

APPLICATION NO.	P13/V0679/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	16.4.2013
PARISH	ABINGDON
WARD MEMBER(S)	Jeanette Halliday Jim Halliday Marilyn Badcock Mike Badcock
APPLICANT	Cranbourne (Abingdon) Ltd
SITE	Unicorn School for the Dyslexic Child, Berkeley House, 20 Marcham Road Abingdon, OX14 1AA
PROPOSAL	Refurbishment of the existing building into 8 one-bedroom apartments and the erection of 6 terraced houses (resubmission).
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	448753/197021
OFFICER	Mr Peter Brampton

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Berkeley House is an attractive period property set back from the road in a generous plot. Originally a single dwelling, the building has a long-standing use as a B1 office. More recently, a temporary consent has been granted for the building to be used by the Unicorn School, a private school specialising in educating dyslexic children.
- 1.2 The main house is three storeys in height, with two-storey and single story rear extensions to serve the commercial and education uses. The site rises up from the road, with a garden to the front and extensive hardstanding at the rear. This hardstanding is primarily used for parking and children's play. The main building is considered to be a heritage asset.
- 1.3 In July 2013, the Unicorn School received a further temporary consent lasting three years for the continued use of the site.
- 1.4 The application comes to committee as Abingdon Town Council objects to the proposal, whilst 16 letters of objection have been received.
- 1.5 A location plan is **attached** as Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the extension and refurbishment of the main building into 8 1-bed apartments and the erection of six 2/3-bed mews style houses, with associated parking and amenity space.
- 2.2 This application is a re-submission of a previously refused scheme, which proposed to convert the main building into six flats, and the erection of eight houses to the rear. This application was refused for being an overdevelopment of the site, harmful to the character of the area, intrusive on neighbouring amenity, a poor design and for having a lack of information on trees and air quality.
- 2.3 Turning to the main building, the conversion of it into flats requires limited internal alterations to the original structure. The existing two-storey and single storey rear and

side extensions will be removed, to create space for new three and two-storey extensions. The design and materials of these will match the existing building.

- 2.4 The mews houses will be split into two terraces of three. They will be three-storey dwellings of brick construction under a slate roof. There are areas of flat roofing to the mews houses, with a parapet.
- 2.5 Each of the mews houses will have a private garden. Across the development, there are 16 unallocated car parking spaces, plus 1 disabled space, with cycle parking along the eastern boundary. The flats will benefit from a shared amenity space at the front of the site, utilising the existing garden.
- 2.6 Financial contributions towards off-site services are required to mitigate the impact of the additional residents who will occupy the proposed development. The applicants will provide financial contributions to a number of infrastructure requirements. The contributions requested can be summarised thus:

2.7 **County Council agreement**

- Primary education - £11,582 – expansion of an existing Abingdon school
- Libraries - £2,040
- Waste Management - £1,536
- Museum Resource Centre - £120
- Social and Health Care - £3,300

2.8 **District Council agreement**

- Street Names - £213
- Waste Collection - £2,380
- Public Art - £2,400
- Sports Hall - £6,066
- Swimming Pools - £4,691
- Artificial Grass pitch - £831
- Outdoor tennis - £2,734
- MUGA - £2,716
- Football pitches - £1,998
- Cricket pitches - £811
- Rugby pitches - £479
- Clubhouse/pavilion - £4,796
- Public Open Space commuted sum

- 2.9 Extracts from the applications plans are attached as **Appendix 2**. Documents submitted in support of the application, included the planning statement, design and access statement and the transport statement are available on the council's website.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Abingdon Town Council** – Recommends refusal over concerns about increased volume of traffic and car parking, and the overdevelopment of the site
- OCC Highways** – No objections subject to conditions relating to vehicle parking, the access, cycle parking and manouevring space
- OCC Archaeologist** – No objections subject to conditions relating to archaeological investigation and mitigation
- OCC Rights of Way** – No objection
- OCC Drainage** – No objection subject to condition relating to sustainable drainage system
- Thames Water Development Control** - No objections, general information about

connecting to the public sewer provided

Crime Prevention Design Adviser - No objections, condition requested relating to development achieving “Secured by Design” accreditation

