

APPLICATION NO.	P14/V0080/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	14.1.2014
PARISH	STANFORD IN THE VALE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Robert Sharp
APPLICANT	Blue Cedar Homes
SITE	Land at Penstones Farm Horsecroft Stanford in the Vale
PROPOSAL	18 dwellings (8 no. dwellings for the Over 55 age range, 7 no. affordable and 3 no. Open Market dwellings) with landscaping and associated infrastructure.
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	434567/193394
OFFICER	Mark Doodes

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The site is relatively flat greenfield land, approximately 0.95 hectare in area, presently used as a paddock, on the eastern edge of the village. It is entirely undeveloped and is roughly rectangular in shape. The site is easily identifiable, save for its southern boundary which is presently non-existent. The site is bounded to the north by a moderate quality hedgerow over a post-and-wire fence. The same style of enclosure exists to the west, with a more mature hedgerow being on neighbouring land. The eastern and western boundaries are the rear gardens of existing residents of either Horsecroft or Ock Meadow, which have relatively low or open boundary enclosures. To the east Horsecroft becomes single track and more rural in character.
- 1.2 Existing housing is to the west and across some of the northern frontage, while to the east is the single, more isolated, grade II listed building known as Long Acre (no 30 Horsecroft). The application site is considered to be contiguous with the main part of the village and importantly is located close to the school and shops.
- 1.3 The site location plan can be found **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The applicant seeks full planning permission for the erection of 18 homes, of which seven are affordable units, three are full open market and eight are retirement units. The retirement element is all one-and-a-half storeys in massing and will also feature a manager's office, which will not feature overnight accommodation.

The proposed mix is as below;

Number of bedrooms	Retirement	Affordable	Open	Total
2 (all 1 st floor b/rooms)		6		6
3 (inc downstairs b/room)	8			8
3 (all first floor b/rooms)		1		1
4			3	3

- 2.2 The headline density is 19 dwellings per hectare, which is relatively low, but this was part of a conscious choice to ensure that good public space, private gardens and a density that matches the neighbouring area was achieved. There are two means of access proposed, a single driveway to a single detached unit fronting Horsecroft and a

“main” entrance which is towards the grade II listed building. Public open space is arranged in two areas one alongside the internal road and a second area which is in the retirement area and features a wooden garden structure in its centre.

- 2.3 The affordable units are located along a cul-de-sac which, given the site size and shape, the need to provide public open space, and a buffer to the listed building, is considered to be reasonable. The seven affordable units will be constructed from the same palette of materials that the open market and retirement units utilise. The size of the affordable units has been driven by the need for 2- and 3-bed units.
- 2.4 A mix of render, stone and brick finishes are proposed with smaller quality tiles. The landscaping will be a mix of native species of trees and hedges. Existing hedges will be protected and enhanced where possible.
- 2.5 Copies of the plans and example house types can be found **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Parish Council – Objection. Traffic, School Capacity, Impact on Listed building, highways matters. A copy of the Parish comments can be found **attached** at appendix 3.

Neighbours – 105 Objections (all matters raised by the Parish and some non-material matters) 9 letters of support (responding to the need for housing, the quality of the scheme etc)

Oxfordshire County Council –

Education - objection – Three primary school places generated. Insufficient spaces at school projected due to the scheme recently approved at appeal to the west of Faringdon Road. Contributions can be sought although the transport of children to neighbouring villages undermines community cohesion and the sustainability credentials of the scheme.

Highways – No objections on access, footway, public transport, highway drainage or parking.

County Archaeologist – No objection.

Thames Water - No objection, subject to conditions.

Crime Prevention Design Adviser – No objection, recommends registration with Secure by Design standards.

Environment Agency - No objection

Natural England - No objection

English Heritage (South East) - No objection

Urban Design Officer - No objection, many comments.

Leisure Department – No objection, contributions sought.

Waste Management Officer - No objection

Forestry Officer - No strong views, conditions recommending the retention of trees and hedgerows.

Landscape Officer - No strong views

Conservation Officer - No objection

Environmental Health - Air Quality - No objection

Drainage Engineer – No objection

Equalities Officer – Supports the provision of retirement homes.

Countryside Officer - No objection, requested offset scheme to finance off-site ecology works.

Georgian Group – Objection, impact on the listed building amongst other concerns.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 There is no relevant planning history.

The Interim Housing Supply Policy (IHSP) – Many local residents and the parish council have made reference to the IHSP. A larger site, of four hectares, was promoted to the Vale for inclusion in the IHSP in 2011. The site was not considered suitable for housing due to flood constraints, its size and other matters. The application site represents the *more acceptable* quarter of the IHSP site. Councillors are reminded, however, that the IHSP was withdrawn in draft form and that no weight should be assigned to it.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

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 new local plan is being produced:

GS1 – provides a general location strategy to concentrate development within the five main settlements (policy H10), and smaller-scale development in the larger villages (policy H11) and small villages (policies H12 and H13).

