

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V0129/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	24 January 2013
PARISH	HARWELL
WARD MEMBER(S)	Margaret Turner Reg Waite
APPLICANT	The Harwell Science & Innovation Campus GP
SITE	Land at South Drive Harwell, OX11 0PT
PROPOSAL	Outline application for demolition of existing 13 dwellings. Erection of up to 120 dwellings with associated infrastructure, access, parking and landscaping
AMENDMENTS	29 April 2013
GRID REFERENCE	448092/187470
OFFICER	David Rothery

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This 6.04ha site lies to the north edge of the Harwell Science and Innovation Complex. The site is bounded to the east by the A4185 and to the south, west and north by other areas within the Harwell complex. The site comprises a mix of grassed open areas with tree cover and hedgerows throughout the site and some interspaced large detached dwelling houses, the majority of which (but not all) are boarded up and secured from entry or use.

1.2 Local facilities in the area comprise of a primary school and a community hall (planned for construction) to the Chilton Field site to the south of the Campus, formal private playing field pitches directly to the south, a post office and a small range of shops, a bank, a children's nursery and other facilities within the 'commercial' area of the campus bordering the south-western part of the site.

1.3 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

Application consideration

2.1 This is an outline submission to consider the principle of the proposed development and the means of vehicular access into the site.

2.2 All other matters, such as the appearance of the development, the landscaping to the proposed scheme, the layout of the development, and the scale of the proposed buildings, are reserved for subsequent consideration should this current application be approved. Drawings other than as relate to the outline considerations are for illustrative purposes only in order to demonstrate that the development as proposed under this outline application is capable of being accommodated on the site in a satisfactory manner.

Development proposal

2.3 The proposal as submitted is for residential development of the site for up to 120 dwelling units. The illustrative layout shows that the scheme would include roads, footpaths and associated parking areas, landscaping, amenity space, open space. Pedestrian access would be available from the north and south existing footway and road networks. Vehicular access is proposed from the south of the site off Curie Avenue.

2.4 The indicative mix of dwelling units suggested is as follows:

1-bedroom	=	20 units
2-bedroomed	=	56 units
3-bedroomed	=	21 units
4-bedroomed	=	23 units

Across the 6.04ha site the illustrative 120 dwelling units would produce a density figure of 31dpha. On this illustrative development arrangement 63% of the dwellings are two-bedroom properties or less.

2.5 In support of the application the following documents have been submitted –

- Planning Supporting Statement (Jan 2013 – Kemp & Kemp)
- Design and Access Statement (April 2013 – consortium)
- Landscape and Visual Issues Report Rev D (July 2012 – RPS)
- Tree Survey (June 2012 – RPS)
- Ecological Assessment Report (Nov 2012 – RPS)
- Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy (Jan 2013 – BM)
- Archaeological Impact Assessment (Oct 2012 – Museum of London)
- Transportation Assessment (Dec 2012 – BSP)
- Travel Plan (Dec 2012 – BSP)
- Sustainability Statement (Dec 2012 – RPS)
- Energy Strategy (Jan 2012 – RPS)
- Utilities Statement (Dec 2012 – BM)
- Statement of Community Involvement (Jan 2013 – Kemp & Kemp)

2.6 The proposal is a large major development and is contrary to the policies of the development plan. The proposal has been publicised on this basis.

2.7 The applicants have been in discussion with council officers and others to agree a level of contribution towards off-site services which this proposal (through the increase in population and the activities they generate) would add to the usage of and the securing of on-site facilities such as affordable housing provision. Other contributions cover facilities and services such as waste collection, street name plates, public art, education (primary, secondary, sixth-form and SEN), Library and Museums, waste management, social and healthcare, fire and rescue, highways and transport, police equipment, and local recreational facilities.

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

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Harwell Parish Council** – No objection

“The Council does not object to this application, but asks that neighbours' comments are taken into consideration by Planners, and that the advice of the Arboricultural Officer is obtained before any trees are removed.”

3.2 **East Hendred Parish Council** – No objection

“The large development site is adjacent to our parish. The provision of 40% affordable housing is very welcome which should be of benefit to our parish, where we have an established local need, established by a survey.