Health & Housing - Environmental Protection Team – No objections

Conservation Officer - No objections – *“I am confident that in design and conservation terms, the proposed new buildings and the extension will sit comfortable within the context of the existing buildings, which are not designated heritage assets.”*

Neighbour Representations – Sixteen letters of objection received. Main concerns can be summarised thus:

- Overdevelopment of the site
- Harmful to the spacious character of the area
- Inappropriate scale, height and design of the mews houses
- Loss of privacy, light and outlook to the rear of properties along Winterborne Road
- Overlooking of rear gardens of Winterborne Road from rear facing windows of the mew houses
- Increase in traffic congestion on Marcham Road
- Insufficient car parking will cause additional on-street parking in adjacent residential roads
- Removal of trees
- Increased noise pollution
- Increased risk of flooding
- Harm to air quality
- Increased light pollution
- Clear differences between this scheme and that approved at 18 Marcham Road

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P13/V0890/FUL](#) – Approved (05/07/2013)

Continued use of the property by the Unicorn School for a temporary period of three years.

[P12/V1896/FUL](#) - Refused (16/11/2012)

Conversion of school premises to form 6 flats and erection of 8 houses to the rear of the site

[P08/V1818](#) - Approved (22/01/2009)

Erection of a summerhouse building to be used as a temporary classroom.

(Retrospective application)

[P07/V1982](#) - Approved (07/02/2008)

Temporary change of use for 5 years to educational use by the Unicorn School.

[P01/V0117](#) - Approved (12/04/2001)

Temporary siting of two portable buildings for office use.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;**

GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements

DC1 - Design

DC3 - Design against crime

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

DC13 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

DC14 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

H10 – Development in the five main settlements

Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/SPG)

Residential Design Guide – December 2009

Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009

Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008

Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006

Planning and Public Art – July 2006

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraphs 14 and 29 – presumption in favour of sustainable development

Paragraphs 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education

Paragraphs 57, 60 & 61 – promote local distinctiveness and integrate development into the natural, built and historic environment

Paragraph 99 – Flood risk assessment

Paragraph 109 – contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment

Paragraph 111 – encourage the effective use of land

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of development

- 6.1 Policy H10 confirms that the principle of residential development within the built up limits of Abingdon is acceptable. This is provided the character of the area is preserved.

Character and appearance

- 6.2 The application site does not fall within a conservation area, and the building on site is not listed. However, it remains an attractive period structure and can be considered an undesignated heritage asset of the area.
- 6.3 From observations on site, the existing extensions at the rear of the building are not particularly attractive or sympathetic to the character and quality of the original structure. The proposed extensions, whilst quite substantial, are comparable in scale to these existing rear projections. Crucially however, they better respect the character of the original building. In this respect, these proposals enhance the contribution this impressive building makes to the character of the area.
- 6.4 The design of the two mews terraces has been developed with advice from the council's conservation officer. They represent a modern interpretation on a traditional town house style.
- 6.5 In assessing this application, it is important to highlight an existing planning permission at the adjacent site to the east, 18 Marcham Road. This is another imposing period building, albeit different in terms of design. In 2011, consent was given for the conversion of this building to 7 apartments, with a terrace of five mews houses behind (Planning Ref: P12/V0204/FUL). This application here reflects that arrangement, with the proposed terraces to be of a similar scale, on a similar building line, to that approved at No.18. Whilst the approved mews houses at No.18 visually appear as a 2 ½ storey development, the ridge height is comparable to the 3-storey development proposed here. Both designs have a ridge height of around 9.8 metres. The design of the mews houses proposed here is different to that approved at No.18, but better reflects the main building on the site, with the use of a similar roof design.
- 6.6 Crucially, this application site is wider and larger than No.18. Consequently, there is sufficient space for two terraces of three mews houses. The plot coverage of this scheme will be comparable to that approved at the adjacent site. Reasonable gaps to

the eastern and western side boundaries are proposed, whilst each house will benefit from a garden of around 12 metres in depth. These gardens provide appropriate amenity space for dwellings of this size.