DC1 - Design – requires new development to be high design quality in terms of layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, and materials to be used.

DC13 - Flood Risk and surface water drainage – The assessment of sites and the use of SUDS schemes.

DC14 - Flood Risk and surface water drainage - The assessment of sites and the use of SUDS schemes.

DC3 - Design against crime – New development should reflect published guidance such as “eyes on the street” to reduce opportunities for crime by using natural surveillance, urban design etc.

DC4 - Public Art - requires development on sites of 0.5ha or more to contribute towards public art in the area.

DC5 - Access - Seeks to ensure that vehicular movements both within and into sites do not cause safety, congestion or environmental problems. Parking standards and cycling provision should also be adequate. Reference is also made to the need to secure sufficient off-site highway improvements to mitigate the impact of the development.

DC6 - Landscaping - 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.

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling provision

DC8 - Provision of infrastructure and services – secured via a legal agreement for local and district wide services.

DC9 - Impact of development on neighbouring uses – There should be no harmful impact on neighbours from, amongst other matters, overlooking, overshadowing or overdominance.

HE4 - Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development

HE10 - Archaeology

HE5 - Development involving the setting to a listed building

NE4 - Other Sites of Nature Conservation Value

H11 – Development in the larger villages - New development within the built-up areas of the larger villages. This policy seeks to protect the identity of the larger settlements from expansion that could materially harm their character. It currently has little weight due to the lack of a five year supply of housing land.

H17 – The provision of 40% affordable homes.

H23 - Open space in new housing development – requires 15% of the residential area to be laid out as public open space.

NE9 – seeks to protect the wider landscape of the Lowland Vale.

5.2 *Supplementary planning guidance*

Residential design guide (December 2009)

Sustainable design and construction (2009)

Open space, sport and recreation future provision (July 2009)

Affordable housing – provides further guidance in relation to the local plan policy H17.

Planning and public art (July 2006) - Sites over 0.5ha should provide a contribution towards public art in accordance with local plan policy DC4.

5.3 *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012*

Paragraphs 14 & 49 – presumption in favour of sustainable development

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

Paragraph 47 – five year housing land supply requirement

Paragraph 50 – create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities

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

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 been previously developed

Paragraph 119 – the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not override protected species and habitats

Paragraph 126-134 – Historic assets and environment

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 *Principle of the proposed development*

Being an application for full planning permission, councillors need to consider the full spectrum of matters including the principle of development, means of access, mix, design, parking, landscaping and materials. The NPPF seeks to bolster the delivery of housing in particular where councils are unable to demonstrate a five year land supply. The balance in reaching decisions is outlined in paragraph 14 of the NPPF, which states that permission ought to be granted unless;

“any adverse impacts...would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against [the framework]...as a whole”

- 6.2 The current lack of a five year land supply of housing sites in the district is due to the lack of delivery of new housing rather than an under-supply of allocated housing land. The current lack of a five year housing land supply requires some flexibility in line with the NPPF in the consideration of planning applications which do not accord with current local plan policy. This approach is by necessity of a time-limited duration and is aimed at identifying suitable development sites to address the housing land shortfall whilst still meeting the relevant sustainability and design requirements as set out in the NPPF.
- 6.3 The application is contrary to local plan policy H11, and would add approximately 5% to the number of dwellings estimated to be in Stanford in the Vale, in addition to the new housing recently permitted at the appeal site west of Faringdon Road. Whilst the council does not have a five year housing land supply, such restraint policies are inconsistent with the NPPF. The proposed development, therefore, needs to be considered on its site specific merits and, in particular, in relation to its sustainability as defined by the NPPF. The framework promotes, for instance, new housing to help maintain the viability and vitality of rural communities and accepts that sites need to be considered in terms of sustainable transport at least *within the constraints of the area*, noting the Frameworks intention to provide choice of travel, rather than the assumption of one form over another.
- 6.4 This report, therefore, focuses on site specific issues and consideration of whether the specifications of the NPPF are satisfied in terms of providing sustainable development to help address the current shortfall in the five year supply of housing land.
- 6.5 The village - Stanford in the Vale is one of the larger villages within the district and scores within the top 20 in the village hierarchy. The most recent assessment, provided by the Parish Council of the facilities in the Parish produces a score of 14, putting the village firmly in the larger villages hierarchy. The location of the application site is

considered to be sustainable as it lies within short walking distance of the main village centre including the primary school. In addition, the NPPF puts strong emphasis on permitting new homes to further enhance rural vitality. For these reasons, the principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable and in a reasonable sustainable location in a reasonable sustainable village. As discussed at the recently allowed appeal, the inspector concluded that the availability of public transport does not solely define sustainability, noting the likely use of the private motor car in many suburban areas as often the mode of transport of choice, not necessity.