It is noted that the Icknield Way borders the northern boundary to the application site. This is part of the cycle route from East Hendred to the Harwell site and we would hope that it can be upgraded as part of the development. Improvements to the surface of

cycle route 44 immediately west of this development, between the campus boundary and the Hungerford track, which is currently in very poor condition could also be made. Indeed upgrading of cycle routes in the vicinity of the site would be very welcome which would be of benefit to this parish and also to the new planned development This is in line with the requirements of Policy TR4 of the existing Local Plan.

Policy TR9 requires developments with significant transport implications to be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan. One of the attached documents to the application provides rather limited information on transport implications but we would argue this does not constitute either a realistic transport assessment or travel plan. In particular consideration needs to be given to the expected increase of traffic using the A4185, accessing Didcot station, Milton Park, and other local major employment sites. This road is very busy, both in the morning and late afternoon, and extra traffic will put even more pressure on Rowstock round-about on the boundary of this parish and used regularly by our residents.

We believe that this substantial planned development would be an opportunity to invest in more frequent bus services and in a wider network of functioning and accessible cycle routes in the Science Vale area to help to mitigate traffic increases. This would provide benefit to this proposed development as well as to neighbouring villages.

This development is part of a larger 400 house development planned in this area. It is important that any proposed traffic mitigation measures take this larger development into account.”

- 3.3 **Representations from local residents** – A total of 13 representations had been received at the time of writing this report, of which 11 object and 2 consider that there is not enough information submitted. The objections made are on the grounds of the following concerns:
- Loss of landscape setting and open character of the site
 - Increased traffic generation and appropriate parking provision
 - Adverse impact on wildlife, particularly bats
 - Impact of construction on routes to the site
 - Loss of privacy and of existing residential amenity
- 3.4 **The adjacent land occupiers** - Research Sites Restoration Ltd. have asked for a management plan to be made available on how new residents would be advised on the progress of works to decommission the liquid effluent treatment plant on adjoining land to the west of the application site. They also seek the strengthening of the landscape buffer to the open space on this boundary and the relocation of play space elsewhere from this land
- 3.5 **Harwell Village Hall Trustees** – A request for assistance from section 106 contributions toward the redevelopment and replacement of the existing village hall.
- 3.6 **County Highways** – no objection in principle to the application subject to suitable conditions.
- 3.7 **Landscape Architect** – Concern over the quality of the development due to the sites location within the AONB. Links into the wider Harwell site are unclear. The areas of open space seem to have buffer status to the west , limiting their usability.
- 3.8 **Arboriculturist** – This is a reasonable compromise between trees lost and retained and new planting. Tree protection will be important and should be in place before work starts and regularly checked.

- 3.9 **Ecologist** - The illustrative master plan for the site indicates that the majority of the population of white helleborine will be lost to the proposed development. Some areas containing the species could be retained but are likely to be under greater pressure from recreation and potential trampling from the additional population. It is likely that an attempt to avoid impacts on the species would result in a rather artificial layout which would compromise the functioning of the development. If development is to go ahead the best long term solution is to identify a suitable receptor site which can be safeguarded and managed principally as a nature reserve to which a proportion of the existing population can be translocated.
- 3.10 **Natural England** – Objection. The scale of the proposal is likely to adversely affect the purpose for which the North Wessex Downs AONB has been designated
- 3.11 **Environment Agency** – No objection subject to inclusion of conditions relating to contamination and potential flooding.
- 3.12 **Drainage** – No objection subject to conditions to secure drainage details.
- 3.13 **Thames Water** –
Waste Comments – An initial investigation has identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application. Should the Local Planning Authority look to approve the application, Thames Water would like a 'Grampian Style' condition imposed.
- Surface Water* - The applicant should ensure that storm flows are attenuated through storage. Groundwater would require a discharge permit to be arranged.
- Water Comments* - The existing water supply infrastructure has insufficient capacity to meet the additional demands for the proposed development. Thames Water therefore recommends a Grampian condition be imposed.
- 3.14 **Environmental Health** –
Air Quality Assessment - The extra traffic generated is not likely to have a significant impact on air quality.
- Noise Assessment* - Noise does not appear to be an issue affecting this proposed development.
- 3.15 **Design and Conservation Officer** – There are many mature trees on the site the retention of which will help give the development an identity and sense of place. However it is unfortunate that the trees to be retained are not used to a greater extent to influence the location of the open space on the site. More open space should be provided around the trees rather than on the edge of the site to the west and north.
- No indication is given on the plans how pedestrians and cyclists from the new residential areas will access the facilities to the south of the campus and in particular the school. These connections need to be direct and attractive if they are to be used.
- 3.16 **Rights of Way** - The size of the development will have an impact on the surrounding rights of way network with a higher demand from the residents to access the countryside for both recreation and commuting purposes. The Icknield Way runs along bridleway 19 and forms part of the Sustrans cycle network and links the site with Harwell and Didcot, eventually leading to Oxford to the east and north and linking the site with East Hendred and Wantage to the west. The potential impact on this route is