- 6.7 The mews housing will be subservient to the main house, which will remain the dominant feature of the site. There is a good separation between them, with the mews housing set back around 12 metres. The development will not appear unduly cramped in its surroundings and will preserve the character of the site.
- 6.8 Turning to the impact on the character of the wider area, the views of the main house will remain largely unchanged. The alterations to the front elevation of the building are minimal and the trees to the front of the site will be retained. These trees also provide excellent screening of the mew houses behind. Some oblique views through the trees will be possible, but these will be at a good distance, with the main building remaining the dominant feature of the site. Thus, this proposal will preserve the character of the area.

Relationship to surrounding properties

- 6.9 Under the previous scheme, a terrace of eight town houses was proposed. These were orientated to face east. This meant rear windows facing the rear garden of 22 Marcham Road at an unacceptable close proximity. The single terrace of eight houses also projected within one metre of the rear boundary of the site. This led to an unacceptably overbearing impact on the rear gardens of properties on Winterborne Road, Nos.18 and 20 in particular.
- 6.10 This scheme takes a very different approach, orientating the terraces on a north-south alignment and locating them centrally on the rear portion of the site. No windows in the side elevations of the terraces are proposed, so there is no concern regarding overlooking of Nos.18 and 22 Marcham Road. Given the size of the rear gardens of these two neighbours (and the extant permission at No.18), there are also no concerns about these properties being overbearing or causing a loss of outlook.
- 6.11 The new arrangement does alter the relationship with Winterborne Road to the north. A number of residents have objected strongly to this, with concerns regarding overlooking, loss of light, loss of outlook and noise. On balance, these impacts are not considered sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission.
- 6.12 The council's residential design guide is clear that the back to back distance between upper floor rear windows should be 21 metres. This proposal achieves this comfortably, with back to back distances of at least 27 metres. However, this standard does not specifically include second floor windows. Thus, a condition is necessary requiring these windows to be obscure glazed and fixed shut. This is reasonable as these windows only serve ensuite bathrooms and dressing areas. A condition is also necessary to prevent the areas of flat roof at the rear of the building being converted to a balcony; as such a feature would allow an undue amount of overlooking of neighbouring gardens.
- 6.13 Regarding loss of light, the distances involved again ensure the impact is acceptable. Furthermore, the new terraces will be positioned approximately due south of the rear of Winterborne Road. Thus, when the sun passes the application site, relative to these neighbours, it will be at its highest, so the shadows cast will be smallest. Accordingly, there will be no material loss of light to the properties of Winterborne Road.
- 6.14 Currently, the rear outlook from Winterborne Road is quite open, with a distance of over 40 metres to the back of the main building. This outlook will clearly be affected by this

proposal. However, as outlined above, the distances involved remain generous. The new housing will not be unduly overbearing on the rear gardens of properties along Winterborne Road. Thus, the occupants of these properties will continue to enjoy a reasonable outlook for a town centre location such as this. Overall, this proposal will not cause any material harm to neighbouring amenity.