- 6.6 Visual impact – Policy NE9 seeks to protect the wide and open views across the lowland vale. A landscape and visual impact assessment was commissioned by the developers to seek to examine the site and inform the layout accordingly. It is acknowledged that there will be an impact in developing the site. However, the low density of housing promoted along with enhanced landscaping and the choice to locate the public open space at the most visually prominent end of the site, are all considered to assist in overcoming such concerns. The proposed housing is no higher than two storeys. Officers do not consider that any significant open or wide views of the lowland vale are compromised. The site does have a public footpath and public highways nearby, but the views affected are local in nature and the development will be largely interpreted as being within the context of the village and not an intrusion into open countryside. The sensitive use of materials and scale will further reinforce such conclusions. In terms of neighbouring amenity, policy DC9, the proposals have been sensitively designed to avoid any overlooking within the site and to neighbouring units. The minimum separations are well above the council's adopted minimum distance between principal room windows of 21 metres.
- 6.7 Highways – There are three areas of discussion within this topic. Firstly, the impact of the new traffic generated from the scheme, secondly the layout of the internal roads and parking and finally the off site works proposed/required.
- 6.8 Concerns regarding the traffic generated from the development have featured strongly in the objections to the application. It should be noted that around half of the units are retirement units which are less likely to generate trips in the traditional peak traffic times. The county engineer estimate that less than ten journeys will be made by car in the am peak and the roughly the same number in the evening. This equates to a negligible impact on the local highways network.
- 6.9 The internal roads and paths and parking are all considered to be acceptable. The scheme will provides opportunities for casual (unallocated) parking, which could well be used by existing local residents without restriction. The choice to provide such spaces toward the entrance of the development was a conscious one at pre-application stage. Swept path analysis has satisfied the county as regards waste collection. The number of parking spaces (a total of 44 spaces are proposed, of which 8 are unallocated.) meets adopted standards, and there are other opportunities for casual parking on private land.
- 6.10 Turning to offsite highway works, the developer has also agreed as part of the off-site highway works, to provide a new footway leading west from the site entrance, within land controlled by the applicant or within the adopted highway. These works will widen the Horsecroft carriageway to 4.8m width using highways land. This will allow two-way traffic on the carriageway which at present is not possible, in part due to casual parking on the highway. These works will allow for safer access to the village services than at present, and although not an optimum situation, as the highway land ends shy of the main road the proposed new length of footway represents a significant improvement over the status-quo.

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- 6.11 Contributions to improve the bus service have also been agreed. Overall, the scheme is considered to accord with policy DC5 of the adopted local plan.
- 6.12 Archaeology – County officers are satisfied with the findings of the archaeology reports commissioned by the applicant and have not requested that any conditions be imposed. Therefore based on the above conclusions the application is considered to accord with policy HE10 of the adopted local plan.
- 6.13 Sewage and surface water – The village is known to have surface water problems. The site is entirely within flood zone 1, the lowest risk of potential flooding from a river. Therefore the applicants have employed a consultancy to form a drainage strategy for the site. The site, and these SUDS based proposals, have not raised any objection from environment agency of the council's drainage engineer who is satisfied that a suitable SUDS scheme can attenuate and offset the impact of the new roads and houses. The proposals once implemented are intended to account for 1:100 year storms and an allowance for global warming of 30% increase in rainfall. With regard to foul drainage Thames Water have not objected to the proposals and have recommended the use of suitable conditions.
- 6.14 Neighbouring amenity – Policy DC9 of the local plan seeks to protect residential amenity. The scheme has been sensitively designed with existing neighbouring amenity as a prime constraint from the outset. The nearest home to Long Acre, the grade II listed building, will be 35m away, while the distance to homes on Ock Meadow will be a minimum of 30m. The gable to rear window separation on the affordable units is above the minimum standard, at 18m. No concerns are raised as regards the interrelationship between any of the homes in the scheme and any outside it.
- 6.15 The provision of a new area of amenity space in the north west corner of the site (measuring approx 7m by 13m) will be maintained by the management company for the site with three gates to allow ready access from Horsecroft. Overall the scheme is considered to accord with policy DC9 of the local plan.
- 6.16 Education – Primary School – Oxfordshire county council have raised an objection to the application on the grounds that there is insufficient capacity at the local primary school to support the three new residents likely to be of primary school age, and that the balance of sustainable development will shift if pupils must be taken to neighbouring villages on a daily basis. Such activity, it is asserted, will also erode the creation of cohesive communities. However this outcome does rely on the inability of the county council to expand the village school, to seek more suitable sites for the school, or acquire land for its expansion. Such options are the subject of an ongoing feasibility study. This issue is likely to be the only planning area where this application is lacking. Given the relatively small number of pupil numbers involved, Vale officers have sought formal confirmation that such an objection could and will be defended at appeal by the county council. Officers will update members on this matter on the night of committee.
- 6.17 Secondary School – King Alfreds in Wantage has spare capacity, but is approaching its limit. Funding has been agreed to contribute towards the new school secondary school in Grove Airfield. Special education needs contributions have also been sought and agreed.
- 6.18 Heritage matters – The only designated heritage asset in the area is the grade II listed building to the east of the site, Long Acre. During pre-application discussions this constraint was identified and the urban form proposed reflected the need not to impact