considered to be high. There are also a number of other rights of way that link the site to areas of considerable interest including the internationally recognised Ridgeway National Trail. Again there is expected to be a high demand for access to these sites from the development

- 3.17 **Housing Services** – The application proposes to deliver 43 affordable housing units which represents 40% of the stock as per council policy. The proposal to deliver up to 120 units following the demolition of 13 existing dwellings would result in a gain of 107 dwellings.
- 3.18 **Waste Management Team** – Require storage areas for wheeled bins per plot to be provided with collection points clear of parking areas.
- 3.19 **Lesiure Services** – Maintenance of open space areas should be clarified and secured by adoption by parish or through management company.
- 3.20 **Equalities Officer** – accesability to all public areas (open spaces, play areas, etc.) needs to be secured as part of the development layout.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 None

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

Vale of White Horse Local Plan

The local plan was adopted in July 2006. The following relevant policies have been considered to be saved by the Secretary of State's decision of 1 July 2009 whilst the replacement local plan is being produced.

- 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 new building will not be permitted unless on land identified for development or the proposal 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 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.
- 5.6 Policy DC9 seeks to ensure development will not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.
- 5.7 Policy NE9 of the adopted local plan 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.
- 5.8 Policy H13 seeks to limit new housing development outside the built up areas of settlements.

- 5.9 Policy H16 requires about 50% provision of housing to be two-bedroom or less for schemes of more than 10 dwellings and 10% should meet lifetime homes standards.
- 5.10 Policy H17 requires 40% provision of affordable housing for schemes of more than 15 dwellings.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- 5.13 *Residential Design Guide – December 2009*
Sites for 10 or more dwellings is subject to guidance on design and layout.
- 5.14 *Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009*
Code for Sustainable Homes guidance to achieve level 3 and working to level 4 by 2013.
- 5.15 *Open space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision – July 2008*
Advice for the provision and maintenance requirements for open space areas.
- 5.16 *Affordable Housing – July 2006*
Provides further guidance following on from policy H17.
- 5.17 *Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006*
Sites over 1ha or likely to flood should provide a flood risk assessment (FRA).
- 5.18 *Planning and Public Art – July 2006*
Sites over 0.5ha should provide a contribution towards public art installations in line with Policy DC4.
- 5.19 *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) – updated 2009*
Focus on site providing 200 or more dwelling units. Smaller sites have been assessed as part of the identification process.

Other Policy Documents

- 5.20 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012**
Paragraph 14 & 49 – presumption in favour of sustainable development
Paragraph 47 – five year housing supply requirement
Paragraph 50 - create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities
Paragraph 99 – flood risk assessment
Paragraph 109 – contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment
Paragraph 111 - encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed (brownfield land)

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

National advice

- 6.1 At the heart of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Within the context of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, unless any adverse impacts would so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole (para.14).
- 6.2 The current lack of a five year supply of housing sites in the district is 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 some major allocations due to the economic downturn and the delay in bringing forward the council's new local plan. The current lack of a five year housing land supply justifies some flexibility in line with the NPPF in the consideration of planning applications which do not accord with local plan policy.

