

SUN/7291/5 – J A Pye (Oxford) Ltd
Demolition of existing 8 flats and construction of replacement building containing 8 flats
Lincombe Lodge, Fox Lane, Boars Hill

1.0 **The Proposal**

- 1.1 Lincombe Lodge is a building containing 8 flats that lies on Fox Lane, Boars Hill. This application seeks permission to demolish the existing building and replace it with a new building containing the same number of flats, with a volume that is 29% greater than the existing building. The proposed building would also be set further back into the site with parking arranged in front of it. Extracts from the plans are in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The site lies within the Green Belt. To the west of the site is Lincombe Lodge Hotel. At the front of the site is a separate dwelling called The Lodge, while to the east is a dwelling known as Gracedieu.
- 1.3 The application comes to Committee because of anticipated objections from the Parish Council and local residents.

2.0 **Planning History**

- 2.1 In 1983 planning permission was granted to convert the original house at Lincombe Lodge into 6 flats for the elderly and 1 wardens flat (ref SUN/7291/1). In 1984, planning permission was granted for an extension to allow for 1 extra flat, making a total of 8 flats (ref SUN/7291/2).
- 2.2 The restriction on the occupation of the flats, to elderly residents only, was lifted by an application permitted in 2004 (ref SUN/7291/3).
- 2.3 In 2005, an application was made to demolish the existing building and replace it with a building containing the same number of flats but with an increase in volume of 46%. That application was refused under delegated authority by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair. The reason for refusal related to the size of the proposed building and is in **Appendix 2**.

3.0 **Planning Policies**

- 3.1 Policy G5 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan restricts the size of any replacement dwelling in the Green Belt. Policy GS3 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan is similar, but uses a “sliding scale” to allow a larger building where the floor area is below the threshold of 120m².
- 3.2 Policies D1, D2 and D3 of the adopted 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 Sunningwell Parish Council – any comments received will be reported orally at the Meeting.
- 4.2 Local Residents – any comments received will be reported orally at the Meeting.
- 4.3 County Engineer – no objection subject to conditions.
- 4.4 Consultant Architect – comments to be reported at the Meeting.

4.5 Architects' Advisory Panel - comments to be reported at the Meeting.

4.6 County Archaeologist – no objection subject to conditions.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 There are four main issues:

The size of the proposed building in relation to Green Belt policy
The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area
The effect of the proposal on neighbours
Access and parking

5.2 With regard to the first issue, it should be noted that Green Belt policy on replacement dwellings does not refer to the instance of a single building containing multiple dwellings, or flats. In the previous application, refused in 2005, the applicants argued that each flat should qualify as a "small dwelling" under Policy GS3 of the emerging Local Plan and therefore could be replaced by a flat up to 50% larger in volume. This meant a proposed increase in volume of the whole flats building of 46%. Officers did not agree with this argument because an increase of 46% in the volume of the flats building would amount to a considerable absolute increase in built mass on the site, and a corresponding significant reduction in the openness of the Green Belt. Were Lincombe Lodge a single dwelling, the policy restriction would enable only a 30% increase in volume, which would have a reduced impact on openness arising from the increase in mass.

5.3 The applicants have amended the proposal so that the current proposed increase in volume is within 30%. Officers consider that the proposal now accords with Green Belt policy.

5.4 In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the design of the proposed building exhibits considerable articulation through variation in the height of the roof and the use of projecting bays. It has a far more coherent appearance than the existing building. The design of the previous proposal, for a larger building, was supported by the Consultant Architect and the Architects' Advisory Panel. At the time of writing the report, the comments of the Consultant Architect and the Architects' Advisory Panel on the current scheme were not known. These will be reported at the Meeting, but in view of the support for the previous application Officers anticipate support for the current proposal.

5.5 The next issue is the effect of the proposal on neighbours. Between the site and the road lies a dwelling called The Lodge. The impact of the proposal on The Lodge is complex and needs careful consideration. Currently, the front elevation of Lincombe Lodge lies very close to the rear wall of The Lodge, which contains windows. The distance between the buildings is only 10 metres which is well under the Council's normal requirement for a minimum distance of 21 metres. The proposed building would be moved significantly further back in the site, so that the distance between its front wall and the rear wall of The Lodge would be at least 26 metres.

5.6 However, balanced against this is the proposed relocation of the bulk of the car parking from the rear of the site to the area between the proposed building and The Lodge. This is likely to result in increased noise and disturbance to residents of The Lodge from cars manoeuvring on the site. However, it should be noted that with the existing arrangement there is likely to be a degree of disturbance to The Lodge from manoeuvring vehicles. This is because all cars currently have to pass The Lodge when entering and leaving the site, and there is space to park some cars in the area between the front of the existing building and The Lodge. Members will need to consider this issue carefully. Officers consider the gains to the residents of The Lodge will outweigh any harm.

5.7 Given the relationship of the proposed building to Lincombe Lodge Hotel to the west, no harm would arise to the latter. The nearest flank wall of the dwelling known as Gracedieu, to the east of the site, lies approximately 13 metres from the flank wall of the proposed building. Two first

floor windows and two rooflights would face Gracedieu, but these would be either obscure glazed or high level to avoid overlooking, which can be required by conditions. Overall, the impact of the proposal on neighbours is considered to be acceptable.

5.8 The final issue is highway safety. As the proposed number of dwellings is the same as the existing number of dwellings, the use of the access is not likely to be materially greater. Of the proposed 8 flats, 6 are potentially 3-bedroom flats and 2 would be 2-bedroom flats. The Council's adopted parking standards require a maximum of 2 parking spaces per unit for 2/3-bedroom dwellings and this is what is proposed. For these reasons, the County Engineer has no objections.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *Subject to no other substantive issues being raised by the Parish Council or local residents, it is recommended to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:-*

1. TL1
2. MC2
3. REMOVE PD RIGHTS
4. OBSCURE GLAZING
5. HIGH LEVEL WINDOWS