on the setting of this attractive home. Both English heritage and local conservation officers support the officer view that the scheme as stands does this. The proposals have identified and responded to a legitimate constraint in a sensitive manner. An objection has been received from the Georgian Group. However, having assessed the material of the objection, officers remain satisfied that proposals accord with policies HE1 and HE4 of the local plan, as the conservation area is some distance away and the scheme will not be visible from within it.

- 6.19 Ecology – The site is not part of any EU, national or local ecology site. The site is part of a Conservation Target Area (CTA), which is a large landscape area aimed at promoting restoration and positive management of such areas for the gain of ecology. Councillors are advised that such a designation does not attract any formal Vale planning policy designation, such as Policy NE4. The designation is not intended to inhibit growth, and would not be supported as such. It is, however, intended for relevant parties to seek opportunities to improve biodiversity or support and promote existing species. As such the developer has been approached to fund an off-setting scheme. However such a scheme required a contribution of around £25,000, which officers did not feel was proportionate or justifiable for a site which was not designated. Therefore the scheme of bat boxes, bird boxes and other on-site provisions has been accepted.
- 6.20 Layout – The application was the subject of pre-application discussions. The layout has been informed by the developers model for retirement homes which are arranged around a central area of public open space with landscaping and an on-site manager's office. The layout was also informed by the site constraints, namely the listed building to the east, the existing homes to the immediate west. The affordable units, seven in total, are in a single cul-de-sac. Members will be aware that affordable units should be of a size/type to meet local needs, be distributed evenly and be indistinguishable from open market housing. It is the view of the case officer that, although not ideal, the scheme is proposed meets the broad thrust of this policy, noting the high quality materials. As regards to meeting the local needs, the developer initially proposed some larger three bed units, but the council's Housing Services insisted on these being changed to two-bed units. This clearly demonstrates that the developer has not driven the final outcome which is that the smaller units are all affordable homes. Public open space is considered usable and of a good quality, noting the very few traffic movements anticipated from this scheme.
- 6.21 Contributions - The following contributions have been sought and agreed by the developers to offset the impact of the additional residents on nearby infrastructure. These contributions will be secured on-site and by means of a section 106 agreement.

Affordable housing	On site (40%)
Parish contributions for facilities	£45,000
Leisure	£37,464
Public Art	£5,400
Street Naming and numbering	£500
Waste and recycling	£3060
Vale Total	£91,424

Oxfordshire County Council contributions

Education – Primary	£34,746
Education – Secondary	£71,250
Education – SEN	£3,066
Highways	Off site works

Library	£3910
Skills and learning	£560
Day care	£11,000
Waste infrastructure	£2944
Integrated Youth Support	£792
Museum	£230
Monitoring fee	£1500
OCC Total	£129,998

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application is recommended for approval as the LPA believe there is no compelling or cogent reason for refusing the delivery of much needed family, retirement and social homes in this village. The scheme will;

- Deliver quality new homes, made from good finishing materials, including the full quota of affordable units.
- Improve Horsecroft for pedestrians by means of a new footway.
- Provide opportunities for unallocated parking in an area with a shortfall
- Provide an area of new shared public amenity space for residents of Horsecroft to enjoy, in particular the terraced Victorian homes abutting the site.
- Provide public open space of a useable good standard.

The application is, despite being unpopular locally, considered to comply with the principles of the local plan and the NPPF *as a whole* where this is absent and the public gain of the scheme is considered to outweigh the detriment, noting the above.

This recommendation is made despite the objection of the County as regards to lack of capacity for the three primary school placements generated from this scheme.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions;

- 1 : Commencement 1 year**
- 2 : Approved plans ***
- 3 : Sample materials required (all)**
- 4 : Refuse & Recycling Storage (Details required)**
- 5 : Construction Traffic Management plan**
- 6 : No Surface Water Drainage to Highway**
- 7 : No Garage conversion into accommodation**
- 8 : Landscape Management Plan**
- 9 : Preserve trees, shrubs and hedges**
- 10 : Surface water drainage works prior to commencement (details required)**
- 11 : Foul drainage works prior to occupation (details required)**
- 12. Ecology scheme be implimented in line with Malford proposals.**

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