- 6.3 This approach is by necessity of a time-limited duration and would be aimed at identifying sites suitable to address the housing shortfall whilst still meeting relevant sustainability and design criteria as referred to in the NPPF. On the basis of the assessment of the case that has been put forward by the applicants that this proposal meets the specifications in the NPPF for providing housing in sustainable locations to address the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply, it is considered that the current site would be likely to meet this situation.
- 6.4 It is clear the application is contrary to local plan policy GS2. However, whilst the council does not have a five year housing land supply, policy GS2 is inconsistent with the framework. The proposed development, therefore, needs to be considered on its site specific merits and whether it constitutes a sustainable form of development as defined in the NPPF.
- 6.5 The assessment at the present time of the application needs to balance the desire that the scheme should be considered through a strategic sites allocation process against the tests set out in the NPPF tests, such as a sustainable location, appropriate design, landscape impact, drainage, and highway safety.

Use of land

- 6.6 Para.109 of the NPPF says that “the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment”, and para.111 says that planning decisions “should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed (brown field land).”
- 6.7 The site has been used for residential uses in the past. The development of the site for housing is not a restricting factor given the current housing land shortfall, subject to all other site specific matters being considered acceptable in accordance with the NPPF. The landscape quality of the site is relatively good. This would not prejudice the proposed development

Sustainability credentials

- 6.8 The NPPF puts strong emphasis on housing being used to further enhance rural vitality. The location of the residential site is sustainable as it is close to the range of services and facilities available within the complex. In addition for these reasons, the principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable in that this site could be considered a favoured location. .
- 6.9 The assessment however is just one consideration criteria and must be balanced with the policy planning consideration of the methodology for this site to come forward for consideration in cumulative terms and the suitability of the location on character and landscape appraisal assessments given the Area of Outstanding Beauty countryside location.

Cumulative impact considerations

- 6.10 There are no cumulative issues in the development as proposed in this particular location. The overall level of development is considered to be capable of being accommodated in the locality, provided suitable contributions are secured to on-site and off-site services and infrastructure.

Access arrangements

- 6.11 The site would be accessed off Curie Avenue to the south. The access is shown with acceptable vision splays. No direct vehicular access to the site would be provided from the A4185 to the east of the site.

Affordable housing

- 6.12 The requirement for affordable housing (para.3.17) has been confirmed by the applicant to be workable as part of the scheme. The illustrative layout and suggested dwelling provision (para.2.4) illustrates that there is ample scope to cater for the affordable housing numbers and distribution across the site in accordance with council policies, which the applicant has confirmed is the intention. This matter can be secured by a section 106 agreement.

Visual impact - appearance, landscaping, layout and scale

- 6.13 Good design and layout is a key aspect of sustainable development and the NPPF is explicit in seeking high quality outcomes. The submitted proposal has been considered in accordance with the advice in the NPPF and on the basis of the illustrative site layout and relationship with surrounding land and uses, it is considered that this scheme is acceptable in terms of the site specific considerations.

- 6.14 *Appearance* – The detailed appearance and design of the dwellings has not been submitted for consideration at this stage. The illustrative layout infers a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings and some flatted units. In general appearance the illustrative plans could enable a suitable development.

- 6.15 *Landscaping* - The illustrated proposal retains and maintains the existing field boundaries to the site and to Icknield Way which dissects the northern area of the site. There is landscaping indicative throughout the illustrated layout and to the open area to be created within the south-west area of the layout. The quality of the retained and additional landscaping will need to ensure that the quality of the site within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is enhanced.

- 6.16 *Layout* – The illustrative arrangement shows that adequate private and public outdoor space is provided and the layout relates well to the surrounding development in the area.

- 6.17 *Scale* – No building scales are under consideration at this time. The expectation inferred from the illustrative drawings is that the dwellings are standard two-storey construction, as would be any flatted development within the layout. There may be limited scope for roof void accommodation (two-and-a-half story development).

Impact on neighbours' residential amenity

- 6.18 The illustrative layout of the proposed residential development shows one possible arrangement that would, subject to the expected limitations identified in the above paragraphs, not have any direct harmful impact on the residential amenity of adjacent houses in North Drive in terms of overshadowing, light pollution, over-dominance or loss of privacy. The layout shown would provide a generally inward facing development which is a common form of housing arrangement to locations bounded by main through routes. Adequate spatial separation could be achieved

- 6.19 Amenity standards within the council's residential design guide are illustrated to have been observed. Waste facilities (recycle bin storage and collection points) throughout the site would be suitable to be conditioned.

