submitted. Conditions required by the Environment Agency should also be imposed.
- 3.7 Thames Water: No objection. Attenuation and control of surface water drainage would be recommended to remain separate from foul drainage until reaching any combined public sewer.
- 3.8 Crime Prevention Design Advisor: Welcome reference to safety and crime reduction in the Design and Access Statement, and would like to see public open spaces, play areas and footpath routes overlooked by active windows.
- 3.9 Natural England: No objection. Suggest measures to “enhance biodiversity of the site are secured from the applicant.”

- 3.10 Ecologist: “The main part of the site is brownfield land dominated by various types of hardstanding with little ecological interest. The buildings have been surveyed for bats and evidence of low numbers of common pipistrelle was found from one of the existing buildings which is due for demolition. The Bat Survey Report and Method Statement provide details of the proposals for mitigation and enhancement for bats which should in the long run provide enhancements to the site if planning permission is granted.

The Ecological Appraisal conducted in September 2009 contains details of other surveys which have been completed across the site. The main ecological constraints identified in this report include areas of species rich grassland associated with the habitats along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site, water vole populations in the ditch and watercourse on the south and eastern boundaries and areas of reptile habitat in the south east corner of the site.”

- 3.11 Arboriculturalist: Tree species in the new planting need to be clarified, and the density of planting and protection measures will need to be specified. An arboricultural report would be appropriate.
- 3.12 Waste Management: More details are needed for comment.
- 3.13 Letters of objection from six local residents have been received. These raise the following concerns:
- Increased traffic will lead to additional road congestion
 - Land is contaminated and should not be used for housing
 - Contrary to policies and an undesirable expansion of the village
 - Foul drainage has not been catered for
 - Increased pressure on local amenities and infrastructure
 - The proposal will be out of character with the area which is dominated by detached properties
 - Housing density on the site would be out of keeping with the village
 - Increase in noise from traffic and residents
 - Lack of any new amenities to serve the site

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 06/00212/OUT
Outline application for a mixed use development comprising 9,360sqm of storage and distribution (Class B8); 930sqm offices (Class B1); 2,436sqm of retained workshop / storage buildings and external storage areas (Class B2) for Amey; residential development and associated car parking and landscaping on part of the site.
Approved August 2006
- 4.2 07/01372/REM
Reserved matters application for the erection of 15 dwelling units (re-submission of application SUT/19470/3-D)
Approved November 2007
- 4.3 10/02032/FUL
Full application for the erection of 15 dwellings with car parking and landscape works
Approved 2 June 2011

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

Vale of White Horse Local Plan

- 5.1 Policy GS1 of the adopted local plan provides a general location strategy to concentrate development within the five main settlements.
- 5.2 Policy GS2 says that outside the built up areas of settlements new building will not be permitted unless it is on land identified for development or is in accordance with other specific policies.
- 5.3 Policy DC1 requires new development to be of a high design quality in terms of layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials to be used, and its relationship with adjoining buildings.
- 5.4 Policy DC4 requires development on sites of 0.5ha or more to contribute to public art to significantly contribute to the scheme or the area.
- 5.5 Policy DC5 requires safe and convenient access and parking and suitable access from the public highway.
- 5.6 Policy DC6 requires landscaping to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and to maximise nature conservation opportunities.
- 5.7 Policy DC9 seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.
- 5.8 Policy E12 is the site specific policy which seeks to resist the loss of the existing business land and requires any redevelopment for business uses to be as sustainable as the current employment uses on the site.
- 5.9 Policy NE9 says that development in the Lowland Vale will not be permitted if it would have an adverse effect on the landscape, particularly on the long and open views within or across the area.
- 5.10 Policy NE11 seeks to protect the character of areas from harmful development in the urban fringes and important open gaps between settlements.
- 5.11 Policy H17 requires the provision of 40% affordable homes in new developments of five or more dwellings in settlements with a population of less than 3,000.
- 5.12 Policy H23 refers to housing schemes providing open space facilities.

Other policy guidance

- 5.13 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing
Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport
Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control
Planning Policy Guidance 24: Planning and Noise
Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Background

- 6.1 A mixed use development including some residential uses was approved in August 2006 for the whole Amey site. A subsequent scheme for 15 dwellings was approved and is currently under construction on land in the north-west corner of the whole Amey site. That land has been sold off separately from the main Amey site.
- 6.2 The current outline application seeks to establish the principle of residential development on the rest of the Amey site, with access from Appleford Road via the existing access point adjacent to 2-Morrow Court. An illustrative layout plan shows how the site could accommodate about 140 dwellings.

Policy

- 6.3 The application site is subject to local plan policy E12 which seeks to retain specified sites as employment land. This application, therefore, conflicts with policy E12.
- 6.4 A case has been put forward by the applicants that, notwithstanding the policy situation, the proposal should be considered as an exception to the provisions of the local plan. This is on the basis that the land is surplus to employment requirements in the area, which is served by other preferable employment sites, and that the release of the land for housing would assist in addressing the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply.
- 6.5 The current lack of a five year supply of housing sites (as required by PPS 3) seems to be due to the lack of delivery of new housing by developers rather than an under-supply of allocated housing land. This has primarily been caused by delays in progressing schemes due to the economic downturn. Nevertheless, the current lack of a five year housing land supply justifies some flexibility in the consideration of planning applications which do not accord with policy.
- 6.6 The case put forward by the applicants has been considered in line with the advice in PPS 3. This advice states that where a local planning authority does not have a five year supply of housing land, steps should be taken to address the shortfall. This includes looking favourably upon planning applications for housing, subject to the issues set out in paragraph 71 of PPS 3. These are:
- Achieving high quality housing.
 - Ensuring developments achieve a good mix of housing reflecting the accommodation requirements of specific groups, in particular, families and older people.
 - The suitability of a site for housing, including its environmental sustainability.
 - Using land effectively and efficiently.
 - Ensuring the proposed development is in line with planning for housing objectives, reflecting the need and demand for housing in, and the spatial vision for, the area and does not undermine wider policy objectives (e.g. addressing housing market renewal issues).
- 6.7 Your officers believe this proposal meets the issues listed above and therefore, despite the policy position, warrants favourable consideration. The reasons for this

are as follows:

- The site appears readily developable and capable of being progressed quickly, unlike some of the larger local plan allocated sites. The proposal, therefore, will help to meet housing supply in the short to medium term.
- The site is brownfield land, mostly hard-standing, enclosed by fencing and screened by planting.
- The site is within the central Oxfordshire part of the Vale, where housing provision is a sub-regional priority and the five year housing land supply shortfall is most acute.
- There are other significant employment land reserves and a very large potential employment site very close by, at Milton Park and Didcot A Power Station respectively.
- The Employment Land Review concludes that given the amount of employment land available in the district to 2026, the Amey site is surplus to requirements and further work should be done to assess what alternative uses the site may be suitable for.
- Evidence has been provided of a lack of market interest for business use of the site.
- Sutton Courtenay is one of the Vale's more sustainable villages with good access to services and facilities.
- The proposal is an infill development between existing housing and the business site, 2-Morrow Court.
- Part of the overall Amey site is currently being developed for 15 houses.

Access

- 6.8 The proposed access junction will meet the visibility requirements for a 30mph road. A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) will need to be arranged to reduce the speed limit of Appleford Road where it fronts the site to 30mph. This arrangement can be secured by means of the applicant entering into a section 106 planning obligation.
- 6.9 A footway to cater for pedestrians using Appleford Road is also required to link the site to the nearby bus stops. This road is also in need of street lighting should it take additional traffic generated by the proposed development. These and other highway requirements, including a pedestrian phase being incorporated in the A415 traffic lights by the Wagon and Horses public house, can be secured through a section 106 planning obligation.

Character and density

- 6.10 The design and appearance of the development needs to await consideration of a subsequent application for reserved matters for the layout, appearance and scale of the dwellings. The indicated density, whilst not prescriptive in terms of numbers at this stage, is higher than the density of the existing village area. Density on its own, however, is not a determining factor in considering whether the proposed scheme is acceptable in terms of character or appearance. Much will depend on the details of building design, materials, open spaces, boundary treatments and landscaping, all of which will be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- 6.11 The principle of the proposal, therefore, is not considered to be harmful to the locality and would make efficient use of the site, in line with government guidance.

Contamination

- 6.12 Some concern had been expressed regarding the soil gas generation potential of the site. The site is considered to be a low/moderate risk based on accepted guidance. The site has been monitored over a four year period and the findings have given rise to some concern that development of the site for standard low rise residential housing with gardens is not acceptable without further detailed assessment of the ground gas regime and the risks it poses and mitigation measures required to reduce or remove the source of the gas.
- 6.13 As the proposal is not yet at the detailed planning stage a number of variables required for a detailed risk assessment are not yet known. However, based on a thorough understanding of the gas regime identified at the site where monitoring in the worst temporal conditions has occurred, safeguarding mitigation and removal measures can be conditioned at this stage to ensure that any risk to the development from soil gas can be addressed satisfactorily to provide a safe living environment. Accordingly, the council's environmental protection team and the Environment Agency raise no objections, subject to conditions.

Drainage

- 6.14 Conditions to control the water regime on the site are considered appropriate to cater for the proposed development. This includes ensuring compliance with the flood risk assessment submitted by the applicants.

Landscape and ecology

- 6.15 Landscaping matters, including tree planting and works would be considered at the reserved matters stage. Existing landscaping is limited to the periphery of the site and apart from the illustrative footpath links there would be no serious risk to current screen planting that would impact on the proposal at this outline stage. Conditions to protect the existing landscaping, subject to the conclusions of a fuller assessment later, can be imposed.
- 6.16 The ecological assessment identifies this site as having a medium value with some identified grassed areas adjacent to the southern and eastern boundaries, and some bat and water vole activity. The bat roosts that would be lost can be adequately mitigated by condition. Safeguards can also be put in place for the other identified species. This is not seen as an impediment to the development subject to adequate controls through imposing planning conditions.

Amenity space

- 6.17 Policy requires provision of 15% of the residential area as open space to be provided on site. However this should take into account the proximity of existing open space provision, which for this site exists adjoining the southern boundary in the form of the Millennium Common area. Open space areas would be provided as part of the layout along circulation routes and as part of the internal layout arrangements, which would be part of the reserved matters application.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development needs to be considered in the light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing land supply. It is a brownfield site and an

assessment of its employment allocation and its relationship with the rest of the village and the local highway network has led to the conclusion that the site is suitable for residential development as an exception to planning policy.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **It is recommended that the decision to grant planning permission be delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman, subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) and subject to appropriate conditions. The section 106 agreement will need to require the provision of 40% affordable housing and secure the payment of sums to mitigate the impact of the development on local services and infrastructure.**

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