

**NHI/18135/1 – Cranbourne Homes Ltd**

**Demolition of existing house and garage. Construction of two semi-detached houses and four flats**

**2 Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey**

1.0 **The Proposal**

1.1 The application site comprises a large detached house in a substantial plot on the corner of Yarnells Hill and Westminster Way. In May 2004, outline planning permission was granted on appeal for the replacement of the existing house with three dwellings. The appeal decision is in **Appendix 1**.

1.2 This new application seeks to replace the existing house with two buildings, one orientated towards Westminster Way and containing 4 flats, the other orientated towards Yarnells Hill and comprising two semi-detached houses. The existing vehicular access would be modified to provide improved visibility towards the junction. Off-street parking would provide 2 spaces for each house and 1.5 spaces for each flat. Extracts from the application drawings are in **Appendix 2**.

1.3 This application comes to Committee due to objections being received from the Parish Council and local residents.

2.0 **Planning History**

2.1 As in Section 1 above

3.0 **Planning Policies**

3.1 Policies D1, D2 and D3 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan require all new development to be acceptable in terms of design, impact on neighbours and highway safety. Policies DC1 DC5 and DC9 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan are similar.

4.0 **Consultations**

4.1 North Hinksey Parish Council – Object for the reasons given in **Appendix 3**.

4.2 Local Residents – 7 households object to the application for the following reasons:-

- i) overdevelopment of the site and out of keeping with the character of the area
- ii) increased traffic on a steeply inclined road near to a busy and dangerous junction
- iii) increased on-street congestion adding to problems associated with the church opposite the site
- iv) some of the flats may be rented leading to a harmful social mix
- v) the development will lead to drainage problems

4.3 County Engineer – no objections subject to conditions.

4.4 Consultant Architect – supports the proposal.

4.5 Architects' Advisory Panel – "Attractive scheme".

4.6 Arboricultural Officer – no objection subject to conditions.

4.7 Principal Engineer – no objection subject to details of drainage being agreed.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 There are three main issues for Members to consider –

- i) the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area
- ii) the effect on neighbours
- iii) access and parking

5.2 In the appeal decision of May 2004, the Inspector noted that the locality of the site, from No 2A to No 12 Yarnells Hill, comprises varied residential development, including a pair of semi-detached houses, a relatively narrow plot containing 2 flats and a detached house. He concluded that a higher density development on the site would not necessarily be viewed as out of keeping with the lower density surroundings because the large rear gardens of neighbouring houses, which largely create the lower density, are not visible from the public highway. He therefore considered that the site could accommodate a higher density form of development, provided the layout and design retained sufficient green space to complement the surrounding area. The Inspector's comments concerning the illustrative plan of 3 houses considered at the appeal indicate that he did not object to the form of development proposed by this application.

5.3 The applicants argue that the layout of the new application differs little from the illustrative plan considered by the Inspector. A comparison of the footprint of both proposals is in **Appendix 4**, and Officers agree that, in light of the Inspector's comments, the differences are not sufficient to warrant refusal. Significant space between the proposed buildings and the site's boundaries is retained. In fact, in one respect the current proposal is considered better than the appeal plan in that the proposed building closest to Westminster Way would now face the road rather than present a side wall, as the appeal plan suggested.

5.4 In terms of layout, the proposal has been designed to respect the 40-degree line from the nearest neighbouring houses. One building would face Westminster Way and one would face Yarnells Hill with sufficient space between to respect the typical corner relationship found throughout the area. The building containing the flats has been carefully designed to reflect the domestic scale of surrounding houses, with split level access to make use of the significant drop in levels across the site. Slab levels need to be controlled for this reason (Condition 4 below). All of the surrounding screen planting is to be retained except for a section of the hedge nearest to the access, which is to be replanted further back to provide visibility splays. For this reason, the Arboricultural Officer has no objections. Local vernacular details have been incorporated into the design based on a contextual analysis and the Consultant Architect considers the scheme to be "ingenious". Overall, Officers consider the proposal would be sympathetic to the defined character and appearance of the area.

5.5 The second issue is the effect on neighbours. The two closest neighbours are No 108 Westminster Way and No 2A Yarnells Hill. As mentioned above, the proposal conforms to the 40-degree rule with respect to the nearest windows in these neighbours' houses. Potential harm from overlooking has been eliminated through the use of high-level rooflights on sensitive elevations. Overshadowing would not occur due to the location and orientation of the proposed buildings. The Council's Principal Engineer has a concern over drainage and recommends that details be agreed (Condition 7 below). Officers conclude that the impact on neighbours is acceptable, but consider it prudent to remove permitted development rights for extensions and alterations to ensure continued protection for neighbours (Condition 3 below).

5.6 The final issue is access and parking. Visibility from the existing access towards the junction of Westminster Way and Yarnells Hill is poor due to an intervening hedge. This visibility will be greatly improved by the proposed removal of a section of the hedge and its re-planting further back. In terms of parking, Botley is one of the most sustainable locations in the Vale, and there is a bus stop located almost in front of the site on Westminster Way. Covered cycle

parking is included in the proposal. For these reasons, the County Engineer considers the access and parking details are acceptable and does not object.

5.7 Objections have been made to the potential social mix arising from the proposal. The type of tenure of the proposed dwellings is not material to the consideration of the application.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *Permission subject to the following conditions:-*

1. *TL1 Time Limit - Full Application*
2. *MC2 Submission of Materials (Samples)*
3. *RE2 Restriction on Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings*
4. *RE22 Floor/Slab Levels (Dwellings)*
5. *RE7 Submission of Boundary Details*
6. *Prior to the commencement of development, details of all proposed retaining walls, including facing materials, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the District Planning Authority. The retaining walls shall be built in strict accordance with the approved details.*
7. *RE8 Submission of Drainage Details (Surface Water and Foul Sewage)*
8. *LS4 Implementation of Landscaping Scheme (incorporating existing tree(s)) - to be submitted*
9. *LS11 Protection of Trees/Hedges during Building Operations*
10. *HY3 Access in accordance with Specified Plan*
11. *HY10 Visibility (access)*
12. *HY24 Car park Layout (Dwelling)*
13. *HY16 Turning Space in accordance with Specified Plan*
14. *Prior to first occupation of the development, covered cycle parking and bin storage shall be provided in accordance with the approved drawings and shall be permanently retained for such uses thereafter.*