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<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	11/01453/OUT
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	Outline
<b>REGISTERED</b>	30.06.2011
<b>PARISH</b>	Wantage
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Charlotte Dickson, John Morgan, Fiona Roper
<b>APPLICANT</b>	John O'Flynn Developments Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	'Broadwater', Manor Road, Wantage
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Outline application for residential development for a maximum of 18 units and associated works including demolition, construction of new access road and landscaping
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	Reduction in proposed maximum unit numbers to 18 dated 19 Aug 2011
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	439769 187369

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is an outline application seeking approval of the principle of residential development on the site and the consideration of the means of access into the site. All other matters (appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale) have been reserved for later consideration. The amended illustrative plans indicate a maximum of 18 dwellings.
- 1.2 The site is located to the west of Manor Road, about 500m south of The Portway B4507 cross road junction. The site is bounded to the north by Willow Lane, a narrow access track, to the east by the rear gardens of properties fronting Manor Road (including 'Broadwater' which lies within the application site), to the south by other fields separating the site from a cul-de-sac of housing, and to the west by the playing fields associated with the leisure centre.
- 1.3 The site comprises an irregular shaped field or paddock which apparently, in previous times, was a builder's yard. The site is generally flat but is uneven with small localised undulations. There is an area of tree cover along the north boundary and hedgerows along most of the other boundaries.
- 1.4 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposed residential development of the site would be accessed from a new road taken off Manor Road through 'Broadwater' which would be demolished.
- 2.2 The submitted scheme as amended shows that up to 18 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 an updated Planning Supporting Statement (June 2011), a Design and Access Statement (6 June 2011), a Transport Statement (May 2011), a

Landscape and Visual Assessment (June 2011), an Ecological Assessment (June 2011), an Archaeological Assessment (April 2011), and a Site Appraisal covering drainage and contamination matters (June 2011) have been submitted.

2.4 Extracts from the application plans are **attached** at appendix 2.

### 3.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Wantage Town Council: “Object. The development contravenes the current District Council planning policy. The Highway Authority’s advice should be sought on whether the development would result in an unacceptable level of additional traffic joining an already busy road near a primary school. The development would necessitate the demolition of a house. The proposed development is outside the town’s development boundary.”

3.2 County Engineer: No objection subject to conditions and contributions to be secured towards junction improvements and public transport provision in the area.

3.3 County Archaeologist: “The applicant has provided an archaeological desk based assessment of the site and a written scheme of investigation has been agreed for the evaluation. Prior to the determination of this application the applicant should therefore be responsible for the implementation of an archaeological field evaluation.”

3.4 Ecologist: “Overall the site is of relatively low ecological value within the UK and County context although it may have some value as an amenity to local residents. There are no protected or priority habitats on or likely to be affected by the proposals. The surveys have revealed evidence of at least two protected species which have used the site in the past. Evidence of past roosting activity by a small number of brown long eared bats has been found in the loft space above 'Broadwater' – the property which is due to be demolished in order to make way for the site access and, disused badger holes have been recorded along the western boundary of the site.

“The proposals would involve the loss of most of the existing habitats on the site except for those associated with the site boundaries. The proposals would also involve the demolition of Broadwater. The disused badger set would be removed as would most of the habitats which have been assessed as having potential for reptiles.”

Conditions have been suggested for protection of bats, reptiles, badgers and birds.

3.5 Landscape Architect: “Whilst the site lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB and therefore the proposal is against policy NE6 it does not form a visually prominent area within the wider AONB or would detract from views from public vantage points. Its impact on the AONB is of a local scale on the transition between town and countryside.”

3.6 Arboricultural Officer: “The significant trees on the site covered by the TPO are to be retained. There are some of the protected trees that are in poor condition that are to be removed, which I have no objection to, but there needs to be replacements for these. Tree protection needs to be detailed and confirmed by us.”