Highway Safety

- 6.15 Another key local concern has been the impact of this proposal on highway safety. This is both in terms of increased on-street parking in local residential roads and increased congestion on Marcham Road itself. The long-standing traffic congestion on Marcham Road is acknowledged. However, again, these impacts are not sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission.
- 6.16 Turning first to the parking provision, 17 spaces are provided for the 14 units, including one disabled space. These spaces will be unallocated, which the Highways Authority Liaison Officer has confirmed is the appropriate way to provide parking at a site like this. The overall level of car parking is appropriate for an edge of town centre location. The availability of alternative forms of sustainable transport is significant. The applicants also propose a 32-rack cycle store. Thus, whilst the overall level of parking provision is less than would normally be required, it is acceptable against modern highway standards. Furthermore, it is extremely unlikely that, if a car were unable to park in the development, it would park on adjoining residential streets, as the length of the walk would be impractical. Thus, there are no concerns this development will lead to an unwelcome or materially harmful increase in on-street parking.
- 6.17 In terms of increased congestion on the road network, it is important to reiterate the current, permanent, planning use of the building is a B1 office. The agent's transport consultant has demonstrated that this development would generate significantly fewer trips than the extant B1 use, and the current school use. The Liaison Officer has assessed the methodology and results of this exercise and has agreed them. Thus, there are no concerns this proposal would result in a materially harmful increase in traffic movements on this busy road.
- 6.18 Visibility at the point of access is acceptable, whilst adequate manoeuvring space within the development is proposed. Accordingly, subject to the conditions recommended in Section 8, this proposal will have an acceptable impact on highway safety.
- 6.19 *Other matters*
As outlined in Paragraph 6.8, there are a number of mature trees on the site. These provide excellent screening and give the site a verdant feel given the location. The retention of these trees is essential, and the applicants have provided an arboricultural method statement demonstrating a method of protecting these trees during construction. The council's forestry officer has assessed this statement and confirmed no objections to the proposal, subject to the condition recommended in the report. Additional planting will be sought as part of the landscaping condition also recommended.
- 6.20 The council's environmental health officer has assessed this scheme. A lack of information about air quality was a reason for refusal on the previous scheme. The applicants have provided additional information on this matter, demonstrating there will be no undue impact. This report has been agreed by the environmental health officer. Given the town centre location, neighbour objections relating to noise and light pollution are not considered sustainable.
- 6.21 The southern boundary of the site just falls within Flood Zone 2, but the building works

will all take place within Flood Zone 1. Given the manner in which the site slopes downwards to the road, there is a need to ensure no surface water runs onto the public highway. The council's drainage engineer has previously recommended a condition on this scheme requiring a drainage strategy, and this condition is recommended in Section 8.

- 6.22 In line with the council's sustainable design and construction SPD, the new units will need to achieve Code Level 4 when assessed against the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 6.23 The applicants will need to provide details of bin storage prior to work commencing on site, and a condition can secure these details.
- 6.24 The application site falls within an area of archaeological interest. Accordingly, the county archaeologist requires conditions relating to an archaeological watching brief and mitigation scheme. These will be agreed prior to work commencing on site.
- 6.25 An informative will be placed on the consent, encouraging the applicant to achieve "Secured By Design" accreditation for the scheme. This is a third party standard, which is good practice, but cannot be required by a condition attached to a planning consent.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The principle of residential development in this location is acceptable. The proposed alterations and extensions to the main building will not compromise its positive contribution to the character of the area. The proposed mews houses are of an appropriate design, scale and height and will not have a materially harmful impact on the character of the site or wider area. The proposal will have no undue impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety, the health of important trees or flood risk.
- 7.2 Accordingly, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal complies with relevant local and national planning policy and guidance

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the committee chairman and vice-chairman subject to:

1. A S106 agreement with both the County Council and District Council in order to secure contributions towards local infrastructure and to secure the affordable housing.

2: Conditions as follows

- 1 : Commencement Three Years
- 2 : Approved plans
- 3 : Sample materials to be agreed
- 4 : Access, Park. & Turning in accordance with plan
- 5 : Bicycle Parking as per approved plans
- 6 : No Drainage to Highway
- 7 : Submission of Landscaping Scheme
- 8 : Implementation of Landscaping Scheme
- 9 : Drainage Details (Surface and Foul) to be agreed
- 10 : Sustainable Drainage Scheme to be agreed
- 11 : Boundary Details to be agreed
- 12 : Refuse Storage to be agreed

- 13 : Construction traffic management plan to be agreed
- 14 : Slab levels to be agreed
- 15 : Code Level 4 to be achieved in the new units
- 16 : Tree Protection to be agreed
- 17 : Archaeological investigation to be agreed
- 18 : Scheme of archaeological mitigation to be agreed
- 19 : Restriction on Use of Roof as Balcony
- 20 : Second floor rear facing mews house windows to be obscure glazed

3. If the required section 106 agreements are not completed, and planning permission cannot be granted by the determination deadline of 3 September 2013, 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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