

## **SUN/7557/5 – MAA Architects**

### **Demolition of existing buildings and erection of one dwelling. Charlottes, Sunningwell**

#### **1.0 The Proposal**

1.1 Charlottes is an established builders' yard on the edge of Sunningwell. In February 2004, planning permission was granted for the removal of the existing buildings and structures and the erection of one bungalow (ref SUN/7557/4). This permission was granted as an exception to Green Belt policy because very special circumstances were identified to justify the replacement of the commercial buildings with a dwelling, principally the significant reduction in the volume of buildings on the site. This new application is to amend that permission and is for a dwelling with rooms in the roof space. The new proposal has been designed to be no bigger in volume and no higher relative to its surroundings than the permitted bungalow – to maintain the same relative height the proposed dwelling would be sunk into the ground by 0.8 m. A comparison of the permitted and new plans is in **Appendix 1**.

#### **2.0 Planning History**

2.1 Aside from the permission in 2004, a proposal for two bungalows on the site was refused and dismissed on appeal in 1997. A copy of the appeal decision is in **Appendix 2**.

#### **3.0 Consultations**

3.1 Sunningwell Parish Council – object for the reasons in **Appendix 3**.

3.2 Local Residents – 1 household has written to object on the following grounds:-

1. the proposed dwelling is too large
2. it will set a precedent
3. sinking the dwelling into the ground may result in flooding problems

3.3 County Engineer – no objection subject to conditions.

3.4 Assistant Director (Environmental Health) - no objection subject to conditions.

#### **4.0 Officer Comments**

4.1 There are four issues. Firstly, the issue of Green Belt policy; second, the impact of the proposal on the area; third, the impact on neighbours; and fourthly, highway safety. The first and second issue are related. In terms of Green Belt policy, the applicants have repeated the same justification advanced for the previous permission for the bungalow. It is accepted that the proposal amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, very special circumstances have been identified, namely the significant reduction in built volume compared to the existing commercial buildings on the builders' yard. In this regard, the new proposal has been carefully designed to be no more in volume than the permitted bungalow, and, due to its lower slab level, no higher relative to its surroundings. Similarly, it would be sited in the north-east corner of the site to minimise its visual impact from the main road.

4.2 Thus the advantages to the Green Belt of a significantly reduced built mass and minimised visual impact are maintained in the new scheme. Officers therefore consider that the same very special circumstances identified in the previous application apply to the new one, and that the proposal is acceptable under Green Belt policy and has an acceptable impact on the area. However, the application is a departure from the development plan, and as such the Government Office for the South East will be consulted if Members resolve to grant planning permission.

- 4.3 Regarding impact on neighbours, the new dwelling would lie 30 metres from the nearest neighbouring dwelling, in excess of the Council's minimum standard to ensure privacy (21 metres). Thus although the proposal includes first floor windows, there should be no harm to neighbours' amenity from overlooking. It should be noted that the site is currently well screened to the north and east by a high conifer hedge.
- 4.4 The final issue is highway safety. As part of the previous application, the County Engineer sought improvements to vision at the junction of the access road to the site with the main road. These improvements would be required as part of this proposal and can be secured via condition. All other aspects of the proposal are acceptable to the County Engineer.
- 4.5 Of the other objections made, the provisions of Green Belt policy mean that no precedent will be created if the proposal is permitted – all proposals have to be considered on their merits relative to the policy. Officers have no information to suggest that flooding would prevent the reduction in ground levels by 0.8 m as proposed.
- 5.0 **Recommendation**
- 5.1 *It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair, subject to:-*
- i) *referral of the application to GOSE and confirmation that the Deputy Prime Minister does not wish the application to the subject of call-in*
  - ii) *conditions to include materials, slab levels, removal of all existing buildings, removal of permitted development rights, contaminated land, definition of the residential curtilage, access and parking*