- 3.7 Scientific Officer: “Due to the proposed sensitive land use of the site the applicant should provide as a minimum a desk top study and site reconnaissance in line with PPS 23.”
- 3.8 Environmental Protection: “The site is affected by noise from plant at Wantage Leisure Centre, but not to such a level to preclude the proposed development.”
- 3.9 Thames Water: No objection subject to conditions.
- 3.10 Drainage Engineer: Holding objection as insufficient drainage information has been provided to demonstrate an acceptable means of sewage and surface water disposal.
- 3.11 Waste Management: No objection subject to on site requirements for waste refuse facilities.
- 3.12 North Wessex Down Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty unit: Object as the site is shown outside the current settlement boundary and is within the North Wessex Downs AONB which is classed as having the highest level of landscape protection.
- 3.13 Letters of objection from 27 local residents and a petition of objection with 28 signatures have been received. These raise the following concerns:
- Contrary to policies and the site’s AONB designation
  - Increased traffic leading to additional road congestion
  - Concern on highway safety given the proximity of the primary school
  - Scale of the proposal (density) would be out of keeping with the local area
  - Loss of open space
  - Site is subject to flooding with inadequate drainage
  - Increased pressure on local amenities and infrastructure
  - Impact on trees and wildlife that use the site
  - Overlooking and loss of privacy
- 3.14 Two letters of support have been received. One letter accepts the site’s sustainable location but questions the (original) level of development indicated and requests improved junction access which would also require improvements to the access to the writer’s own property. The other letter highlights other local open spaces and the limited impact on the AONB, particularly given the recent decision to permit a floodlit pitch on adjoining land.
- 3.15 Wantage CE Primary School Governors: “Objection based on highway safety considerations. At the beginning and end of each school day in excess of four hundred children of primary and nursery school age have to enter and leave the school premises safely.
- “The relatively small contribution to housing need in Wantage would bring with it a disproportionate adverse effect on road safety in Manor Road near a public park in general and to the safety of the children for whom wed have a duty of care in particular”.
- 3.16 Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE): “Object on the grounds that:
1. The site sits outside the Wantage development boundary and is considered harmful to the North Wessex AONB, contrary to local plan policies.
  2. The proposal is likely to result in a harmful impact on the convenience and safety of highway users in Manor Road, contrary to local plan policies.”

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

##### 4.1 10/00163/OUT

Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a new dwelling with recital hall and recording studio. This proposal was to the south of the site and was refused in May 2010 for the following reasons:

1. The majority of the application site sits outside the Wantage development boundary and the proposal is considered to be unjustified development in the open countryside. Given the resultant change in the character of the landscape and the scale and siting of the buildings, the proposal is considered to be harmful to the rural character and appearance of the area and would not preserve or enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies DC1, GS2, H13 and NE6 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011
2. It has not been demonstrated that sufficient and convenient parking is available to serve the proposed recital hall. As such the proposal is likely to increase the number of vehicles parked on Manor Road (a classified road) or on the proposed access road. This would likely result in a harmful impact on the convenience and safety of all highway users. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies DC1 and DC5 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011.

##### 4.2 11/00469/FUL

Proposed new floodlit all weather sports pitch with perimeter fencing on land to the west of this application site, plus the provision of 32 additional car parking spaces and the improvement of sight lines to an existing road junction.

Resolved to approve 20 July 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 indicates 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 DC3 promotes crime deterrent and prevention in building design and site layout.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 Policy DC5 requires safe and convenient access and parking and suitable access from the public highway.
- 5.7 Policy DC6 requires hard and soft landscaping to protect and enhance the visual

amenities of the site and surroundings and to maximise nature conservation and wildlife habitat creation.

- 5.8 Policies DC7 and DC8 require necessary waste storage and collection arrangements to be in place and that essential infrastructure is provided to the site.
- 5.9 Policy DC9 seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.
- 5.10 Policies DC13 and DC14 relate to the water environment and require flood risk identification, assessment, and appropriate mitigation; and to limit surface water run-off.
- 5.11 Policies HE9, HE10 and HE11 relate to archaeology and require appropriate investigation to protect any identified findings from damage and, if significant, to enable preservation in situ if practicable.
- 5.15 Policy NE6 says that new development will only be permitted in the North Wessex Downs AONB if the natural beauty of the landscape will be conserved or enhanced.
- 5.16 Policy H13 seeks to limit new housing development outside the built up areas of settlements.
- 5.18 Policy H17 requires 40% provision of affordable housing for schemes of more than 15 units in locations such as Wantage.
- 5.19 Policy H23 refers to housing schemes providing open space facilities.

#### **Other policy guidance**

- 5.20 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development  
Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing  
Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas  
Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport  
Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning  
Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control  
Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk

## **6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Policy**

- 6.1 The site is subject to local plan policy NE6 which seeks to protect the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB. In addition Policy GS2 seeks to resist new development outside the built up areas of existing settlements. This outline application has to be considered against these two principal policies.
- 6.2 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 release of the land for housing would assist in addressing the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply.
- 6.3 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.

6.4 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).