Heritage assets

- 6.20 The NPPF requires that account should be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance heritage assets. The proposal has no heritage assets within the site or within the surrounding area. The submission has not identified any heritage asset that is identifiable in the local area that would be subject to any adverse impact from this proposal.

Drainage and flooding issues

- 6.21 *Waste Surface Water* - The site is considered large enough to enable water storage facilities to deal with surface water without causing surface water run-off to the highway or onto neighbouring properties. An attenuation scheme as part of the drainage solution for the site's development would be a consideration.
- 6.22 *Waste Foul Water* - Drainage of the foul water system has been considered. Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this proposal. A drainage strategy is required to enable all water drainage (surface and foul) to be discharged into the public sewerage system before any development starts on site.
- 6.23 *Water Supply* - Thames Water have advised that the water supply infrastructure has insufficient capacity to meet the additional demands for the proposed development. An impact study of the existing water supply infrastructure is requested before any works start on site to determine the magnitude of any additional capacity requirement in the system.
- 6.24 The requirements of water supply and waste water discharge need to be addressed before any development starts on site. The timescale for the implementation of any favourable determination are restricted on the basis of the need to ensure the housing shortfall identified is addressed. A delay in requirements for the water environment infrastructure would indicate that this proposal is potentially an issue in meeting the required implementation timescales. A refusal on the basis of the water supply and drainage solution would therefore be a consideration.

Social infrastructure

- 6.25 There has been some expression that current social and physical infrastructure could not cope with the increase in residents from this proposal. However contributions can be secured to offset the impacts arising from the development. The applicant has agreed to the principle of addressing these needs through contributions and off-site provision to be secured through a legal agreement / obligation.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 This outline proposal does not accord with the development plan and has been publicised as a departure. However, in the light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing land supply, the proposal's location adjoining an existing large village settlement with close availability of services and facilities should be afforded appropriate weight.
- 7.2 The proposal would result in a sustainable development in terms of the relationship and proximity to local facilities and services. Therefore the proposal accords with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 7.3 In site specific terms, the proposal is not considered to be harmful to the character of the area, the existing residential amenity of nearby properties, any local heritage assets or general highway safety and therefore, given the current housing land shortfall, it

complies with the NPPF. The illustrative plans show that an acceptable scheme could be provided on the site.

- 7.4 In addition, the scheme could come on stream quickly, subject to an acceptable detailed scheme being approved, as all the necessary criteria are in place for swift development on site which will assist in helping to address the current housing land shortfall.
- 7.5 The applicants consider that the proposal meets the specifications in the NPPF and would provide housing to address the council's current shortfall in the five year housing land supply. On the basis of the assessment put forward it is considered that this site could be a favoured location and the principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the decision to grant planning permission be delegated to head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman and the local members subject to:

1. Completion within the agreed PPA period of a section 106 agreement for on-site affordable housing provision, contributions toward off-site facilities and services including highway works, education improvements, waste management and collection, street names signs, public art, library and museum service, social and health care, fire and rescue, police equipment, local and area hub recreational and community facility improvements;

2. The following conditions including, the requirements for receipt of a reserved matters application or a detailed scheme within six months and that scheme to be available for the commencement of development within 12 months from the date of the issue of planning permission to help address the immediate housing land shortfall:

- 1. TL1 - Time limit (12 months)**
- 2. MC2 - materials**
- 3. LS1 - landscape**
- 4. LS4 - tree protection details**
- 5. RE6 - boundary walls and fences – including walls to open frontages**
- 6. Plot curtilage boundaries**
- 7. Ecology**
- 8. MC24 - drainage requirements**
- 9. Construction traffic management plan**
- 10. Travel information packs**
- 11. Access visibility**
- 12. Parking provision**
- 13. Building height parameters**
- 14. Refuse bin storage**
- 15. Roof top aerials**
- 16. Maintenance of open space areas**
- 17. Protect and maintain hedges during development operations**
- 18. Approve drawings**

3. If the required section 106 agreements are not completed in a timely manner and so planning permission cannot be granted by the determination deadline of 18 June 2013, in accordance with the agreed PPA, it is recommended that authority to refuse planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in

consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman.

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