

NHI/7093/1 – S & H Homes

**Demolition of existing dwelling. Erection of five flats with associated car parking.
62 Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey.**

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a three storey building comprising 5 x 2 bed flats with associated parking.
- 1.2 The property is currently a large detached dwelling located on the western side of Yarnells Hill and is bounded by similar dwellings to the north and south. To the rear lie the rear gardens of residential properties in Laburnum Road.
- 1.3 The proposed building, contemporary in design, would be set slightly forward of the front elevation of the existing dwelling but will remain behind the nominal building line of adjoining properties. It has been designed to look like a large dwelling, in a similar architectural style to no 64 which lies immediately to the south. A copy of the plans showing the location of the proposal, its design and the applicant's supporting statement are attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.4 The application has been amended to take account of the views made by the Consultant Architect, which are outlined below and now provides 8 parking spaces as requested by the County Engineer.
- 1.5 The application comes to Committee because several letters of objection have been received and the views of North Hinksey Parish Council differ from the recommendation.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 Planning permission was granted in 1983 for a ground floor and first floor extension to the existing building.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Policy H4 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan provides for residential development within North Hinksey.
- 3.2 Policy H11 confirms that the sub-division of properties into flats will be permitted provided the proposed units would be self contained, would have adequate amenity / living space and car parking provision, and would not undermine the established character of the area or the amenities of neighbouring properties.
- 3.3 Policies D1, D2 and D3 seek to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design, does not cause harm to the amenity of neighbours and is acceptable in terms of highway safety.
- 3.4 Similar policies to those above have been included in the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan 2011. The corresponding policies are H9, H13, DC1, DC5 and DC9.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 North Hinksey Parish Council has objected to the application stating:

“Councillors were concerned that the footprint of the proposed flats would almost double the size of the existing house. The proposal was for a total of 14 bedrooms and only 7 onsite parking spaces, which would invariably mean that resident's cars will be parked on Yarnells Hill, a road that is considered to be unsuitable for street parking. The V.W.H.D.C. had been informed of the possibility of restricted covenants on the property. Councillors also felt that the

design of a three storey flat roofed block of flats would be out of keeping with the predominantly large detached dwellings of mainly two storeys with pitched roofs. The same cannot be said of the existing flat roofed building at 64 Yarnells Hill as this cannot be taken as a precedence as the proposed block of flats is much larger, higher and of a very different design. There is a large Maple tree on site, which the V.W.H.D.C. should consider protecting by the issuing of a Tree Preservation Order (T.P.O.).”

“Councillors UNANIMOUSLY AGREED to OPPOSE the application on the grounds that the proposed development would be out of character with the other properties in Yarnells Hill (excluding no. 64) and there was insufficient on-site parking provided. It was believed that the proposed development contravened: - V.W.H.D.C. Adopted Local Plan 1999 – Policies D1, D2, H4, H11 V.W.H.D.C. Second Deposit Draft Local Plan 2011 Policy DC1. Ask that the V.W.H.D.C. to consider issuing a Tree Preservation Order (T.P.O.) on the large Maple tree onsite.”

4.2 County Engineer – no objections (subject to conditions).

4.3 Drainage Engineer – No objections.

4.4 Arboricultural Officer – “Having visited the site, the Norway Maple at the front is not worthy of a TPO. As this is the only significant tree to be affected, I have no objection to this development.”

4.5 Environmental Health – No objections.

4.6 Consultant Architect – comments attached at **Appendix 2**.

4.7 30 letters of objection have been received, which are summarised as follows:

- The development will create a precedent, making it impossible in future to resist similar unsuitable developments.
- Five flats with a total of 10 bedrooms is an over intensive use for the size of the site. The proportion of plot covered would be much greater than is the pattern for the area.
- Flats are inconsistent with the character of the area. The proposal undermines the established family home character of the area and is inappropriate here.
- The ‘box shape / warehouse’ style has no consideration for the privacy of neighbouring residents and would be overbearing on its neighbours.
- The design is ‘ugly, utilitarian and unsympathetic’ to the conventional style of other houses in the area.
- The size and height of the building are considered excessive and out of scale with nearby properties and is detrimental to the street scene.
- The proposal will lead to a loss of view from neighbouring properties (this is not a material planning consideration).
- The flats are likely to bring a young transient population with all the attendant problems that the letting situation brings (this is not a material planning consideration).
- Parking provision is insufficient and will lead to on street parking. There is no provision for visitor parking. The flats will also result in an increase in traffic on Yarnells Hill near to a dangerous bend.
- The flats will cause noise / disturbance problems to neighbouring dwellings.
- There are restrictive covenants on the property that prevent flat developments (this is not a material planning consideration).

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The main issues in this case are considered to be 1) the principle of the development in this location, 2) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including

its design, 3) the impact of the proposal on neighbouring properties, 4) the safety of the access and parking arrangements, and 5) precedent.

- 5.2 On the first issue, the principle of replacing a dwelling with flats, Members may recall a recent proposal at 10 Cumnor Hill, which was similar to the current proposal, being to replace a house with a building containing flats. That scheme has been built and is considered to fit in well with the character of the area. Latest Government advice in PPG3, 'Housing', encourages the use of innovative approaches to achieve higher densities within existing settlements. The principle of a development of flats is therefore considered acceptable. The proposed residential units are considered to be an appropriate form of development in this area and would provide small units to meet the needs of an increasing number of one and two person households.
- 5.3 Regarding the second issue, the contemporary form proposed is not considered to be out of keeping with the locality and is certainly not an overdevelopment of the site. Its siting is set back within the site, and its bulk and massing are similar to and no larger than neighbouring properties.
- 5.4 The design takes reference from the Art Deco design of no 64, and has the appearance of a spacious house. Whilst objectors have stated that they find it ugly and utilitarian in appearance, Officers consider the design to be acceptable. Furthermore, the Consultant Architect has commented that it is a carefully considered form of design that has a distinct quality that should certainly be supported.
- 5.5 Turning to the third issue, the impact on neighbouring properties, it is considered that no harm is caused to the immediate neighbours. The proposed building is not on the common boundaries and is no longer in depth than the existing dwellings on either side. The upper storey elements have been designed so as to meet with the Council's amenity standards. Any adverse impact on loss of light or loss of privacy is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal.
- 5.6 On the issue of the parking and access, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable. The parking provision shown of 8 spaces is considered to be sufficient in this location. Furthermore, the County Engineer has no objection to the proposal.
- 5.7 With regard to precedent, whilst this can be material where other sites possible suitable for similar development can be identified in the locality, Committee will be aware that each proposal must be considered on its own merits. In this case, there are other potential sites in the vicinity that could be the subject of a similar proposal. However, given the thrust of Government Guidance on new housing, particularly in terms of making more efficient use of land within settlements, Officers consider that the issue of precedent is not such as to warrant refusal of this individual proposal.
- 5.8 Of the other objections made, Members will be aware that any covenants on the property are not material to the consideration of the planning merits of the application.

6.0 **Recommendation**

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

1. *TL1 – Time Limit*
2. *MC2 – Sample materials*
3. *RE7 – Submission of boundary details*
4. *HY3 – Access in accordance with specified plan*

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5. *HY25 – Car parking layout (Building)*
6. *HY29 – Surface water*
7. *LS4 – Landscaping scheme (incorporating existing trees) to be submitted*