6.5 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 preferred options document and strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA) both include this site as a potential housing allocation in the forthcoming managing development document.
- The proposal accords with the council's locational strategy of concentrating development in the main urban areas. It also follows the scale and distribution of homes set out in the emerging core strategy, which includes a commitment to provide 4,900 homes at Wantage and Grove.
- It is a sustainable location, close to Wantage town centre.
- 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.
- The site forms a logical extension to the built up area of Wantage and adjoins the town's development boundary.
- A landscape assessment has been carried out which concludes that development of this site would not have a harmful impact on the landscape character, visual amenity or natural beauty of the wider AONB.

#### **Access and highway safety**

6.6 Details of the access and the safety for users of the access (pedestrians, cyclists and motorists) have been considered by the County Engineer. No objection has been raised subject to conditions and the provision of off-site highway improvements and public transport improvements.

- 6.7 There is an existing footway along the road which splays off for a short distance in front of the site to the access drive to the south before rejoining the roadside. The width of the public realm in this area, including the property side verge is reasonably wide and would offer clear refuge on either side of the proposed junction and access into the site. There is no highway safety issue that warrants changes to the submitted scheme.

### **Character and density**

- 6.8 The proposal is for not more than 18 dwellings. 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. Density on its own 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.
- 6.9 The majority of the site would be screened from the main public vantage points along Manor Road due to existing road frontage housing. The other boundaries would be subject to landscaping screening that would be considered at the reserved matters stage. The principle of the proposal, therefore, is not considered to be harmful to the locality and, in particular, would not harm the character or natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB. In addition, the proposal would make efficient use of the site, in line with government guidance.

### **Drainage**

- 6.10 At the time of writing this report, the applicant has not submitted sufficient information to demonstrate acceptable drainage measures for the proposed development. A sustainable drainage system is proposed but no details have been provided. The north-east area of the site is identified as being at risk of potential flooding and this issue also needs to be addressed.
- 6.11 Once acceptable details have been considered, conditions to control the water regime on the site would be appropriate to cater for the proposed development. This would include ensuring compliance with the flood risk assessment to be produced by the applicants.

### **Landscape and ecology**

- 6.12 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 the illustrative footpath link to Willow Lane there would be no serious risk to existing 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.

### **Contamination**

- 6.13 The land had been used in the past as a builder's yard and as an unofficial garden extension prior to its present use as a paddock. Given the land's previous use a desk top study of the ground situation in line with PPS 23 needs to be carried out – this can be required by condition.

### **Overlooking and residential amenity**

- 6.14 Building layout and design, including the location of windows, would be considered at the reserved matters stage. Nevertheless, the illustrative layout plan shows one possible arrangement of 18 dwellings on the site. At the reserved matters stage, the council's spatial standards will need to be complied with to ensure no undue harm is caused to the amenity for existing properties.

### **Pressure on local infrastructure**

- 6.15 The introduction of up to 18 dwellings is not considered to be a risk in creating adverse pressure on local infrastructure. The increase in dwelling numbers and population will require financial contributions to local services by way of a section 106 agreement.

### **Open space and wildlife issues**

- 6.16 Policy H23 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 immediately to the west in the form of playing fields for the leisure centre and across Manor Road to the east in the Memorial Recreation Ground. Nevertheless, some open space areas would be provided as part of the new housing layout, particularly along circulation routes. This issue would be considered as part of the reserved matters application.
- 6.17 The ecological assessment submitted with the application identifies this site as having low value, but the proposed development would involve the removal of some habitat environments within the main part of the site. However, this is not seen as an impediment to the development, subject to appropriate conditions being imposed on the planning permission.

### **Amenity issues**

- 6.18 The council has resolved to grant planning permission for floodlights and an all-weather playing pitch on the leisure centre playing field on adjoining land to the north-west of the site. The floodlights would have some impact on the residential amenity of the new properties, but the layout and orientation of the new dwellings will take this issue into account and so limit any adverse impact. In addition, there is an existing tree belt along the west boundary of the site which would assist in reducing some of the light glare from the floodlights.

## **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. An assessment of the proposal's impact on the landscape and natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and its relationship with the built up area of Wantage and the local highway network has led to the conclusion that the site is suitable for residential development as an exception to planning policy, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the outstanding drainage issues.



**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 following:**

- 1. The prior completion of a legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) requiring the provision of 40% affordable housing and securing the payment of sums to mitigate the impact of the development on local services and infrastructure;**
- 2. The outstanding drainage issues being satisfactorily addressed;**
- 3. Appropriate conditions.**

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